

**A SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS) TO CHILD
PROTECTION: A TSONGA CASE STUDY**

by

SAMUEL LISENGA MAHUNTSE

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

SUPERVISOR: Dr MP le Roux

APRIL 2021

DEDICATION

To my late father Josiah Bushane Simbine, in your ancient times you had an uncontrollable desire for education which saw you migrating to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) to earn your education. You died before I could really figure out who really was you but one thing which I managed to understand about you is that you valued education. This work is dedicated to you my late father, my beloved wife Brenda Gombiro-Simbine and my son Thalane Samuel (Jnr) Simbine. Brenda and Thalane you endured going for days, nights and hours without me whilst I pursued the long journey which today culminate into this work, therefore this thesis I dedicate to you too. To all Vatsonga people in the world this thesis is yours too!

Declaration

Full name: Samuel Lisenga Mahuntse
Student number: 15369732
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work
Title of thesis: A social work programme on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems to child protection: a Tsonga case study

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. All secondary material used has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with University requirements.

I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of University policy and implications in this regard.

SL Mahuntse

25 October 2020

ABSTRACT

A social work programme on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection: a Tsonga case study

by

Samuel Lisenga Mahuntse

Supervisor: Dr Liana (MP) le Roux
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Social Work)

All children have a right to protection, as set out in international and regional documents such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights [OHCHR], 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (African Union, 1990). Individual countries uphold children's rights to protection through domestic laws and formal child protection services (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:286). In Sub-Saharan Africa, adverse conditions such as extreme poverty and hunger, poor access to education and health services as well as harmful cultural practices affect children's rights, including their right to protection (Kaime, 2005:229-230; Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:81; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28; Mwambene & Mawodza, 2017:21; United Nations, 2019:21, 24). Yet, the social welfare sector in the region lacks resources and the capacity to deliver key child protection services to communities (Davis, McCaffery & Conticini, 2012:32; Watkins & Quattri, 2016:20). Hepworth, Rooney, Drewberry Rooney and Strom-Gottfried (2017:431) suggest that social workers explore resources in the natural ecological environment to deal with challenges of limited resources. In terms of child protection, it appears that Africa had effective child protection systems in pre-colonial times, which have since become extinct (Mushunje, 2006:16).

Against this background, the researcher explored the possible contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection with the goal to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection. The study was based on the Tsonga IKS, and was guided by the following research question: How can Tsonga Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) contribute to child protection and inform an awareness programme for social workers?

Adopting a qualitative research approach and a case study design, intervention research was implemented to collect data on Tsonga IKS and its potential contribution to child protection,

which then informed the development of the awareness programme for social workers. Data were collected from a sample of 40 experts on Tsonga IKS who were recruited through key informant and snowball sampling in two rural districts in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. A second sample, consisting of 11 child protection workers in the two districts, were selected through availability and snowball sampling. Data were collected with the use of semi-structured interviews that were regarded as appropriate for exploring indigenous knowledge, which is based on oral tradition. The ecological systems theory and social constructionism as the theoretical frameworks for the study enhanced the researcher's appreciation of and sensitivity to the influence of culture and IKS on the participants' views. The research findings were used to develop an awareness programme for social workers, which was pilot tested with 22 social workers working in the child protection field in the wider Harare area, Zimbabwe. Their feedback on the programme, which formed the second stage of data collection of the study, was obtained through focus group interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The research findings obtained during the first stage of data collection confirmed the encompassing influence of culture and IKS on people's lives. The Tsonga IKS guided various aspects of communities' lives, including their spirituality, beliefs and norms, and manifested in their patterns of family and community life, mentoring and childrearing practices, rituals and ceremonies, agriculture, traditional medicine, and stories, songs and dance, amongst others. The findings showed that the Tsonga culture and IKS were threatened by acculturation, which affected many of the traditional practices. However, their IKS was perceived to be still relevant and the participants advocated for efforts to revive the Tsonga culture and IKS.

It was found that many of the beliefs and practices captured in the Tsonga IKS could create protective environments for children and contribute to child protection. These included the value placed on children, the extended family and community as a safety net for all children, the influence of the traditional justice system, and effective indigenous socialisation practices such as mentoring and age-appropriate teaching methods for children and young people. However, some beliefs and practices of the culture and IKS could be regarded as harmful practices according to the CRC, ACRWC, and modern legislation. These practices reflect some of the public debates on harmful cultural practices, including child marriage, child labour, and gender discrimination.

The awareness programme that were developed based on the above findings and information from literature included themes related to culture and IKS, children's rights and child protection. The social work participants in the pilot testing of the programme confirmed that the programme raised their awareness of IKS and of how elements of IKS could be used in child protection. Their feedback on the programme contents and presentation will inform the

advanced development of the programme.

Based on the research findings, it was concluded that the IKS of the Vatsonga people could contribute to formal child protection systems. It is recommended that social workers and indigenous communities collaborate on the integration of indigenous knowledge into social work and child protection practices. The process should include elements such as clarification of constructs related to child maltreatment, information on the role of social workers, discourse on existing legislation, and frank discussions of cultural practices that can be beneficial or harmful to children. Integration of IKS in social work practice can promote an empowering approach to child protection and a focus on preventive rather than responsive child protection interventions; aspects that relate to the developmental social work approach as well as the increased focus on including African indigenous knowledge in social work training and practice. It is recommended that further studies be conducted on the relevance of IKS for social work and other human service professions.

Key words

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Vatsonga people

Children's rights

Child protection

Social work

Awareness programme

Abbreviations

IKS: Indigenous knowledge systems

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR, 1989)

OHCHR: Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (United Nations)

ACRWC: African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Union, 1990)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am ever indebted to various organisations, government departments, the University of Pretoria and my family. In particular the following people and institutions deserve special mention:

Dr MP le Roux, my supervisor, deserves a special mention. She is an astute academic, patient and caring with an unmistakable mark of a mentor. I am indebted to her for the several hours spent going through my work at various stages of the study, giving timely and frank feedback which resulted in this refined final product. I stole your family time including your weekends to discuss my chapters, yet you did it with diligence without showing any sign of impatience as some of us would naturally do. I am indebted to your whole family, in particular your husband, Frans, your daughters and sons-in-law for the gesture of support in various forms including unaccounted for litres of coffee which kept me energised during my visit to Pretoria. I thank you all the Le Roux family!

The University of Pretoria, Post Graduate Research Scholarships office deserve a very special mention. Without your financial support in form of a bursary the journey was never going to be smooth. Through your support, the journey was an easy walk, allowing me to attend international conferences, purchasing books among other academic necessities. A very big thank you to the entire University of Pretoria. I also wish to acknowledge the role played by Professor A. Lombard, the Head of the Department of Social Work and Criminology. When I got in touch with you for the first time some years back, you were dependable. It is through your guidance and support that I managed to come up with the initial proposal for the Department to consider my application. A big thank you to you Prof Lombard for such the support.

The administration staff of the Department of Social Work and Criminology deserve a special mention. Being an international student, I was clueless about certain directions on the campus, but you were there to help. I would call you even making silly enquiries and demands but you were professional in your conduct.

My family and friends deserve a special mention. My wife Brenda Gombiro-Simbine, you were a pillar of strength. You played a very central role of being my first critique and proof-reader of my work. At times I got busy, coming home very late; worse enough I travelled several times to South Africa and other countries in pursuance of my studies, but you endured the lonely years. You had to content of being a temporary single parent to our only handsome son Thalane. The young man deserves a special mention for being fatherless for years when I was glued to various journals and the computer all in a bid to arrive where I am today. My mother, stepfather and my siblings, you deserve a big thank you. You contributed in your own small

ways, a mere thought of you invoked in me a spirit of renewed energy as I was always reminded of how education could push such families like ours out of deep-seated poverty to another better acceptable standard of living.

To my in-laws, the Gombiro family, a big thank you for the much-needed support you offered over all these years of study.

To the almighty God, the giver of all life and wisdom, without Thee everything could have come to not but with Thy blessing and guidance I have arrived.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	i
Declaration.....	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	vi
CHAPTER 1:	
GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY	
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS	3
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE	6
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION	8
1.5 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	8
1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODS	9
1.7 COMPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT	11
CHAPTER 2:	
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF THE STUDY	
2.1 INTRODUCTION	13
2.2 ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY	14
2.2.1 General systems theory	14
2.2.2 The ecological systems perspective	15
2.2.3 Central concepts to the ecological systems perspective	15
2.2.3.1 Holism	15
2.2.3.2 Social environment	16
2.2.3.3 Transactions	16
2.2.3.4 Energy	17
2.2.3.5 Interface	17
2.2.3.6 Homeostasis	17
2.2.3.7 Adaptation and coping	18
2.2.3.8 Interdependence	18
2.2.4 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory	18
2.2.4.1 The microsystem	19
2.2.4.2 The mesosystem	21
2.2.4.3 The exosystem	21
2.2.4.4 The macrosystem	22
2.2.4.5 The chronosystem	23
2.2.5 The relevance of the ecological systems theory to the study	23
2.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM	24
2.3.1 Variations in social constructs	27

2.3.2	The relevance of social constructionism to the study	28
2.4	SUMMARY	29

CHAPTER 3:

CHILDREN’S RIGHTS AND THE PROTECTION RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

3.1	INTRODUCTION	30
3.2	LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN’S RIGHTS	30
3.3	CHILDREN’S RIGHTS: THE CRC AND THE ACRWC	33
3.3.1	Guiding principles underlying the implementation of children’s rights	34
3.3.2	Children’s protection rights	35
3.3.3	Children’s survival and development rights (provision rights)	36
3.3.4	Children’s participation rights	37
3.3.5	The nexus between different categories of children’s rights	38
3.3.5.1	The nexus between protection and provision rights	38
3.3.5.2	The nexus between protection and participation rights	40
3.3.5.3	The nexus between protection, provision and participation rights	43
3.3.6	Children’s rights and local contexts	45
3.4	THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD AND NON-DISCRIMINATION ...	47
3.4.1	The best interests of the child principle	47
3.4.2	The principle of non-discrimination	50
3.5	THE REALISATION OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS	52
3.6	SUMMARY	56

CHAPTER 4:

CHILD PROTECTION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

4.1	INTRODUCTION	58
4.2	CONCEPTUALISING CHILD PROTECTION	58
4.2.1	Child protection and child protection services	58
4.2.2	Levels of intervention	61
4.3	CHILD WELFARE AND CHILD PROTECTION	62
4.3.1	The social worker as role player in child protection	63
4.3.2	From remedial to a developmental approach to social work	65
4.3.3	A developmental approach to child welfare services	69
4.4	CHILD PROTECTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA	72
4.5	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS INFLUENCING CHILD PROTECTION	75
4.5.1	The construction of childhood	76
4.5.1.1	African constructions of childhood	78
4.5.1.2	Comparisons of Western and African constructions of childhood	80
4.5.2	The concept of child well-being	83
4.5.3	The concept of equality	86
4.5.4	Child-rearing as a social construct	91
4.5.5	Child protection as a social construct	95

4.6	CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	100
4.7	CHILD PROTECTION IN COUNTRIES RELEVANT TO THE VATSONGA	103
4.7.1	Child protection in the Republic of Mozambique	104
4.7.2	Child protection in the Republic of South Africa	107
4.7.3	Child protection in the Republic of Zimbabwe	109
4.8	SUMMARY	112

CHAPTER 5:

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS)

5.1	INTRODUCTION	113
5.2	IKS AND CULTURE	113
5.2.1	Conceptualising culture	114
5.2.2	Acculturation	116
5.3	THE AFROCENTRIC WORLDVIEW	117
5.3.1	The spirit of <i>ubuntu</i>	119
5.3.2	A holistic worldview and spirituality	122
5.3.3	Traditional healing and medicine	124
5.3.4	A communal worldview	126
5.3.5	The Afrocentric worldview as moral guide	130
5.3.6	African folklore	131
5.3.7	The Afrocentric worldview and social work	133
5.4	THE NATURE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS)	137
5.4.1	Defining IKS	137
5.4.2	Sources and the manifestation of IKS	138
5.4.3	Characteristics of IKS	140
5.4.3.1	Oral transmission	140
5.4.3.2	Local and context specific	141
5.5	AFRICAN IKS	141
5.5.1	The nature of African IKS	141
5.5.2	The sustainability of African IKS	143
5.6	AFRICAN IKS, SOCIAL WORK AND CHILD PROTECTION	145
5.6.1	Principles underlying African IKS and social work	145
5.6.2	Social and economic development	146
5.6.3	Transmission of knowledge	149
5.6.4	Legal systems and human rights	150
5.6.5	African IKS and child protection	153
5.6.6	Consideration of harmful aspects of African IKS	156
5.6.7	Children's rights and harmful cultural practices	158
5.7	CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS	160
5.7.1	An ecological perspective to cultural competence	162
5.7.2	Social constructionism and cultural competence	163

5.8	THE VATSONGA PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA	164
5.8.1	History of the Vatsonga people	165
5.8.2	Tsonga traditions and practices	167
5.9	SUMMARY	170

CHAPTER 6:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1	INTRODUCTION	171
6.2	GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	171
6.3	RESEARCH APPROACH	172
6.4	TYPE OF RESEARCH	173
6.5	RESEARCH DESIGN	175
6.6	RESEARCH METHODS	176
6.6.1	Study population and sampling	177
6.6.2	Data collection	179
6.6.3	Pilot testing	181
6.6.4	Data analysis	181
6.6.5	Trustworthiness	183
6.7	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	185
6.7.1	Avoidance of harm and beneficence	185
6.7.2	Voluntary participation and informed consent	186
6.7.3	Privacy and confidentiality	187
6.7.4	Deception of subjects	187
6.7.5	Compensation	188
6.7.6	Actions and competence of the researcher	188
6.7.7	Publication of findings	189
6.8	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	189
6.9	SUMMARY	190

CHAPTER 7:

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: TSONGA IKS AND CHILD PROTECTION

7.1	INTRODUCTION	192
7.2	EMPIRICAL FINDINGS – FIRST PHASE OF THE STUDY	192
7.2.1	Research site and research participants	193
7.2.2	The empirical findings of phase one of the study	196
7.2.2.1	Theme 1: Conceptualising Tsonga IKS	198
7.2.2.2	Theme 2: Manifestation of Tsonga IKS	204
7.2.2.3	Theme 3: Conceptualising childhood and child well-being	217
7.2.2.4	Theme 4: Child-reading practices	229
7.2.2.5	Theme 5: Indigenous ways of mentoring and socialising children	247
7.2.2.6	Theme 6: Dealing with adversity and social problems	254
7.2.2.7	Theme 7: Perceptions related to children’s rights	263

7.2.2.8	Theme 8: Acculturation and IKS in modern times	269
7.2.2.9	Theme 9: Relevance of Tsonga IKS to child protection and well-being ...	278
7.2.2.10	Theme 10: Recommendations for social workers	288
7.3	SUMMARY	303

CHAPTER 8:

DEVELOPMENT AND PILOT TESTING OF AN AWARENESS PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL WORKERS ON THE ROLE OF IKS IN CHILD PROTECTION

8.1	INTRODUCTION	304
8.2	THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AWARENESS PROGRAMME	304
8.2.1	Rationale for the awareness programme	305
8.2.2	Goal and objectives of the awareness programme	305
8.2.3	Programme development	306
8.2.3.1	Module 1: Indigenous Knowledge Systems, culture and acculturation	307
8.2.3.2	Module 2: The Vatsonga people as a case study for understanding IKS ...	309
8.2.3.3	Module 3: The manifestation of IKS in everyday life	309
8.2.3.4	Module 4: Children's rights	312
8.2.3.5	Module 5: Child protection	315
8.2.3.6	Module 6: IKS in child protection: a Tsonga case study	321
8.2.3.7	Module 7: Suggestions to social workers from IKS experts	328
8.2.4	Facilitation of the programme	331
8.3	EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: PILOT TESTING OF THE PROGRAMME	335
8.3.1	Summary of the research methodology	336
8.3.2	Biographical details and research site	339
8.3.3	Research findings from the pilot test	340
8.3.3.1	Theme 1: Programme presentation	341
8.3.3.2	Theme 2: Programme content	344
8.3.3.3	Theme 3: Programme replication	347
8.3.3.4	Theme 4: The importance of understanding IKS	350
8.3.3.5	Theme 5: Understanding of child protection and children's rights	352
8.3.3.6	Theme 6: Recommendations for further research	359
8.3.4	Discussion of the research findings	363
8.4	SUMMARY	364

CHAPTER 9:

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1	INTRODUCTION	365
9.2	ATTAINMENT OF THE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	365
9.3	KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	368
9.3.1	Key findings related to the literature review	368
9.3.2	Key findings related to the theoretical frameworks of the study	369

9.3.3	Key findings and conclusions: IKS and child protection	370
9.3.3.1	Theme 1: Key findings on the conceptualisation of Tsonga IKS	370
9.3.3.2	Theme 2: Key findings on the manifestation of IKS	371
9.3.3.3	Theme 3: Key findings on the conceptualisation of childhood and child well-being	372
9.3.3.4	Theme 4: Key findings on childrearing practices	373
9.3.3.5	Theme 5: Key findings on indigenous ways of mentoring and socialisation	375
9.3.3.6	Theme 6: Key findings on dealing with social adversity and problems	376
9.3.3.7	Theme 7: Key findings on the perceptions of children's rights	377
9.3.3.8	Theme 8: Key findings on the influence of acculturation on Tsonga IKS ...	378
9.3.3.9	Theme 9: Key findings on the relevance of Tsonga IKS to child protection and child well-being	379
9.3.3.10	Theme 10: Key findings on participants' recommendations for social work	380
9.3.4	Key findings and conclusions: Pilot testing of the awareness programme ..	382
9.3.4.1	Key findings related to the contents of the awareness programme	382
9.3.4.2	Key findings related to child protection and children's rights	383
9.3.4.3	Key findings on the applicability, replicability and relevance of the programme	384
9.3.4.4	Key findings on programme presentation and facilitation	385
9.3.4.5	Key findings on participants' recommendations on programme content	386
9.4	RECOMMENDATIONS	386
9.4.1	Recommendations for an awareness programme for social workers	386
9.4.2	Recommendations for practice and training	387
9.4.3	Recommendations for policy change directives	389
9.4.4	Recommendations for future research	390
9.5	CONCLUDING STATEMENT	391
	REFERENCES	393
	LIST OF TABLES	
	Table 4.1: CRC Ratification and Child Rights Ranking	104
	Table 5.1: Western versus African values	134
	Table 7.1: Biographical details of participants (Tsonga IKS experts)	193
	Table 7.2: Biographical details of participants (child protection workers) ...	195
	Table 7.3: Themes and sub-themes	196
	Table 8.1: Manifestation of IKS	311
	Table 8.2: Categories of children's rights	314
	Table 8.3: Tsonga IKS: Implications for child protection	322
	Table 8.4: Suggestions for social workers: Implications for practice	329
	Table 8.5: Summary of the awareness programme for social workers	333
	Table 8.6: Biographical details of participants in focus groups	339
	Table 8.7: Themes and sub-themes: Pilot test of the programme	340

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Child well-being inputs	86
Figure 8.1: The six-tier system of care	319

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of permission: Director for Child Welfare and Probation Services, Zimbabwe	430
Appendix B: Letter of permission: Secretary for Rural Development, Promotion and Preservation of National Culture and Heritage, Zimbabwe	431
Appendix C: Letter of permission: Embassy of the Republic of Mozambique	432
Appendix D: Letter of permission: National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe	433
Appendix E: Interview schedule: IKS experts	434
Appendix F: Interview schedule: child protection workers	435
Appendix G: Focus group interview guide	436
Appendix H: Letter of approval: Research ethics committee	437
Appendix I: Letter of informed consent: IKS experts	438
Appendix J: Letter of informed consent: child protection social workers	441
Appendix K: Letter of informed consent: social workers in pilot test	444
Appendix L: Letter of agreement: research assistant	447

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

All children have a right to protection. Internationally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 1989) is the supreme document related to children's rights to protection. Regionally, on the African continent, children's rights to protection are largely guided by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (African Union, 1990). Nationally, individual countries uphold children's rights by means of policies and legislation, and by formal child protection services responsible for protecting children who are at risk of maltreatment (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:286).

Children in Africa experience numerous challenges to the realisation of their rights. The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund report, *Children in Africa*, portrays a bleak picture in terms of the health, growth, schooling, and access to drinking water of the rapidly increasing child population in Africa (UNICEF, 2014a). A report on child poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa estimates that in 2012, 216.4 million children under the age of 18 living in the region were regarded as "children in extreme poverty" (Watkins & Quattri, 2016:20). This picture is shared by the United Nations in its report on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as it estimates that in 2019, nearly half (46%) of children came from extremely poor households, only 35 percent of children were covered by formal social protection whereas 36 percent of the world's undernourished children were found in Sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations, 2019:21, 24). Research indicates a strong link between poverty and child maltreatment, and a high number of children in the formal child protection system come from poor families and communities (Conley, 2010:40).

In addition, many African children's rights to protection are affected by their exposure to adverse experiences. These experiences include child labour, armed conflict, and harmful cultural practices such as child marriages, virginity testing and female genital mutilation (FGM), amidst poor access to education and health services (Kaime, 2005:229-230; Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:81; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28; Mwambene & Mawodza, 2017:21). Child marriages remain a common feature of communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the region is lagging behind in terms of birth registrations of its children (United Nations, 2019:32, 55). Adolescent child-bearing is still rampant across Sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations, 2019:26). Furthermore, "[d]eep rooted cultural beliefs and practices ... continue to be prevalent in many places, putting children, especially those from the most marginalized

communities, at harm” (UNICEF, 2017).

The social welfare sector in Sub-Saharan Africa appears to be ill equipped to effectively deliver child protection services, mainly due to a lack of capacity and resources (Davis et al., 2012:32). In their report on Eastern and Southern Africa, UNICEF (2017) indicates that, although there has been significant progress in child protection in this region, the system still lacks specific laws, legal systems and law enforcement mechanisms.

To deal with limited resources, Hepworth, Rooney, Drewberry Rooney and Strom-Gottfried (2017:431) recommend that social workers seek out resources in the natural ecological structures in communities. In addition, it is advised that social workers must be aware that different societies have different understandings of childhood and of social problems, which will influence a society’s views about children and the responsibilities of families and the state towards children (Hepworth et al., 2017:253; Wilson, Ruch, Lymbery & Cooper, 2008:468). Of note, is that it appears that Africa has had intact child protection systems well before colonialism but that these systems have become extinct over time (Mushunje, 2006:16). Before colonisation, traditional African communities had effective systems to care for orphans and for vulnerable children and members of society (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:88). However, with the advent of colonialism and Westernisation, indigenous knowledge and practices became marginalised and even regarded as backward and evil (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:216; Dondolo, 2005:115). Due to the apparent ineffectiveness of Western models of intervention in non-Western contexts, the focus shifted to the inclusion of local or indigenous knowledge in interventions on the African continent (Magid, 2011:136).

Indigenous knowledge refers to the knowledge of a specific group or society that developed through their history and contains their cultural beliefs, traditions and ways of life (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:215). Indigenous knowledge includes aspects such as a group or society’s traditional governance and legal systems, traditional medicine, agriculture, folklore and cultural beliefs, value systems and practices, and entails strategies for the survival and sustainable development of the group or society (Mapara, 2009:140; Ossai, 2010:4-5; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1). Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) provides measures for communities to deal with practical situations and cope with adverse circumstances (Lunga, 2015:206-207; Nabudere, 2006 in Teffo, 2013:189), and are still observed in many non-formal support systems in African communities (*cf.* Makhubele, 2008:38; Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:87-88; Patel, 2015:90). However, the recognition of IKS and its potential to contribute to social development appears to be overlooked by the social work profession (Patel, 2015:138).

In recent years, debates on the integration of African IKS in social work and other helping professions have gained prominence (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:2). It is believed that the

integration of IKS in social work in Africa can promote the well-being of and support sustainable development in African societies (Muchiri, Murekasenge & Nzisabira, 2019:224; Twesigye, Twikirize, Luwangula & Kitimbo, 2019:145). Culture, IKS and African ethics are argued to be essential elements for successful social work interventions in Africa (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2014 in Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019:1). Thus, the mainstreaming of IKS and culture could be an ingredient for the acceleration of sustainable development and growth in Africa (Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019:1). The attraction of IKS to social work practice has led to the emergence of the indigenisation agenda in social work (*cf.* Gray & Coates, 2010; Kreitzer, 2012; Twikirize, 2014; Spitzer, 2019).

With the focus of this study on child protection, the exploration of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) could provide social workers with insights into how natural resources in communities as well as local constructs of childhood and social problems could be used in enhancing children's rights to protection. Therefore, the goal of the study was to explore how IKS could contribute to the protection of children. The study specifically focused on IKS among the Vatsonga people of Southern Africa. This group resides mostly in Southern Africa and is regarded as an under-researched group (Hove, 2012:6; Levine, 2005:210; Malaza, 2012:7; Manganye, 2011:5). Based on the findings of the study, the researcher developed an awareness programme for social workers to raise their awareness of how IKS could impact their work in child protection as well as how it could be utilised to realise children's right to protection.

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts are relevant to the study:

- **Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)**

Indigenous knowledge points to knowledge that is available in a country, area, or region, and in its history, culture and memory (Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:227). This knowledge is therefore a unique knowledge of a specific culture or society (Fernandez, 1994 in Shokane & Masoga, 2018:6). Indigenous knowledge "includes the cultural traditions, values, beliefs and worldviews of local peoples, as being distinguished from Western scientific knowledge" (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:7). The United Nations (2005:2) use the term 'traditional knowledge' to refer to "the complex bodies and systems of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations which are maintained and developed by local or indigenous communities through their history." Following the concept of 'systems of knowledge', Magid (2011:137) uses the term African indigenous knowledge systems (AIKS) to refer to what a host of authors call indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). African indigenous knowledge systems are loosely defined as

community-based knowledge which is informed by and relate to all domains of life and the environment in the African context. African indigenous knowledge systems are holistic; embedded in customs, cultural practices, rituals, oral stories; and no single person can know them all (Magid, 2011:138). In this study, the term 'indigenous knowledge systems' (IKS) will be used to refer to a particular body of indigenous knowledge.¹

- **Child protection**

In their Child Protection Information Sheet, UNICEF (2006) defines child protection as “preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage.” The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2016) defines child protection as “the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. It involves measures and structures designed to prevent and respond to abuse and neglect.”

Child protection services refer to services, programmes, measures and interventions formulated, designed and implemented to protect, promote and fulfil children’s rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:286, UNICEF, 2013a:7). Kirst-Ashman (2013:286) describes child protection services as “interventions aimed at protecting children at risk of maltreatment.” The author refers to child maltreatment as an umbrella term for physical, sexual and psychological abuse, child neglect and psychological maltreatment (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:282). The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, emphasises that child protection needs to include a focus on the domains of care and justice, the strengthening of the family’s and community’s protective capacities, and the collaboration between allied systems, including health, education and social protection (UNICEF, 2013a:7). In line with the focus of this study on the potential contribution of IKS to child protection, the researcher adopts a view of child protection as formal and informal strategies to protect children from all forms of maltreatment and to promote their wellbeing.

- **Child protection system**

It appears that there is no internationally accepted definition of child protection systems (Davis et al., 2012:13). The Inter-Agency Group on Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (Davis et al., 2012:8) defines child protection systems or the child protection workforce as follows:

¹ As IKS can be regarded as a (singular) body of knowledge, it will be referred to in the singular form.

The child protection social service workforce is an inclusive term that includes all categories of people who work on behalf of vulnerable children and families. This includes a range of providers and actors, paid and unpaid, both informal and traditional such as family and kinship networks, community volunteers as well as formal, employed professional and paraprofessional workers.

In this study, a child protection system will refer to formal and informal measures and structures to protect children from all forms of maltreatment and promote their well-being.

- **Social work**

The National Association of Social Work (in Kirst-Ashman, 2013:6) provides the following definition of social work:

Social work is the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favorable to this goal. Social work practice consists of the professional application of social work values, principles, and techniques.

Social work aims to promote the well-being of people and communities, to enhance their quality of life, and to work towards social and economic justice and the eradication of poverty (Hepworth et al., 2017:3). In the field of child welfare, social work aims to promote a healthy environment, to empower families, to meet children's needs, and to protect children and safeguard them from various forms of abuse and neglect (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:280). Kirst-Ashman, 2013:295) highlights the role of the social worker in advocating for children's rights.

- **Programme**

Kirst-Ashman (2013:219) refers to a programme as an intervention to meet certain goals to address problems such as child maltreatment and improve people's lives. In social work, the development of programmes is often aimed to address a gap in services, for example programmes to support culturally appropriate interventions (Hepworth et al., 2017:33). In this study a programme will refer to set of guidelines to enhance the awareness of social workers on the use of IKS to inform child protection strategies, based on Tsonga IKS.

- **The Vatsonga people**

The Vatsonga people are an ethnic group inhabiting Sub-Saharan Africa in countries such as Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and Zambia (Mathebula, Nkuna, Mabasa & Maluleke, 2007:1). Debates in literature show that the Vatsonga people were formed by two main groups which are the Rhonga, meaning people of the East, and the Tsonga, meaning the subjects or followers of Soshangane (Malaza 2012:7). South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique are indicated as the three countries in Southern Africa with the largest

populations of the Vatsonga people (Malaza, 2012:7). The empirical research for this study was conducted in Tsonga communities in Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

- **Southern African region**

Encyclopaedia Britannica (2014) defines Southern Africa as the southernmost region of the African continent. The region includes the countries in which the Vatsonga people primarily live, which is Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Zambia (Mathebula et al., 2007:1). These countries are also member states of the Southern African Development Community; a regional economic community promoting economic development and peace and security among its 15 member countries (Southern African Development Community [SADC]).

1.3 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

While there is a rapid increase in the child population in Africa, children on the continent are exposed to a host of adverse circumstances that negatively affect their health, development, education, and living conditions (UNICEF, 2014a). For children in Sub-Saharan Africa, factors such as extreme poverty, poor nourishment, poor access to education and health services, exposure to child labour and armed conflict as well as to harmful cultural practices, affect their development and well-being, and infringe on their human rights (Kaime, 2005:229-230; Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:81; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28; Mwambene & Mawodza, 2017:21; United Nations, 2017:3-4, 16; Watkins & Quattri, 2016:20). By itself, poverty is associated with a higher prevalence of child maltreatment (Conley, 2010:40).

Although there have been concerted efforts in Eastern and Southern Africa to ensure children's rights to protection, the region still lacks an efficient child protection system (UNICEF, 2017). Several gaps and challenges in child protection services in the Sub-Saharan Africa have been identified (Davis et al., 2012:13). These include a lack of resources; failure to include children and caregivers as community actors in promoting child protection; a lack of coordination between formal and informal child protection systems; and a lack of strengths-based interventions to build resilience and empower families and communities to form part of the child protection workforce.

Social workers are tasked with the responsibility to protect children, to meet their needs, and to advocate for the rights of children, including their rights to be protected against child maltreatment. These tasks are often implemented in welfare contexts characterised by shrinking resources (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:280, 295). Involving the natural ecological structures in communities is recommended as a strategy for social workers to deal with limited resources (Hepworth et al., 2017:431). In this respect, Mushunje (2006:16) indicates that African

societies had effective child protection systems before colonialism, however these systems have since become extinct.

The researcher therefore wished to explore whether IKS could be used as a strategy to address limitations in the child protection system. Indigenous knowledge provides insight into the traditions, values, beliefs and worldviews associated with a culture (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:7). Magid (2011:136) proposes that whilst IKS have claimed its space as a credible source of knowledge which can be applied to the development process of Africa, it still needs to be embraced and recognised. Research on IKS has been dominated by a focus on climate change and adaptation, agriculture, environmental management, sexual and reproductive health, and traditional maternal health care (*cf.* Briggs, 2005; Chiwanza, Musingafi & Mupa, 2013; Makhubele, 2011; Mapara, 2009; Ossai, 2010).

In recent decades there has been an increased call for the social work profession in Africa to incorporate indigenous knowledge to provide services relevant to the African people whom they serve. To this end, Kreitzer (2012:77) and Patel (2015:138) posit that the inclusion of indigenous ways of knowing in social work has been largely ignored. Social work has been part of the abusive system to indigenous people in the context of Australia, thus pursuing IKS can vindicate the profession from its oppressive past (Ife, 2016:3-8). Therefore, it is important to explore and validate indigenous knowledge so that local people's own strengths, resources and talents can be used in locally relevant social work intervention (Mataira, 2002, Handley et al., 2009 in Shokane & Masoga, 2018:4). In the Global Definition of Social Work (2014) as adopted by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of SSW (IASSW), indigenous knowledge is stated as one of the theories underpinning social work (IFSW, 2019).

Ross (2008:368) notes that social work needs to formulate African social work models which do not exclusively rely on countries in the North and, as such, Africa needs to rely on its indigenous best practices, indigenous knowledge and cultures. Considering that different societies have different views on children, on family and state responsibilities for children, and on the nature of social problems (Hepworth et al., 2017:253; Wilson et al., 2008:468), IKS can provide insight into contextual factors that relate to child protection. The inclusion of African indigenous knowledge in social work can enhance the provision of culturally relevant social work services (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:13). The influence of the socio-cultural context on individuals and groups will be discussed in Chapter 2, in which the ecological systems theory and social constructionism will be discussed as the theoretical frameworks of the study.

The study focused on the IKS of the Vatsonga people; a group that lives mostly in Southern Africa (Malaza, 2012:7), and specifically on the Vatsonga people residing in Zimbabwe and

Mozambique. The Vatsonga ethnic group across Sub-Saharan Africa is under-researched and their history is regarded as inadequately recorded (Hove, 2012:6; Levine, 2005:210; Manganye, 2011:5). In a literature search on electronic platforms such as Ebscohost and Google Scholar, the researcher could find no studies that focussed on the potential role of Tsonga IKS in child protection.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research was guided by the following research question:

How can Tsonga Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) contribute to child protection and inform an awareness programme for social workers?

The following sub-questions are formulated:

- What elements of Tsonga IKS are relevant to children's right to protection?
- What elements of Tsonga IKS could enhance or hamper children's right to protection?
- How could knowledge of IKS be utilised by social workers in the field of child protection?

1.5 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Goal of the study

The goal of the study was to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To theoretically conceptualise IKS with specific reference to children's right to protection.
- To explore and describe Tsonga IKS that could be relevant to children's right to protection from a bio-ecological and social constructionist perspective.
- To identify elements in Tsonga IKS that could enhance or hamper children's right to protection.
- To develop and pilot test an awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection.
- Based on the research findings, to suggest practice guidelines for relevant role players in the child protection field on the use of IKS in child protection.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a constructivist research paradigm which resulted in research participants being engaged as active partners in the formulation of the research problem (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011:7-8). As active role players in knowledge creation, the participants were engaged to present their views on IKS and how IKS could inform child protection strategies for social workers in Southern Africa (De Vos et al., 2011:7). As the Tsonga ethnic group is considered an under-studied group, a qualitative research approach was adopted due to its suitability for studies interested in exploring a phenomenon of which little is known about it (Henn, Wenstein & Foard, 2008:171). In addition, the research approach was suitable given that the researcher sought to collect verbal data to capture the participants' experiences and the meaning they constructed about the phenomenon under study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:58; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:31).

The study was intended to proffer practical strategies and guidelines for the potential use of IKS in child protection, therefore the type of research was applied research (Bless et al., 2013:59). Furthermore, the study had an explorative and a descriptive purpose as the researcher intended to provide a detailed description of the research topic as a phenomenon about which there was limited information (Babbie, 2013:91; Bless et al., 2013:60-61). Intervention research, as a branch of applied research, was utilised as the researcher developed an awareness programme for social workers on the potential use of IKS in child protection (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:475; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:459). The researcher followed the first four stages of the intervention research process; thus, to the stage in which the developed programme was pilot tested with a sample of child protection social workers (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a: 475-485; Fraser, Richman, Galinsky & Day, 2009:29-32). The last two stages, involving advanced programme development and programme dissemination, did not form part of the study (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:485-487; Fraser et al., 2009: 32-33).

The researcher utilised a case study research design in line with the demands of the qualitative research approach (Maree, 2016:36). The case study design, specifically the instrumental case study, was useful for the in-depth exploration of the phenomenon under study (Babbie, 2013:338; Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321; Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:82-83). The study had three distinct study populations that included persons who would most likely have knowledge, experience and insight in terms of the research topic (Bless et al., 2013:395; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:35). In the first stage of data collection that focused on the Tsonga IKS and child protection in Xitsonga-speaking districts, the two study populations consisted of experts on Tsonga IKS who domiciled in the Chiredzi district (Zimbabwe) and Chokwe district (Mozambique), and social workers working in the field of child protection in these two districts

who were familiar with Tsonga IKS. In the second stage of data collection, involving the pilot testing of the developed awareness programme, the study population consisted of social workers working in the field of child protection in the wider Harare area in Zimbabwe.

Two study samples were recruited for the first stage of data collection. Key informant and snowball sampling were used to recruit 40 Tsonga community IKS experts (Babbie, 2013:129; McKenna & Main, 2013:116), and purposive and availability sampling were used to recruit 11 child protection social workers within the mentioned districts (Bless et al., 2013:172, 176; Strydom & Delport, 2011:392). The second stage of data collection involved a sample of 22 social workers who were purposively selected (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392). Permission were obtained from the relevant authorities to conduct the research in the areas.

Data collection methods relied predominantly on interviewing, and all the interviews were audio-recorded with permission granted by the participants (Greeff, 2011:342). In the first stage of data collection, semi-structured interviews guided by interview schedules were used to collect data of the experiences and views of the community IKS experts and the social workers on the research topic (Greeff, 2011:351-352). The interviews, although time consuming, allowed the researcher with flexibility to explore different themes found to be vital to the investigation (Bless et al., 2013:216). In the second data collection stage, focus group interviews were used to collect data from social workers who attended the designed awareness programme, which were presented in a group setting. Focus groups were adopted for its known advantage for exploring different ideas and opinions on an aspect, including on materials being pilot tested (Greeff, 2011:362). The researcher formulated an interview guide with questions meant to obtain feedback on the participants' experiences of the programme (Greeff, 2011:369). The researcher conducted a pilot study to determine whether sufficient data could be collected by the data collection instruments (Bless et al., 2013:394).

Data were analysed through thematic analysis, following the different steps in the iterative process in Creswell's (2009) model of data analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:109; Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:403). The data of the two stages of data collection were analysed separately. Trustworthiness was ensured by strategies such as reflexivity, peer debriefing and rich description of the research findings (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006:440; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195). Applicable research ethical considerations were strictly adhered to (Bless et al., 2013:25; Strydom, 2011:113). A detailed discussion of the research methods is presented in Chapter 6 of the research report.

1.8 COMPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report is presented in nine chapters.

Chapter 1 gives a general introduction and orientation to the study. The chapter contains a general overview of the research topic and definitions of the key concepts. This is followed by the problem statement and rationale for the study, the research questions and goal and objectives of the study. The chapter is concluded with a brief summary of the research methodology of the study.

Chapter 2 contains information on the theoretical frameworks that guided the study. Two theoretical frameworks, namely the ecological systems theory and social constructionism are discussed in the chapter and their relevance to the study is reflected upon.

Chapter 3 largely entails a review of literature on children's rights and the protection rights of children. An overview of the rights of children as documented in international and regional policies is provided. The chapter is concluded with a section on the realisation of children's rights in Africa.

In **Chapter 4** the researcher continues with literature review with a conceptualisation of child protection and the role of social work in the protection of children. An overview of social constructions that can influence child protection is discussed and child protection systems in Sub-Saharan are discussed, including a brief overview of child protection in the three countries in which the Vatsonga people mostly live, namely South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Chapter 5 contains a detailed discussion of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). As a background to the discussion of IKS, the relation between IKS and culture is discussed with emphasis on the Afrocentric worldview that characterises African cultures. Subsequently, IKS is discussed. The last part of the chapter focuses on African IKS, social work and child protection, and a discussion of cultural competence in social work. The chapter is concluded with a brief overview of the Vatsonga people of Southern Africa as the group whose IKS were relevant to the study.

Chapter 6 contains a detailed discussion of the research methodology by focusing on the following: the research approach, type of research, research design and the research methods, including the study population and sampling, data collection, pilot testing, data analysis and trustworthiness. The chapter is concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

In **Chapter 7** the researcher presents the qualitative research findings of the first stage of data collection of the study. The findings are based on the data collected during the interviews with the experts on Tsonga IKS and with the social workers working with Vatsonga people in two rural districts in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. These findings were used in the development of the awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of IKS to child protection.

Chapter 8 contains information on the development and the content of the awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection, followed by the research findings based on the feedback of the social work participants who attended the pilot testing of the programme.

Chapter 9, the final chapter, contains the key findings and conclusions of the study. The researcher provides recommendations in terms of the refinement of the awareness programme for social workers, for policy, for social work practice and training, and for future research. Furthermore, the attainment of the goal and objectives of the study will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is vital to make explicit the theoretical framework upon which a research study is based (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karrick, 2009:198). A theory guides the researcher in understanding or explaining a phenomenon in a certain context (De Vos & Strydom, 2011b:38). McLeod (2013:68) believes that a lack of a theoretical framework will hamper the researcher's ability to conduct a productive research study. The focus of the study was on the potential contribution of IKS to the protection of children due to the many challenges that child protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa are faced with amidst a high incidence of adversity that increases the risk of child maltreatment (Davis et al., 2012:13; UNICEF, 2014a).

IKS is grounded in the history, culture and memory of a specific country or region (Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:227). Recognising that culture influences the worldview of specific groups, including their worldview about families, children and social problems, Hepworth et al. (2017:253, 433) emphasise that social workers need to familiarise themselves with the local culture, including the values, norms, social and political structures, and the finer nuances of the culture. The researcher identified the *ecological systems theory* and *social constructionism* as theoretical frameworks that could guide the exploration and description of the potential role of IKS in child protection, specifically within the context of the Tsonga culture.

According to the ecological systems theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner, in which the impact of the different interacting levels of the child's environment on the developing child is portrayed, culture is situated in the outermost ecological level and thus "blankets all of those interacting levels" (Henderson & Thompson, 2016:46). Bronfenbrenner's theory provides insight into the encompassing influence of culture, and thus of IKS, on all aspects of the environment, including aspects that can relate to the protection of children. Moore (2016:475) explains that social constructionism focuses on "the important role that social and cultural contexts play in the way we interpret the world or create meaning" as a result of the interactions between people and their social and cultural environments. Social constructionism could provide a better understanding of the influence of culture and IKS on people's worldview, including their views related to children, families and problems. The two theories complement each other, with social constructionism giving an expanded explanation of the influence of the socio-cultural context explained in the ecological systems theory (Moore, 2016:475). Both these theories provided frameworks for understanding the phenomenon being studied, as will be discussed in this chapter.

2.2 ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

The ecological systems theory² by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1973, 1979), a developmental psychologist, has had a significant impact on the adoption of an ecological perspective by the social work profession as well as the field of child and youth care (Besthorn, 2013:175). The ecological systems theory is relevant to the social work profession as ecological theory, systems theory and the person-in-environment concept distinguish the profession's approach from the approaches followed by other helping professions (Besthorn, 2013:173). Ecosystems theory developed from two separate theories, namely general systems theory and the ecological perspective (DuBois & Miley, 2014:60; Mbedzi, 2018:88).

2.2.1 General systems theory

Modern systems theory largely developed from the social systems theory of the North American sociologist Talcot Parsons (1951) and the general systems theory of Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), an Austrian-born biologist (Besthorn, 2013:174). Parsons, recognising the subjective dimension of human systems, described the inter-relational and interactional dynamics of people in their social systems. Bertalanffy's general systems theory, in reaction to conventional views of systems as closed, static and resistant to change, emphasised creativity and growth over time. The general systems theory is famed for its focus on the complex and diverse relationship between the person and the physical and social environment (DuBois & Miley, 2014:60). General systems theory played an important role in the adoption of a more holistic view of people and had a substantial influence on different disciplines, for example psychology, social work, sociology, economics, anthropology, biology, physics and engineering (Besthorn, 2013:174; Moore, 2016:471). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2010:9) describe the relevance of systems theory to the social work profession as follows: "Systems theory provides social workers with a conceptual framework that can guide how they view the world."

The ecological perspective in social work practice evolved from general systems theory (Ungar, 2002:481; Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016:33). The ecological perspective integrates concepts from both ecology and general systems theory, and focuses on the person in the environment, thus on understanding human interactions within the environment (DuBois & Miley, 2014:60; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:11).

²Bronfenbrenner's theory is described as the *bio-ecological theory*, *ecological theory*, *ecological systems theory*, *ecosystemic theory*, *bioecological model* in different literature sources (cf. Arnett, 2016:24; Berk, 2013:26; Christensen, 2010:107; Hardman, 2012:48; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:46; Johnson, 2008:1; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:7). In this study, the term *ecological systems theory* will be used.

2.2.2 The ecological systems perspective

There are different versions of ecological systems theory, with scholars giving different explanations of the ecological systems perspective. It is thus imperative to establish a working interpretation of an ecological systems perspective for the study (O'Donoghue & Maidment, 2005:36 in Fadel, 2015:54; Healy, 2005:136; Turner, 2005:112). The point of departure is that the ecological systems perspective relies heavily on borrowed features of the general systems theory such as the concepts of boundaries, wholeness, sub and supra systems (Greene, 2008:173-179; Visser, 2007:23-29). Social work is familiar with the ecological systems perspective with its emphasis on the relationship between the person and the environment and how the two shape and influence each other (Gitterman & Germain, 2008:53).

The ecological systems perspective enables the social worker to consider both the person and environmental factors (Fadel, 2016:53). Social work interventions thus focus on both the human systems (individuals, groups, families) and their environment (organisations, cultural practices, knowledge base, communities) (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010:24). Jenson and Fraser (2011:17) posit that there are various versions of the ecological systems perspective. O'Donoghue and Maidment (2005:36-37 in Fadel, 2015:54) identify three such versions as (i) Siporin's (1975) ecological systems model, (ii) Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, also known as bio-ecological theory, and (iii) Meyer's (1983) ecological systems approach. All these versions emphasise that service users should always be assessed and assisted in the context of their environment. For this study, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is adopted, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

2.2.3 Central concepts to the ecological systems perspective

Some ecological concepts, namely holism, the social environment, transactions, homeostasis, input, output, energy, interface, adaptation, and interdependence, are highlighted as being central to the ecological systems perspective (Besthorn, 2013:178; DuBois & Miley, 2014:60-62; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:11; Mbedzi, 2019:90-93; Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016:33). These concepts enhance the understanding of the ecological perspective.

2.2.3.1 Holism

A social system is defined as an organised and enduring whole, with components that interact in a unique manner that distinguishes one system from another (Anderson et al., 1999 in DuBois & Miley, 2014:60). The ecological perspective proposes that each system forms a whole or holistic entity, consisting of individual parts that fit in and function as part of the larger whole (Besthorn, 2013:178). All systems are made up of different sub-systems and, on the other hand, are sub-systems in larger systems or environments (Van Wormer & Besthorn, 2011 in Besthorn, 2013:178; DuBois & Miley, 2014:60-61).

Social workers need to understand the totality of a system. To understand a person as a whole system, the social worker must look at aspects such as the health and social circumstances of the person (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:10). In addition, the person forms part of a family system, which again functions within a community as the wider system (DuBois & Miley, 2014:60-61). Each of these systems can include organised and interdependent parts, such as in a family system, or less structured and autonomous parts, such as neighbourhoods. Systems theory promotes a holistic view of intervention, taking into account that the system will achieve more if all parts work together (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61; Moore, 2016:471). Therefore, “a systems approach guides social workers beyond a seemingly simplistic presenting problem. Social workers utilising a systems approach such as the ecological systems theory view problems as being interrelated with all other aspects of the system” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:10). The social worker needs to view the person as an integral part of their social context, hence maintaining the concept of holism.

2.2.3.2 Social environment

The social environment refers to the physical and social setting in which a person lives, including the home, type of work, the systems they interact with (person-in-environment) such as family, friends, social services, religion, as well as the social institutions such as health care and educational systems and laws and social norms of society (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2013:11-12). The social environment thus includes the societal and cultural settings in which a person lives (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016:33). The environment presents supporting systems for individuals to cope with shocks as these systems are expected to supply energy (resources) to the individual and vice-versa, through transactions between them (DuBois & Miley, 2019:60).

2.2.3.3 Transactions

People continuously interact and communicate with one another in the social environment. In a process of give and take, they offer, share, accept or reject resources. All systems are separated by boundaries, which differentiate them from other systems. Boundaries can be open or closed, and thus influence the interactions or the exchange of energy or resources between systems (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61). The interaction between human systems and the exchange of resources between systems are referred to as transactions (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:12). Transactions are therefore dynamic. Depending on the nature of the interaction, transactions may be either positive or negative. A positive transaction may be acquiring employment while a negative transaction may relate to being informed that one’s partner wants a divorce (Mbedzi, 2019:91). The reciprocity of these transactions within and between systems conjures up the notions also captured by *ubuntu*

theorists (*cf.* Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019:28; Mupedziswa, Rankopo & Mwansa, 2019:29; Van Breda, 2019:439). *Ubuntu* will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

2.2.3.4 Energy

Transactions are based on energy, which refers to “the natural power of active involvement among people and their environment” (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016:33). Energy occurs through input or output. The energy, resources, information or communication that are received from other systems, known as *input*, can include positive aspects such as material resources or adverse aspects such as traumatic experiences or adverse social environments. Inputs can thus bring advantages or changes to the system. Conversely, *output* entails the system’s responses to the environment, including energy, resources and communication (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:10). The exchange of energy between systems enhances the level of energy in each of the respective systems, while a lack of energy resulting from interaction with other systems will deplete the energy reserves of the system and negatively affect their functioning (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61).

Feedback refers to a transactional process in which information is transferred, according to which systems can evaluate their situation, take corrective actions, and make changes to the system (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61). Feedback is related to the mutual effects that systems can have on one another. People may be products of the transactions that shape their environments; however, they are also active participants in these transactions that can influence the environment that they live in (DuBois & Miley, 2014:62).

2.2.3.5 Interface

The interface refers to “the exact point at which the interaction between an individual and the environment takes place” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:12). To determine the most appropriate interactions for change, the interface must be in clear focus. The interface, or the actual problem or target for intervention, must be identified if a change is to occur; otherwise, an intervention will amount to a waste of energy and time (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:12; Mbedzi, 2019:93).

2.2.3.6 Homeostasis

One of the key notions of ecological theory is that systems constantly strive towards homeostasis or equilibrium (Besthorn, 2013:178). Homeostasis, a central concept of general systems theory, entails that systems strive to remain relatively stable and constant, thus in a state of balance (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:10; Mbedzi, 2019:94). However, homeostasis can also be harmful when a system attempts to maintain a negative situation (Mbedzi, 2019:94).

To maintain the balance amongst parts and ensure the coherence of the whole system, each part of the system is required to perform a specific role or function (Besthorn, 2013:178).

2.2.3.7 Adaptation and coping

Adaptation entails that a person or system changes to adapt to a new situation or circumstances to maintain an effective level of functioning (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:12). Efforts to adapt involve the use of energy. Social work focuses on helping people to adapt optimally to their current situation (Mbedzi, 2019:92).

Coping involves how people deal with negative experiences. Coping is therefore related to adaptation; however, it involves a struggle with problems (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:12). Social workers thus have an important role in helping people to enhance their coping skills (Mbedzi, 2019:92). One of the key ideas of an ecological systems perspective is the belief that systems have an adaptive nature (Besthorn, 2013:178). This notion holds that systems have built-in mechanisms that support them with adaptation and coping to maintain stability over time. This perspective emphasises that change is a gradual process.

2.2.3.8 Interdependence

Interdependence refers to the reciprocal dependency of people on other individuals, groups for energy, input and services (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2013:12). People are therefore dependent on others for their survival. Mbedzi (2019:93) relates interdependence with the African concept of *ubuntu*. The increased recognition of *ubuntu* philosophy as a practice theory of social work has gained traction as posited by Van Breda (2019:439).

In conclusion, the ecological systems approach entails a combination of social, biological, psychological and emotional development, and dictates that social work interventions should be contextually sensitive to the people's culture, community and families (Bragin, 2011, Rathus, 2011 in Fadel, 2015:54). Also, the ecological systems approach has influenced the advent of social development interventions with families and communities and is in line with the social work view of human beings as naturally good and capable and, when their environment is addressed, they can adapt and restore their functioning (Ambrosino et al., 2012, Segal et al., 2010 in Fadel, 2015:55).

2.2.4 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory provides a helpful framework for gaining an ethno-centric comprehension of the reciprocal relationship between children and their environment. The ecological systems theory views children as developing in multiple ecological levels, with the child at the centre of the process of development (Henderson &

Thompson, 2016:46; Waller, 2009:11). The theory advances that the child's development is influenced by three major factors, namely (i) the interaction of the biological and psychological features of the child, (ii) the conditions in their multi-faceted environment, and (iii) the ever-changing interaction between the biological and psychological features of the child (Parrish, 2010, Jenson & Fraser, 2011 in Fadel, 2015:54).

In this study, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory serves as a conceptual framework for understanding the potential contribution of IKS to child protection issues in the Southern African context, based on the IKS of the Vatsonga people. The theory is valued for its ability to facilitate an understanding of the child-environment interactions to produce child development outcomes (Berns, 2016:20). Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory to explain how everything within a child and his/her environment affects how the child grows and develops (Christensen, 2010:107; Johnson, 2008:1). The theory highlights the interrelatedness of the child's biologically influenced disposition and environmental influences in shaping children's development (Berk, 2013:26).

To explain contextual influences on the developing child, Bronfenbrenner divided the environment into five nested structures, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:40). Although contemporary scholars mostly recognise four levels, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem (Christensen, 2010:102; Saraw, 2009:2), all five levels will affect the development and well-being of the child. Some authors argue that Bronfenbrenner deconstructs society into the four interlocking systems with the child at the epicentre of the systems (Houston, 2002:307; Keenan & Evans, 2010:35). The four layers surrounding the child represent different aspects of the environment and it is important to acknowledge that the environment is not static but is constantly changing (Keenan & Evans, 2010:35). Thus, for Keenan and Evans (2010:35) the chronosystem is not considered as a layer in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory but indicates change that occurs over time.

2.2.4.1 The microsystem

The microsystem is the innermost layer of the child's environment, which is the immediate setting in which the child lives and interacts with, and includes the family, the school, day-care centre and caregivers (Berk, 2013:27; Berns, 2010 in Fadel, 2015:74; Louw, Louw & Kail, 2014:29). The microsystem thus involves the systems that people are in contact with in their daily lives. Sigelman and Rider (2012:9) view the microsystem is the immediate environment, both physical and social, in which the child interacts face-to-face with other people in the system. As a social actor, the child influences and is also influenced by others within the family, the school, community, and peers. The child is not a mere recipient of action from others but

also impacts the aspects in the environment within the microsystem, which indicates a bi-directional relationship between the child and others in the immediate environment (Keenan & Evans, 2010:35-36). Bronfenbrenner emphasised the bi-directional nature of relationships in the microsystem, for example that parents will affect the child's behaviour while the child's disposition will also influence the behaviour of the parents (Louw et al., 2014:29).

The microsystem is considered as the hub of socialisation as it harbours agents of socialisation such as the family, extended family, community, the school, religion, and peers (Berns, 2010 in Fadel, 2015:74). These agents foster child development and child growth. The quality of interaction between the child and his or her environment therefore determines child development and child growth (Berns, 2013:18; Louw et al., 2014:29; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:7). The microsystem consists of the systems which frequently interact with the person and influences their sense of identity and level of functioning (Louw et al., 2014:29). Interestingly, child treatment or ill-treatment is linked to how the child acts and reacts to the agents of socialisation within the microsystems, hence making it vital to explore this layer of the ecological systems (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010:63). In addition, the microsystem is the hub of resources needed for better childcare and child protection, which will enhance children's development (Connolly & Eagle, 2009:552).

The family is singled out as the most important microsystem given that child survival, care, protection, health, education, and other key services are hinged on a family (Berns, 2013:18). For ethnic minorities, especially those in rural Africa such as the Vatsonga, the extended family forms an important part of the immediate caregiving environment due to their active involvement in child-rearing and care and must be considered in planning social work services for vulnerable children (Lewis & Greene, 2009:232; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:26).

An ecological systems approach allows the social worker to holistically consider child-family interactions through paying attention to the family and patterns of power, privilege and oppression and how these factors affect a family's social functioning (Lewis & Greene, 2009:233). The patterns of interaction within the family, such as power dynamics, communication styles and the family's conflict resolution skills, can for example be a determinant of the prevalence of violence in the family (Cottrell & Monk, 2004 in Rapholo & Makhubele, 2018:313). Furthermore, how families impact the child's development is determined by the resources they have. In this respect, poor households are more likely than rich households to present with violent behaviour, negligence and maltreatment of children as they try to deal with stresses related to economic hardships (Shaffer, 2006:30). In addition, such households are characterised by harsh parenting styles (Black & Oberlander, 2011:494).

2.2.4.2 The mesosystem

The second level, the mesosystem, refers to the connections and interaction which takes place between the microsystems such as the child, the family, the extended family, the school, the child's peers and the neighbourhood (Lewis & Greene, 2009:233; Louw et al., 2014:29). This brings to the fore that there is a connection between the various elements of the environment in which the child lives; for example, a child's progress in learning to read at school would depend on the activities which take place at home (Berk, 2013:27; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:7). Therefore, experiences in one context will affect those in another.

The mesosystem provides a channel of feedback through which information and resources are shared within the ecological systems (Woolley, 2008:219). Issues of boundaries and feedback as explained in the discussion of the concepts underlying ecological theory, apply to the mesosystem. Child development and growth is likely to be realised in circumstances whereby the mesosystem offers strong and supportive feedback between people in their multiple microsystems (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010:63). The mesosystem provides a supportive social protection system that is key in children's development, care and protection. Strong relationships and collaboration between the child's microsystems create a caring environment that contributes to the best interests of children (Rapholo & Makhubele, 2018:315). Berk (2013:27) proposes that the connections between the family and neighbourhood are particularly important for children who grow up in economically disadvantaged contexts. Ethnic minorities in Africa value the dependence of a person on a group and social supporting systems found in the person's environment, as guided by the *ubuntu* philosophy (Chibvongodze, 2016:157). The mesosystem confirms the Afrocentric worldview that it takes a village to raise a child (Keenan & Evans, 2010:36-37).

2.2.4.3 The exosystem

The exosystem is the broader social settings and institutions which may appear to be distant to a child yet has a bearing on the child's development (Keenan & Evans, 2010:37). This level is thus comprised of systems which are not in direct contact with the child on a day-to-day basis, for example, the workplace of a parent, media, school board, neighbours, friends of the family, community services and the extended family (Louw et al., 2014:29; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:7). The exosystem is the setting involving supportive elements for child growth and child development and is made up of both formal and informal support systems (Berk, 2013:28; Keenan & Evans, 2010:37). Formal supports would include community health services, parks, recreation centres, municipality, and the parents' workplace, whereas informal supports can include the extended family, friends and social support networks that can provide advice, friendship and financial assistance (Berk, 2013:28; Keenan & Evans, 2010:37).

Adverse influences in the exosystem, such as poverty, can have negative effects on the developing child (Louw et al., 2014:29). It has been found that children who grow up in families that are socially isolated, that have limited social support networks, and that are faced with problems such as unemployment, are at greater risk of child abuse (Berk, 2013:28). Although the child is not directly involved in the exosystem, social workers need to be aware of factors in the wider environment, or exosystem, that can affect the upbringing of the child (Rapholo & Makhubele, 2018:312).

2.2.4.4 The macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outermost layer in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and refers to the broader context, including politics, economics, culture, ideology, customs, laws or regulations, and religion (Berk, 2013:28; Keenan & Evans, 2010:37). This larger context includes the government, cultural values, beliefs and customs, laws and policies, and wars (Churchill, 2011:19). Thus, this system refers to society itself where culture, subculture and social class are embedded and encompasses the microsystem, mesosystem and the exosystem (Bernstein, Mortimer, Lutfey & Bradley, 2011:40; Shaffer, 2009:88). As the other systems are embedded in the macrosystem as the broadest context in the ecological environment, the elements of the system, including culture, will have a significant influence on the child's development (Louw et al., 2014:29). Thus, the macrosystem portrays the impact of cultural values, customs, laws, and policies in a child's context as having a substantive impact on the development of a child (Houston, 2002:307).

Found in these systems are the material resources, bodies of knowledge, and patterns of social interaction of a specific society (Bernstein et al., 2011:40). Cultural groups adopt a common cultural heritage, identity and values of their particular culture, which will influence people's way of life and aspects such as how children are socialised (Louw et al., 2014:30; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:7). The macrosystem will also influence the priority that society places on children's needs (Berk, 2013:28). It is at the macro level that societal values related to aspects such as gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation are internalised, and cultural values and belief systems related to social issues such as child sexual abuse are evident (Rapholo & Makhubele, 2018:310). It should thus be observed that culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the child's life goals and value system (Bjorklund & Blasi, 2012:70; Newman & Newman, 2015:8). Social workers are thus expected to be culturally sensitive and act as agents of social change through confronting unjust laws and advocate for child-friendly and child-sensitive social policies (Healy, 2005:14; Marsh, 2005:293). In modern society, media, technology, and information has claimed a central role within the child's macrosystem; hence,

its influence in shaping the child's goals and value system cannot be ignored (Alam, Klein & Overland, 2010:1; Cross & Gore, 2012:590).

2.2.4.5 The chronosystem

In essence, the chronosystem is not a layer or level of the ecological systems but represents the time dimension that captures changes in the environment as well as changes in the child's development (Louw et al., 2014:30; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:8). As an example, the child's development occurs over time and age-related changes such as the onset of puberty will impact on the child's later stages of life (Keenan & Evans, 2010:37). Historical events in the environment may include major economic and political events or episodes such as economic depression, world wars and, in the case of Africa, colonialism and the wars of liberation which had a great impact on the children of that period and even in periods to come (Keenan & Evans, 2010:37). The chronosystem also highlights the evolvement of culture over time (Louw et al., 2014:30). Thus, the chronosystem contains historical and developmental time dimensions (Keenan & Evans, 2009:37; Lewis & Greene, 2009:233) and each generation of children will develop within a unique social environment (Louw et al., 2014:30).

The chronosystem demands awareness of the temporal dimension of the ecological systems theory (Louw et al., 2014:30). Social workers need to be aware that changes can occur within the child, for example children's school and friendships may change as they grow older, or within the environment, for example a change in societal norms over time. In the context of this study, historical changes can affect views on children, changes in culture due to acculturation, and the weakening in the role of IKS over time.

2.2.5 The relevance of the ecological systems theory to the study

Child protection as a multifaceted issue needs to be viewed from an ecological perspective to allow a holistic approach that takes into consideration the child and his or her environment and context (Saraw, 2009:2). The ecological perspective can assist child protection practitioners to identify, assess, understand and address the complex dynamics and interactions between children at risk of maltreatment and their environment (Leon, Lawrence, Molina & Toole, 2008:145). Furthermore, this perspective views children and adolescents as active participants in their development, rather than "passive recipients of external influences" (Arnett, 2016:26). There is an increasing emphasis on a systems approach to child protection to provide a holistic rather than a fragmented child protection response (Davis et al., 2012:6-7). In agreement, Rapholo and Makhubele (2018:310) state that although the ecological systems theory was not designed to focus on child protection issues such as child sexual abuse, it provides a lens for understanding the multiple contextual factors that are involved in social work interventions.

According to Leon et al. (2008:147) critics of the ecological systems theory challenge its conceptual usefulness as a theoretical framework, arguing that it is a mere perspective that lacks empirical support. Houston (2002:308) suggests that, whilst Bronfenbrenner has made a great contribution in bringing to the fore the four interlocking systems, his theory does not fully explain the interaction between the macrosystem and the exosystem (civil society) as areas for synergies and points of resistance. Also, the legitimating role of the state is not fully acknowledged. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's theory is criticised for being a mere rhetoric call about re-directing resources to disadvantaged children but does not specify mechanisms through which resources can be re-directed (Houston, 2002:308).

Contrary to this view, Darling (2007:203) views the ecological systems theory as a scientific approach emphasising the interrelationship of different processes and their contextual variations. Larkin (2006:2) argues that social work as a profession emerged to address the person-environment interaction, which then reflects the ecological systems theory as relevant to social work interventions. In the context of the study, the ecological systems theory can help the researcher to understand how the cultural context, norms and IKS (macrosystem), can influence child protection issues in the wider social settings (exosystem), the immediate family, school and neighbourhood in which the child lives (microsystem) and the interrelationship between the latter systems (the mesosystem). It can also shed light on how or whether changes over time (chronosystem) could affect the influence of culture, thus IKS, on individuals, groups, and communities.

The notion that the ecosystemic approach leans on constructivism, which emphasises that a person's 'reality' is created by what he or she observes (Moore, 2016:471, 479), shows a link to social constructionism, the second theoretical framework for the study. Moore (2016:473) notes that the term 'constructivism' is at times used to refer to social constructionism, however, there are underlying differences between the terms.

2.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Social constructivism proposes that people create their realities based on what they observe, indicating that individuals create a subjective reality without their views necessarily showing agreement with those of others (Moore, 2016:473-474). A constructivist approach holds the view that people's realities are created within the individual, whereas social constructionism emphasises that people's realities are created through relationships and interactions among people within their cultural and social context (Schenk, 2019:71). Social constructionism therefore considers the significant influence of social and cultural contexts on the way that people interpret their world (Moore, 2016:475).

Iversen, Gergen and Fairbanks (2005:689) posit that social constructionism has a long history, though it was recently popularised by the work of Kuhn (1962) and Berger and Luckman (1967). Kuhn's argument traces the production of knowledge to communities who communally negotiate rules for how the world can be explained (Iversen et al., 2005:689). Through social constructionism, the positivist worldview of objective reality is constantly being challenged (Lit & Shek, 2002:105). Young and Colin (2004 in Andrews, 2012:29) highlight that although the term 'constructionism' is often used interchangeably with 'constructivism', social constructionism has a social focus whereas constructivism "proposes that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes." Social constructionism thus "focuses on culture and context in understanding what happens in society and in constructing knowledge based on those understandings" (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2011:71).

Social constructionism is a philosophical approach maintaining that reality is uniquely experienced, interpreted, and created by individuals in their social relationships; thus, how people make sense of their world is based on their interactions within a specific social and cultural context (Hall, 2005:2; Moore, 2016:475). Stam (2001:291) argues that social constructionism is sometimes called a movement, a position, a theory, a theoretical orientation, or an approach. Social constructionism views knowledge as constructed as opposed to knowledge as being created by an independent subjective observer (Andrews, 2012:39).

Witkin (1990:38) brought social constructionism into the social work circles and views social constructionism as a meta-theory which is critical for unpacking socio-historical contexts and for offering explanations and descriptions of socially constructed reality. The author further argues that the theory puts attention "to the ways in which knowledge is historically embedded in cultural values and practices ... as a way of explaining past and present knowledge" (Witkin, 1990:38). Most important, social constructionism in social work is concerned with social justice and the marginalisation of minority groups in society (Iversen et al, 2005:690). Foucault (1977) as cited in Iversen et al. (2005:690) asserts that knowledge as viewed from a social constructionist point of view is a source of power that can be used to dominate the minority and the marginalised. Consequently, as this knowledge is conceptualised by the powerful, it is viewed as a super truth and reality that can erode the existing traditions and domination of vulnerable groups (Iversen et al., 2005:690).

McLeod (1997 in Lit & Shek, 2002:108-109) points to five key features of social constructionism:

- It rejects the traditional positivistic approaches to knowledge for being non-reflexive,
- It takes a critical stance on social assumptions of the world which are regarded as reinforcing the interests of dominant groups,
- It upholds the belief that people's understanding of the world is a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups,
- The goal of research and scholarship is not on producing fixed and universally valid knowledge, but to create an appreciation of what is possible,
- It moves towards redefining psychological constructs as produced by social discourse rather than individually constructed processes.

Members of society construct meaning and collectively create their social reality and meanings through constant interactions within their cultural and social context (Moore, 2016:475). Social constructionism places emphasis on people's perceptions and experiences of reality that are formed in interaction within their environment, in which the collectives or social systems reach agreement on how they understand their world (Schenk, 2019:73). Reality is a creation of people when they make meaning, describe, explain or account for the world in which they live; therefore, persons from different cultural contexts may not understand the other's views of the world (Moore, 2016:475). Social constructionism focuses on culture and context to understand one's surroundings and to construct knowledge, and children learn about their ethnic group's culture, traditions, values and IKS through interactions with members of their culture who are more knowledgeable about these aspects (Smith et al., 2011:61, 66).

Burr (2003:2-5) advances that social constructionism is underpinned largely by the following principles:

- It takes a critical stance on what is generally taken for granted about the world,
- It holds a belief that all ways of understanding are culturally and historically relative,
- Knowledge about the world is not derived from an objective nature, but is rather constructed through people's daily interactions,
- Understanding is negotiated through these interactions, so there are multiple realities about the world, which are socially constructed.

Social constructionism focuses on realities that are constructed socially through language as well as social and reflexive processes (Lit & Shek, 2002:9). Therefore, this approach emphasises that there are multiple perspectives, belief systems, views, and explanations of the world. People use stories of their experiences and perceptions in the construction and understanding of their world; thus, language plays a central role in social constructionism (Schenk, 2019:72).

2.3.1 Variations in social constructs

Of relevance to this study, is that concepts such as childhood and child maltreatment are social constructs. *Childhood*, like many phenomena, is socially constructed and not genetic, universal, and biological as advanced by some (Smith et al., 2011:71). Therefore, “ideas of childhood are inextricably linked to a society’s culture and organization” (Descartes, 2012:53). Concerning childhood, social constructionism advances ideas such as the following (Prout & James, 1997:8):

- Childhood is neither a natural nor a universal feature of human groups but is a specific structural and cultural component of given societies,
- Childhood is a variable of social analysis and variety that propose multiple childhoods rather than a single or universal phenomenon as advanced by non-constructionists,
- Children’s peer culture is worthy of studying independently of adults, and
- In terms of research, social constructionism emphasises ethnography rather than surveys and experimental research designs.

In this sense, Descartes (2012:52) explains that age is a social construct based on the norms and values of a specific context, and perceptions of age will thus vary across cultures. Different understandings or constructions of childhood are based on the perspectives of a specific society at a specific time and will determine how families and society think about children (Smith et al., 2011:71; Wilson et al., 2008:468). Although age is generally classified into categories such as childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, “the biological categories of age differ from the social categories” (Descartes, 2012:52).

The social construction of childhood manifests amongst others in the beliefs, cultural norms, laws and policies, and in the daily actions of children and adults in their environment (Moletsane, 2012:250). Attitudes about childhood are influenced by the dominant belief system within a society and are located within the particular social, political, cultural, and economic context. In many societies, age categories are determined by rites of passage, rituals and ceremonies that form part of the culture and belief systems of the society and are furthermore determined by the laws of a particular country (Descartes, 2012:54). Constructions of childhood are therefore not independent from the socio-political, economics and culture of any given context, which then produces constellations on conceptions of child and childhood (Knapp van Bogaert, 2012:17).

Some have argued that the construction of childhood is by and large shaped by prevailing neo-liberal political contexts (Keddel, 2018:93). Childhood could be viewed as a sensitive time in human development characterised by dependence, vulnerability, and innocence (Knapp

van Bogaert, 2012:18; Keddel, 2018:94). Wilson et al. (2008:46) concur that childhood is normally romanticised as an angelic period of innocence and dependency which then elevates their protection as a priority; on the other hand, childhood is also viewed in terms of being a period of irrational thinking, needing discipline and constraint. Thus, viewing a child in terms of dependence and innocence is part of socially constructed views that may not be generalised to all contexts. Knapp van Bogaert (2012:18) advance that childhood is a fluid social construct that is not static but changes with time. The stance that views conceptions of children and childhood as neither fixed nor static and adopts the notions of diverse childhoods, are shared by many (*cf.* Giesinger, 2017:202; Pupavac, 2011:287; Wilson et al., 2008:466).

As mentioned, *child maltreatment* is a social construct; hence, what constitutes maltreatment is a contentious and subjective topic (Conley, 2010:32; D’cruz, 2004:100). In this regard, the cultural context will determine a group’s constructions and perceptions of aspects such as problems, illness as well as of help-seeking (Hepworth et al., 2017:253). The role of culture in the construction of child maltreatment can be understood through social constructionism, which is about “how we as groups or collectives, as social systems, reach agreement on how we make sense of the world and understand the so-called ‘reality out there’”, which would then shape people’s values, behaviour and relationships (Schenk, 2019:73-74). Therefore, Moore (2016:475) advises that the impact of social constructionism should be recognised when working in multi-cultural contexts. Of importance, is the advice to social workers that interventions will not be effective or meaningful if it does not make sense to the people in a specific context (Schenk, 2019:76).

2.3.2 The relevance of social constructionism to the study

Michailakis and Scharmer (2014:434) argue that social constructionism is not uncommon to social work research. The authors add that constructionist approaches in social research focus on the construction of the social problem itself. This study investigated the issue of child protection as a social problem affecting societies in Southern Africa and how IKS as locally and socially constructed knowledge that determines people’s understanding of their world, could be used to address this problem. IKS is a community-based knowledge that is embedded in local customs and cultural practices and is relevant to all domains of the life and the environment of a particular society (Magid, 2011:138). The study focussed on Tsonga IKS. The Vatsonga is one of the ethnic groups in Southern Africa that is regarded as adopting an Afrocentric worldview based on the cultural beliefs, values and practices of the African people (Asante, 1987 in Thabede, 2008:233-234).

The encompassing influence of culture on the ecological environment in which children grow and develop, as discussed under the ecological systems theory, is also reflected in the

influence of culture on people's construction of their world. People from different cultures will therefore have different views of their world (McLeod, 2013:287, 290). The Afrocentric worldview determines African people's perceptions, interpretation and understanding of their world or reality (Mutisya & Ross, 2016:237; Kalu, 1978 in Nwoye, 2017:46). People's worldview links directly with the theory of social constructionism (Makhubele & Qualinge, 2008:158). Social constructionism as a theoretical framework was relevant to this study as it allowed the researcher to analyse and present the findings of the study from the Afrocentric worldview of the Vatsonga people and their culture and behaviour (Asante, 1998 in Makhubele, Matlakala & Mabvurira, 2018:97).

In conclusion, both the ecological systems theory and social constructionism enhance an understanding that culture and its related indigenous knowledge determine perceptions of social phenomena, such as childhood and societal problems (Bornstein, 2013:260; Robinson, 2007:139). These theories are thus relevant to the purpose and scope of this research, which is meant to unlock knowledge embedded in Tsonga IKS that informs cultural values and practices that could relate to child protection.

2.4 SUMMARY

The two theories that formed the theoretical frameworks of this study, namely Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and social constructionism theory, were discussed in this chapter. Both theories provide insight into the role of culture in shaping people's social environment. Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory provides insight into the developmental context of the child and the influence of culture, as situated in the macrosystem, on all other levels in the child's environment. Social constructionism provides an understanding of how people's perceptions of their world are formed through their interactions in their specific social and cultural environment. In this study that focused on the possible use of Tsonga IKS in child protection, social constructionism emphasises an openness to differences in social constructions of elements such as childhood, child maltreatment and child protection. The next chapter will focus on a central concept underlying the study, namely children's rights to protection. Their protection rights will be discussed within the broader framework of children's rights.

CHAPTER 3

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND THE PROTECTION RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Children's rights are internationally recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (OHCHR, 1989). In addition, the rights of children on the African continent are documented in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (African Union, 1990). Individual countries give effect to children's rights in their constitutions and relevant legislation. This chapter contains a discussion of the rights of children as described in the CRC and the ACRWC. The chapter will be concluded with a discussion of the realisation of children's rights in the African and Southern African context.

3.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UNCRC, 1989) is regarded as the most celebrated treaty for the protection of children up to date. Earlier attempts to bring child rights to the United Nations arena can be traced as far back as 1924. In 1924, soon after the First World War, the League of Nations came up with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, mainly meant to address emerging post-war child protection issues (Barrett, 2017:264; Mandlate, 2012:37). This declaration did not make much impact and has been criticised for not being binding on member states and for viewing children as recipients of charity (Mandlate, 2012:37). In addition, it was criticised of being 'welfarist' in nature (Barrett, 2017:265). In 1959, under the auspices of the United Nations, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child came into being and became known as the Declaration of Geneva (Barrett, 2017:265). This declaration adopted a rights-based approach but, just like the 1924 declaration, was not binding to member states (Barrett, 2017:265; Mandlate, 2012:37).

Subsequently, the recognition of the human and legal rights of children beyond those provided for adults were documented in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC) (OHCHR, 1989) as the primary instrument of child rights, and internationally the most ratified legally binding instrument for children's rights (Collins, 2017:16; Memzur, 2008:3). Mulinge (2010:10) describes the CRC as "the first international human rights treaty to bring together the universal set of standards concerning children in a unique instrument, and the first to present child rights as a legally binding imperative." Until 2014, a total of 194 countries ratified the CRC, except for the United States of America, Somalia, and South Sudan (Human Rights Watch, 2014). In 2015, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child announced South Sudan as the 195th state to ratify the CRC (UNICEF, 2015a), and Somalia

as the 196th state to ratify the CRC (UNICEF, 2015b). The advent of the CRC has resulted in a greater public awareness of children's rights (Kruger & Spies, 2006:165).

The CRC consists of 54 articles, which are divided into three distinct parts (OHCHR, 1989). The first part largely speaks to children's rights which are supposed to be enjoyed and protected, part two spells out the state parties' responsibilities in ensuring that mechanisms are in place for these rights to be realised, and part three provides the modalities of the signing, acceptance, reservation and ratification of the CRC by member states. In its Preamble, the CRC considers the founding principles declared in the Charter of the United Nations as the foundation for the binding of state members to reaffirm their commitment to fundamental human rights. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 as well as earlier declarations on children's rights such as the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959, are being recognised. States Parties should, amongst others, bear in mind "the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the family" and that children must be afforded special care and assistance and grow up in a positive family environment (OHCHR, 1989, Preamble). Most significant in the context of this study, the CRC confirms that children, due to their developmental level, need special care and safeguards, including legal protection, and takes into account the importance of each people's traditions and cultural values for the protection and optimal development of the child.

The articles on the rights of children in Part I of the CRC are viewed according to four general focus areas, namely guiding principles and three groups of rights. The four **guiding principles** indicate general requirements for all rights of the child and are stated as the following: the right to life, survival and development; non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; and respect for the views of the child (UNICEF, 2010a; UNICEF, 2014b). Child rights indicated in the CRC are grouped into three specific groups of rights, namely provision rights, participation rights, and protection rights (Kruger & Spies, 2006:168-169; Staller, 2008 in Conley, 2010:41; UNICEF, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e), as will be discussed later in this chapter.

On the African continent, children's rights are guided by the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child** (ACRWC) (African Union, 1990). The ACRWC is the first comprehensive regional document to declare the human rights of children on the African continent (Mulinge, 2010:10-11). The Charter was drafted to complement the CRC to address issues unique to Africa, such as practices and attitudes towards the girl child; persons displaced due to conflict; an African perspective on the responsibilities of the community; and the difficult socio-economic situation on the continent (Memzur, 2008:6; WHO, [sa]:1). In the Preamble of the ACRWC, the unique and privileged position of the child in the African society

is emphasised. As in the CRC, the importance of a positive family environment; the need for “particular care” concerning children’s health, physical, mental, social and moral development; legal protection for children; and the importance of cultural heritage and values in upholding the rights and welfare of the child are stated. Noteworthy, is the stipulation that “the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child also implies the performance of duties on the part of everyone” (African Union, 1990, Preamble), which relates to the collectivist African perspective.

The African perspective is unique in the sense that it cherishes collectiveness and relatedness as opposed to viewing a person as an individual, as is the notion driven by the CRC (Le Grange, 2012:56). The ACRWC contains 31 articles that focus on the rights and welfare of the child, of which Article 1 instructs Member States of the African Union to recognise the rights in the Charter, and stipulates that “[a]ny custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice that is inconsistent with these rights are discouraged” (African Union, 1990). The 31 articles largely correlate with those contained in the CRC (1989).

Sewpaul (2016a:36) notes that universal human rights laws are perceived by many authors as rooted in Western notions of individualism as opposed to the African worldview of collectivism, in which individual rights and interests are subordinated to collective rights and common interests. In comparing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (OAU, 1981), Sewpaul (2016a:34) notes that “[n]otwithstanding the popular critique that universal human rights instruments are rooted in Western individualism, the [African Charter] ... makes an effort to marry universal human rights, with culturally specific norms with emphasis on the collective, the family and community, and on duties” (Sewpaul, 2016a:33-34). Given the resemblances in the principles stated in the Preamble and articles of the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (1990), the statement by Sewpaul may also ring true for the two documents on children’s rights.

State Parties who ratify the CRC and the ACRWC must make constitutional and legislative provisions to give effect to these instruments (Memzur, 2008:14-15). Various African countries, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique (the countries in which the Vatsonga primarily reside), comply with this stipulation set out in Article 4 of the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and Article 1 of the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) through their **constitutions and relevant legislation**. In South Africa, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) relates to all people, with Section 28 that specifically highlights the rights of children. These rights include, amongst others, the right to parental or family care; the right to nutrition, shelter, health care and social services; and the right to protection from maltreatment and

exploitation. The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act (2013), Article 81, describes the rights of children in terms of the paramount importance of the best interests of children as well as children's rights to protection, family or parental care, education, nutrition, shelter and health care, amongst others. The Mozambique Constitution (2007), Article 47, recognises the rights of children in stating that all children should have the right to care and protection, and to freely express their opinion on issues relating to them with consideration of their age and maturity. Furthermore, all actions in respect of children should be based on the best interests of the child being paramount.

The above countries give effect to children's rights through relevant legislation, of which only the respective children's acts will be referred to in the context of the study. In the Preamble to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, of South Africa it is stated that the act is to give effect to the Constitution of South Africa, the CRC and the ACRWC. The Children's Act Zimbabwe (Chapter 5:06) states its purpose as, amongst others, the provision of the protection, welfare and supervision of children. The Children's Act of Mozambique (Act No 7/2008) makes provision to support the CRC and the ACRWC (Mandlate, 2012:138-140).

Although the focus of this study is on children's right to protection, it should be noted that children's rights are indivisible and the "child's rights to protection cannot be implemented in isolation from other rights" (Collins, 2017:18). This aspect is an important consideration to keep in mind in the discussion of the three categories of rights, namely provision rights, protection rights and participation rights, in the next section.

3.3 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: THE CRC AND THE ACRWC

The rights of children who live on the African continent are conceptualised firstly in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (OHCHR, 1989) and furthermore in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (African Union, 1990). In the CRC, Article 4, and the ACRWC, Article 1, Member States are assigned with the responsibility to recognise, protect and fulfil the rights of children. In the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) a child is defined as a person below the age of 18 years, unless otherwise stated by the laws of a country (Article 1). The ACRWC (Article 2) concurs with this definition of a child as a person younger than 18 years.

Children's rights are inalienable and indivisible; hence the need to ensure that all their rights are given adequate attention. Thus, children's protection rights cannot be isolated from their participation rights (Collins, 2017:18). Collins (2017:15) indicates that the international community generally regard child protection as protecting children against violence, exploitation and abuse, including sexual exploitation, child labour and harmful traditional practices, amongst others. In the ensuing discussion, the author argues that children's rights

to protection from these adversities are interlinked with other rights. For example, the right to birth, name and nationality, when observed, would then enhance the realisation of the child's right to life, survival and development, and the right to dignity and integrity will prohibit corporal punishment in educational settings (Collins, 2017:17-18).

In this section, children's rights as described in the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) will be discussed according to three categories of rights, namely survival and development (provision) rights, participation rights, and protection rights (Staller, 2008 in Conley, 2010:41; UNICEF, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e). The rights of children as described in the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) will be integrated into the discussion. First, the four guiding principles of the CRC (UNICEF, 2014b) will be discussed.

3.3.1 Guiding principles underlying the implementation of children's rights

The guiding principles of the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) are regarded as general requirements for all child rights and underly the interpretation and implementation of all the other children's rights stated in the CRC (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in Collins, 2017:18). To this end, Kaime (2005:228) explains that "[a]lthough the rights and duties in the CRC cover almost every aspect of the child's life, there are four principles that are so fundamental that they may be considered as underpinning the whole convention" and regards them as the "anchoring principles" of the CRC. Non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child are regarded as the four core principles of the CRC (Thomas, 2011:8; UNICEF, 2010a). These guiding principles are also reflected in the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), as indicated below:

- The *principle of non-discrimination* (Article 2 of the CRC) stipulates that all children should be treated fairly, regardless of their race, ethnic group, sex, language, religion or disability. Thus, no child should be subject to unfair treatment. Article 3 of the ACRWC provides a similar description of non-discrimination, intending that all children are entitled to benefit from the rights and freedoms stipulated in the Charter.
- In Article 3 of the CRC, it is stated that the *best interests of the child* must be the primary concern in all actions concerning the child by courts of law, public or private social welfare institutions, legislative bodies or administrative authorities. This principle is described in the ACRWC, Article 4, stating that all actions in relation to the child should be undertaken with the child's best interests as the primary consideration.
- The *right to life, survival and development* (Article 6) implies that States Parties must ensure the child's survival and optimal development. Collins (2017:18) emphasises that children's right to life, survival and development is closely linked to their rights related to

protection. Because of the significance of Article 6 for all children, this article is included as a principle in the CRC. The right to life, survival and development is reflected in the ACRWC, Article 5.

- *Respect for the views of the child* is described in Article 12 of the CRC. Children who have the developmental capacity to form their own views, have the right to freely express these views. In all matters affecting the child, their views must be considered, taking into account their age and maturity. This principle is of particular importance in judicial or administrative proceedings involving the child and is relevant to children's right to participation, as will be discussed later in this section. Respect for the views of the child is stipulated in Article 7 of the ACRWC.

Two of the guiding principles, namely the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child, are included in the categories of provision rights and participation rights, respectively (*cf.* UNICEF, 2014c, 2014d). These principles will be further discussed under the relevant groups of rights. Two of the above principles are not included in the three categories of child rights – protection, provision and participation rights – indicated by UNICEF (2014c, 2014d, 2014e), but informs the implementation of other rights. These two principles, namely non-discrimination and the best interests of the child, will be highlighted after the discussion of the three categories of children's rights.

3.3.2 Children's protection rights

Protection rights are intended to protect children against harm (Staller, 2008 in Conley, 2010:41). In the summary of children's protection rights, UNICEF (2014e) lists several articles in the CRC that are aimed at upholding these rights. These articles focus on the protection of children from all forms of violence (Article 19); protection against sexual and other forms of exploitation (Articles 34, 36); and protecting children against trafficking, drug abuse, child labour, armed conflict, kidnapping, and cruel punishment (Articles 11, 32, 33, 35, 37, 38). Furthermore, protection rights include the right to care and protection of children in alternative care, adopted children and refugee children (Articles 20, 21, 23); access to rehabilitation services to children who have been maltreated (Article 39); and the provision of legal help to and the fair treatment of children involved in justice systems (Article 40). The applicability of superior national standards of service delivery (Article 41 in the CRC) stipulates that when a States Party has laws that have better national standards than the CRC for the protection of children's rights, those laws should apply (OHCHR, 1989).

Protection rights as indicated in the CRC are reflected in several articles in the ACRWC (African Union, 1990). The protection of children against abuse, neglect and maltreatment, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, all forms of economic exploitation, drug abuse and

abduction, trafficking, and war and armed conflict are stipulated in the ACRWC in Articles 15, 16, 22, and 27 to 29. The ACRWC specifically states that children should be protected against harmful cultural practices that may affect the child's dignity and well-being, for example, child marriages (Article 21). As in the CRC, the ACRWC (Article 17) provides for special treatment for children in conflict with the law. In addition, the ACRWC makes provision for special treatment of expectant mothers in conflict with the law as well as mothers in conflict with the law who have infants or young children in their care (Article 30). The provision in Article 30 is regarded as a unique feature of the ACRWC (Memzur, 2008:24).

3.3.3 Children's survival and development rights (provision rights)

Provision rights, also referred to as the rights to survival and development, guarantee the basic needs of the child (Staller, 2008 in Conley, 2010:41). Article 6 of the CRC emphasises the inherent right to life of every child and, importantly, ensuring the survival and the development of the child to the maximum extent possible (OHCHR, 1989). Article 6 in the CRC is regarded as one of the guiding principles underpinning all other rights of children stipulated in the CRC (Collins, 2017:18; UNICEF, 2014b). In this regard, it is argued that survival, which involves adequate standards of living and health, is a precondition to the enjoyment of other child rights (Kaime, 2005:232). In addition, survival and development rights include, amongst others, the following bundle of rights (UNICEF, 2014c): the right to a name and identity (Articles 7, 8); the right to health, education and development as a responsible citizen (Articles 24, 28, 29); and the right of children to live with and be cared for by their parents, in a family environment or in appropriate alternative care (Articles 5, 9, 10, 18, 20, 25). The rights to a name, to survival and development, education, parental care and protection, and alternative family care are reflected in the ACRWC in Articles 2, 6, 11, 19, 20 and 25 (African Union, 1990).

In addition, UNICEF (2014c) indicates the right of children to an adequate standard of living and social security (Articles 26, 27), the right to play, leisure and culture, as well as freedom of thought and religion (Articles 14, 31), as stated in the CRC (UNOHC, 1989), as falling under the category of provision rights. These rights are also specified in the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) in Articles 14 and 20 (health and health services; conditions of living), Article 12 (the right to leisure, recreation, play and cultural activities), and Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of the ACRWC.

In the category of provision rights in the CRC, the right to special protection of refugee children, the right to special care and support of children with disabilities, and the right of children of minorities or indigenous groups to their own culture, language and religion (Articles 22, 23, 30 in the CRC), are included. Correspondingly, the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) describes the rights of refugee children (Article 23), the rights of children with disabilities (Article 13) and the

rights of children to education, which include upholding positive African morals, cultures and traditional values in the education and development of children (Article 11).

3.3.4 Children's participation rights

Participation rights are intended to give children a voice (Staller, 2008 in Conley, 2010:41). UNICEF (2014d) describes children's rights to participation as encompassing their freedom of expression and that children's views should be respected and considered in accordance with their age and maturity, as indicated in Articles 12 and 13 of the CRC (OHCHR, 1989). The category of participation rights also includes the right to access information related to their health and well-being, freedom of thought and religion, and freedom of association (Articles 14, 15, 17). Article 16 of the CRC stipulates children's rights to privacy, indicating that they should be protected by law from impositions against their good name, their family and their way of life (OHCHR, 1989). The ACRWC (African Union, 1990) describes similar rights that are associated with children's rights to participation: freedom of expression (Article 7), respect for the views of the child (Article 4), information on health-related matters (Article 14), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9), freedom of association (Article 8) and protection of privacy (Article 10).

Of note, is that child rights do not imply a unilateral focus on the rights of children at the expense of parents and the wider society. In the CRC (OHCHR, 1989), in Article 29, it is stated that the education of children should include the development of respect towards their parents, language, values and their cultural identity, and tolerance towards diversity. In the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) the aspect of respect towards parents, family and culture is described as a 'responsibility' and a 'duty' of children. Article 31 in the ACRWC stipulates that "[t]he child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the duty" to, amongst others, respect his parents, elders and superiors, to preserve and strengthen African cultural values, and to serve his community with the use of his physical and intellectual abilities (African Union, 1990). The description of the duties of the child is highlighted as another unique aspect of the ACRWC (Memzur, 2008:24). Memzur (2008:24-25) acknowledges that placing 'duties' in a document that is intended to stipulate rights, could be a contentious issue, but that the phrase "subject to his age and ability" in Article 31 makes provision for the proper implementation of these duties.

Besides its perceived shortcomings, the CRC remains one of the most widely ratified international laws that promote child participation (Tisdall, 2017:59). Hence, most countries have come up with initiatives such as children's parliaments and children's councils although these forums remain criticised as mere lip service, with decision making remaining in the hands of adults (Save the Children, 2008:27; Save the Children South Africa, 2018:4).

3.3.5 The nexus between different categories of children's rights

It is proposed that the best approach to upholding children's rights is not to focus on one group of rights in isolation but to look at all three categories of rights: provision rights, protection rights, and participation rights. Children's rights are absolute and inseparable (Collins, 2017:18; Memzur, 2008:25), hence the need to ensure that all the rights of children are given adequate attention. It appears that debates on children's rights tend to focus on one category of rights without necessarily considering the nexus between the different categories of children's rights. In the following sections, the nexus between different groups of child rights is discussed.

3.3.5.1 The nexus between protection and provision rights

Children's rights are the inalienable human rights of children (Cantwell, 2011:42). If this perspective is adopted and operationalised, it would imply that children's rights are larger than mere protection rights, although protection from harm still is central to the realisation of other rights. This situation calls for a careful interrogation of the nexus between protection rights and provision rights.

The nexus of children's protection and provision rights often occur in the context of **child poverty** and poverty alleviation. As it stands, limited debates are focusing on poverty and child rights, hence child protection laws are skewed towards addressing the protection of children from harm, with a narrower focus on addressing poverty as experienced by children (Morrow & Pells, 2012:906). This state of affairs has led to the reduction of child rights to a level where they are just seen as a tool for protection and dispute resolution, which is regarded as an erroneous stance challenged by many social scientists that pursue a sociological approach to childhood and child rights (Gearty, 2011:243). In terms of the Zimbabwean context, Masuka (2013:82-83) highlights that poverty is not only related to financial status but is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that contributes to a state of vulnerability, thereby putting children who live in poor families particularly at risk for many forms of child abuse. The author proposes that child abuse must be understood within an ecological context; a view that aligns with the ecological systems theory that formed a theoretical framework of this study. In describing the influence of the exosystem on children's development and well-being, Coulton et al. (2007 in Berk, 2013:28) indicate that children who live in families affected by unemployment, are at an increased risk for child abuse. Similarly, Conley (2010:40) points to the strong correlation between poverty and child maltreatment. In this regard, Collins (2017:18) proposes that protection rights should include children's rights to a standard of living suitable for their holistic development and their right to education as stipulated in Article 27 and Articles 28 of the CRC, respectively.

Children's rights are a social construct and highly political, hence its meaning is localised to the context of the claimant of rights (the rights holder) (Mayall, 2000:244); a view that reflects the social constructivist perspective (Moore, 2016:473-474) as described in Chapter 2. There has been a growing notion that child rights are a Western construction imposed on poor nations and has led to some concluding that Western constructions of childhood were sneaked into the CRC provisions (Burman, 2008:47). This perception has resulted in fear permeating poor nations that child rights as contained in the CRC could easily be used to further the agendas and value systems that may be foreign to the child's environment and culture (Tobin, 2011:42). Provision and protection, both being welfare rights, seem to be gaining traction in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, provision rights resonate better with the African conception of child well-being as meaning physical health, life, survival and development. In addition, this right is more acceptable compared to protection rights given that provision rights facilitated by parents and other adults do not incriminate the adults as is often the case with protection rights (Redmond, 2006:3, 15-16).

The protection rights of children have become more pronounced as an area dominating debates on children's rights, often propelled by the topic of **child labour**. The concept of child labour is a politically contested terrain with its meaning still shrouded in controversy (Bourdillon, Levison, Myers & White, 2010:208). Child labour contradicts the popular view of childhood as a period of receiving care, and a period for schooling, playing and rest (Morrow & Pells, 2012:911). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) ties child labour to harmful and hazardous labour; however, the phenomenon is in particular challenged by academics and researchers who pursue a sociological approach to children's rights (Morrow & Vennam, 2012:553). These authors argue that most of the chores and labour done by children in various households do not fit into the ILO yardstick of what constitutes child labour (Morrow & Vennam, 2012:553-554).

According to some, the implementation of rights related to the protection of children against labour in most instances clashes with the push to have children realise their provision rights. It has been argued that application of protection rights such as protection against child labour has the potential of depleting children's welfare if rights are universally applied, ignoring the child's unique context and circumstances (Bourdillon et al., 2010:208). The protectionist stance ahead of consideration of other rights has been blamed on the default take on rights by the CRC which framed rights as rules to protect children, ignoring the economic needs of children which sometimes have to be met through some form of child labour (Morrow & Boyden, 2018:38, 40).

In the view of Vandenhoe (2014:636), perceptions of children's rights tend to take an "individualised and single-issue approach" to rights. This approach implies that child rights experts and practitioners tend to ignore the natural nexus between protection and provision rights and choose to tackle what they would consider as urgent and more pressing. In this regard, protection rights are viewed as having a more temporary focus, while provision rights are considered as an ongoing concern (Vandenhoe, 2014:636). Collins (2007:15) indicates the importance of provision rights in enhancing children's protection by stating that "the risks of poverty and vulnerability fall disproportionately on children" and, therefore, "numerous organizations ... support child protection in their international and developmental and humanitarian efforts."

Ruiz-Casares, Collins, Tisdall and Grover (2017:5) confirm the additional stress that low-income settings and a lack of basic resources can put on families and communities to care for children and young people. Conley (2010:40) thus places emphases on poverty alleviation as a measure to reduce the incidence of child maltreatment. In the Zimbabwean context, Masuka (2013:86) notes the nexus between protection and provision rights in an example of poverty-stricken communities, where it was found that poverty (which strongly relates to provision rights) undermines the implementation of laws and programmes intended to assist orphaned and vulnerable children (relating to protection rights). The researcher thus proposes that a focus on the protection of children from harm cannot be separated from the context in which children grow up and are cared for.

It seems that children's protection rights are lucrative to both state and non-state actors for various political reasons. For the state, protection rights when left unattended, is damaging as compared to other rights, while for non-state entities, protection rights would attract funding. Protection rights, just like provisions rights, are popular given that it resonates with the wide constructions of children as helpless, vulnerable, innocent and irrational, hence they are at the mercy of adults as objects of protection (Alderson, 2008:81). Therefore, the nexus between provision and protection rights could be said to be a cordial one when compared to participation rights which are normally snubbed by parents who view them as challenging the rights of parents to have control over children's lives (Segura-April, 2016:173).

3.3.5.2 The nexus between protection and participation rights

Participation rights provide for the right of children to be heard, that their views should always be considered in all matters affecting them, and that they have the right to access to information, to freedom of association and to privacy (UNICEF, 2014d). Child participation is regarded as ongoing processes of dialogue and information-sharing between children and adults that are grounded in mutual respect, which provide children with opportunities to learn

how their views and the views of adults are considered and can influence outcomes of the participatory processes (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Collins, 2017:16). Participation allows children to make decisions in matters affecting them, hold opinions and have freedom of conscience (Segura-April, 2016:174).

Although human rights law internationally give recognition to child protection and child participation, the implementation of children's participation rights are found to present considerable and ongoing challenges in discourse and practice (Collins, 2017:15-16). In Africa, child participation is hampered by the views held in many traditional societies that children must respect adults who are seen to know what is best for them (Kaime, 2005:231). Such a situation restricts the autonomy of the child and is not conducive to child participation. Collins (2017:34) reports that a review of literature and the international human rights framework shows that there is wide support for child participation. The CRC made a significant impact on adults' understanding of and attitudes towards children, however, the support for child participation remains on a theoretical level and is not well implemented internationally in child protection efforts. The author ascribes this situation to issues such as institutional barriers, power struggles and a lack of understanding of children and children's capacities. Any cultural practices or norms that prevent children from expressing their views and that do not give due recognition to the child's views are inconsistent with the rights of the child as expressed in the CRC (Kaime, 2005:231).

Coyne and Harder (2011:312) propose that there is a clash between child participation and protection rights due to 'paranoid' parents who take a controlling and protectionist stance, thereby compromising child participation in the process. This stance results in parents being the ones answering questions and making decisions on behalf of their children. Other views that contribute to violation of child participation rights point to the fear that child rights can undermine the authority of parents and the assumption that children lack the capacity for decision-making (Dailey, 2016:179-180). Comparing the incapacities of children to the capacity of adults hampers the full realisation of child rights due to the paternalistic conception of children as irrational beings who need the protection and guidance of responsible adults (Dailey, 2016:178; Gillespie, 2012:66). Thus, the emphasis has been on protection rights as opposed to participation rights as parents are comfortable with protection as compared to participation, which challenges adult rule (Kruger & Spies, 2006:165). These views result in children being denied opportunities for participation, even though child participation can enhance child protection in that children can identify their need for protection and contribute to more informed decisions and services to protect them (Collins, 2017:15,18). In agreement, Ruiz-Casares et al. (2017:2) believe that "[c]hildren and young people's participation is necessary for effective and respectful protection, as required by the United Nations (UN)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).” Thus, Collins (2017:35) places emphasis on “the importance of meaningful and ethical participation at the beginning of any process” involving children and their rights to protection.

Child participation rights are the civil and political rights of children which naturally challenge traditional constructions of childhood that are in contrast with a new sociology of childhood that takes a liberationist stance and respect the child’s autonomy to make decisions (Collins, 2017:20; Coppock & Phillips, 2013:99). According to Segura-April (2016:172), children from time immemorial had always participated in school, church, home and their communities but this participation is not acknowledged to the fullest. Some authors propose that children have agency and ought to be viewed as such, and therefore they can challenge adult autocracy (Prout, 2011:8; Tisdall, Hinton, Gadda & Butler, 2014:2). The CRC therefore comes under the spotlight for having provisions which allow for decisions to be made by adults on behalf of the child under the guise of the best interests of the child principle and the notions of age and maturity imposed as conditions of full participation (Lansdown, 2020:2; Phillips & Coppock, 2014:59-60). Challenges around child participation also relate to the conceptualisation of participation as a threat to the rights of parents and the family, although Article 5 and Article 14 of the CRC seem to restore those rights to the adults (Segura-April, 2016:173).

Another challenge to child participation relates to instances where social workers and other professionals working with children normally reduce child participation merely to having children attend meetings without a thorough analysis of whether their attendance translates into children’s voices influencing decision-making rather than just signposting participation of children through their mere attendance (Dillon & Hills, 2015:71). Collins (2017:20) confirms these practices as a form of tokenism, where children’s voices are heard but the children have no influence on decisions about their welfare. Long-standing attitudes towards children as victims and dependent on adults thus prevent children from meaningfully participating in child protection efforts. However, attending meetings should not be discredited as it remains a vehicle through which children can participate (Dillon & Hills, 2015:71).

A dominant discourse whenever child participation is discussed is the issue of child labour, which was also indicated as an issue related to children’s provision rights. The topic of child labour is a contested terrain (Morrow & Pells, 2012:911). There seems to be consensus in the literature that child labour involves harmful and hazardous work that interferes with children’s education and the health of the child (Nhenga, 2008:xvi). In India, child labour is reported to be rampant with most of the children working on farms (Morrow & Pells, 2012:911). Dominant child labour discourse construes childhood as an era of play, schooling, leisure, innocence and not work, and thus advocates for the banning of child labour (Morrow & Pells, 2012:911).

However, evidence from some child labour research attests to the negative impact of banning child labour and the dire consequences thereof for child welfare outcomes given that many children rely on child labour to access essential services such as health and education (Bourdillon et al., 2010:207-208). The negative attitudes towards child labour are regarded as being based on the Eurocentric conception of child participation which confines child participation to the right to be heard. To this end, there are many researchers and academics advancing that ending the exclusion of child participation need to promote a focus on the child's voice (l'Anson, 2013:104). Voice-based participation does not focus on material participation such as the participation of children in the economy through contributing their labour. However, the latter form of participant may be equally important to the well-being of many children.

It is noted that there is a limited exploration of the concept of children as active citizens with political agency (Arlemalm-Hagser & Davis, 2014:232). This situation explains why children are shielded from labour and why child labour is being dismissed without critically considering that this is a form of participation that can benefit children, besides being perceived as only harmful to the child. Similarly, children suffer exclusion when it comes to sexuality-related policy formulation and decision making as they are viewed as incapable of comprehending sex and sexuality issues (Moore, 2013a:163). The biggest challenge to the realisation of child participation is the tug of war between protection rights and participation rights; hence there is a need to further research the protection-participation nexus (Caputo, 2017:79).

Collins (2017:35) conclude that there is a need for all stakeholders in child protection to engage in reflexive dialogue on child participation and that research studies as well as dialogue between academics and practitioners, should inform the advancement of child participation in child protection strategies. In this regard, the author contrasts the view of children as victims with that of children as people with capacities by referring to the words of Graça Machel who presented a view of young people "as survivors and active participants in creating solutions, not just as victims and problems" (Collins, 2017:15). Furthermore, the author reiterates that child participation can be understood as a child protection system (Collins, 2017:20).

3.3.5.3 The nexus between protection, provision and participation rights

In viewing children's rights, consideration should be given to whether these rights should be attained as stand-alone for ensuring that each one of them are realised on its own, or whether they are offered as a bundle of rights following the argument that rights by their very nature are indivisible and interdependent. Collins (2017:14) observes that with dire poverty, war, conflicts and other forms of violence being experienced by children, there has been a rush to

focus more on protection rights. However, when such a narrow approach ends with just poverty eradication and provision of protection services without opening up child participation spaces, children become passive recipients of services as victims (denoting vulnerability and lack of agency) and not as survivors (denoting resilience and seeing children as social actors) (Collins, 2017:14). Thus, focusing on rights *in silo* poses a challenge of perpetuating adult control and the traditional notions of viewing children as vulnerable, weak, innocent and in need of adult help. Fusing participation rights with protection and provisions rights is likely to offer quality services due to the input of children on the nature of the services they want (Caputo, 2017:78). In addition, protection rights should focus on creating safer spaces for children to meaningfully participate and realise their potential (Caputo, 2017:79). It is therefore not possible to implement children's rights to protection in isolation from other child rights (Collins, 2017:18)

Poverty reduction strategies and interventions to promote children's provision rights can impact on protection and participation rights. As an example, the world-acclaimed Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) influence policies on the protection of children (Pupavac, 2011:286). The Government of Mozambique argued before the United Nations CRC Committee of Experts that their thrust as a nation was on poverty reduction with the view that other child rights, as higher goals, will ultimately be satisfied when the economy improves (Mozambique Country Report to the CRC Committee of Experts, 2009:1). The Mozambican example makes sense in that focusing on macro poverty reduction strategies is also a vehicle to tackle other child rights. It is difficult for poor children to participate in matters concerning them given their low self-esteem resulting from poverty as well as the mind-set of the involved adults who select children from the middle and upper class for participation in events due to the ability of these children to articulate issues compared to poor children (White et al., 2007:532). The latter authors refer to an example in Bangladesh where, when choosing children to participate in campaigns, the organisers of the marches and campaigns chose children from the middle class given that these children are more articulate (White, 2007:532).

When focusing on protection and provision rights without the inclusion of child participation rights, children are likely to become resistant to protection and provision services (Collins, 2017:21). Participation is a key vehicle to raise awareness of the other two groups of rights, hence there is a need to mainstream participation in all interventions related to children (Collins, 2017:21, 25; White, 2007:529). In the same vein, when implementing participation rights, there is also a need to emphasise meeting children's survival or provision rights (White, 2007:529). The new thrust of the rights-based approach, as opposed to the needs-based approach, makes it impossible to offer these rights in isolation, given the need to engage discursive involvement of the child when rendering services (White, 2007:532). In every right

that is sought to be promoted, it is therefore imperative to involve children in the processes of planning and decision making to come up with child-sensitive and child-friendly services, hence demonstrating the indivisibility of children's rights.

In conclusion, children's rights as human entitlements are inalienable, indivisible and interdependent. The satisfaction of one right has a bearing on the other and the violation of one right also jeopardises the fulfilment of the other rights. Protection rights create an enabling environment for children to survive and develop as well as to participate and claim their rights. Children in war and conflict zones are likely to miss out on school and subsequently, their capacity to claim their rights may be diminished. In some isolated cases, children who have their protection rights violated and participate in wars gain some agency and skills which they then use in their adult life to build a prosperous life, as was the case with some sections of Mozambique's child soldiers (Boothby & Thomson, 2011:736-737). These scenarios provide testimony that there is a nexus among the three categories of provision, participation and protection rights, as stated by Collins (2017:18): "Like other treaties, all rights are interdependent." When one category of rights is violated or suppressed, it has a spiral effect of violating the other two categories of rights. Concerning the ACRWC, Memzur (2008:25) emphasises that the various rights in the Charter must not be viewed as a compilation of distinct provisions, but rights and responsibilities must be viewed as interdependent.

The discussion of the nexus between the different categories of children's rights point to the need to take cognisance of local social contexts. In this regard, Morrow and Pells (2012:906) propose that a strict view of rights as static rules need to be reconsidered, as will be discussed next.

3.3.6 Children's rights and local contexts

In support of a sociological understanding of children's rights, there is an increased call to reconfigure rights to viewing rights as rules, rights as structures, rights as relationships, and rights as processes (Galant & Parlevleit, 2005 in Morrow & Pells, 2012:915). Rights as *rules* refer to rights that are formally presented in international, regional and domestic conventions and policies. Morrow and Pells (2012:915) argue that these 'rules' may not be aligned with local realities and that social and cultural norms could be used to interpret and develop approaches in ways that rights can be claimed locally. If not, rights as rules may not be meaningful in the specific social, economic and cultural contexts in which people live.

Those viewing rights as *structures* call for a systematic approach to rights as opposed to tackling individual rights such as focusing on the right to education in isolation (Morrow & Pells, 2012:915). The emphasis of rights as structures is on provision rights, which are aimed at healthy growth and development through addressing structural causes that may hamper the

provision for the basic human needs of the child (Howe & Covell, 2010:92-93; Morrow & Pells, 2012:915; Segura-April, 2016:174). In addition, provision rights are expanded as referring to the provision in the social and economic needs and welfare needs, including the needs for health and education (Howe & Covell, 2010:92-93). This understanding of provision rights is echoed by many who advance that provision rights have to do with access to resources, including the right to education and care (Coyne, Hallstrom & Soderback, 2016:497)

Rights as *relationships* reflect children's relationships within their families, friendship groups, communities, and the larger society (Morrow & Pells, 2012:916). In some societies, the relational aspects of children's lives such as a child who works to provide in the needs of younger siblings, may challenge the traditional views of children's rights. A narrow focus on children's rights may not take the lived realities of children into account, while a sociological approach of rights as relationships acknowledges rights as part of social life (Morrow & Pells, 2012:916).

Morrow and Pells (2012:916) posit that child rights when viewed as *processes* focus more on child participation; however, participation must not be viewed as independent of power dynamics. Thus, it is key to consider local culture and traditions in attempts that focus on improving child participation. This group of rights relates to Article 12 in the CRC, which provides for the right of the child to be heard and that their views should always be given weight in all matters affecting them (Segura-April, 2016:174).

Morrow and Pells (2012:906) warn that a broader approach to children's rights must be adopted as narrow approaches to children's rights may thwart locally relevant responses to rights. The authors propose that there is a growing understanding that rights should not only be conceived as rules, but they should be broadened to be conceived as including structures, relationships, and processes, which is believed to be a way to use rights to tackle poverty. In agreement, Vandenhole (2014:636) recommends a sociological approach to the implementation of children's rights "in which structural and relational dimensions receive appropriate attention." The sociological approach to the implementation of children's rights can be viewed from the perspective of the theoretical frameworks of the study.

Within the ecological systems theory, the macrosystem, containing the broader context of society such as government, laws and policies (Berk, 2013:28; Churchill, 2011:19; Keenan & Evans, 2010:37), provide for local laws and policies for children's rights, thus rights as rules. The structural elements that influence the provision for the basic human needs of the child, thus rights as structures, are situated in the broader social settings, institutions, and resources in the exosystem (Keenan & Evans, 2010:37; Louw et al., 2014:29; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:7). Rights as relationships, which includes relationships within families, friendship groups and

communities, can be considered as the various microsystems involved in the child's life, as well as the linkages between them, referring to the mesosystem (Louw et al., 2014:29-30; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:7). Rights as processes cannot be approached without considering the role of culture and traditions, which highlights the encompassing role of culture on all other ecological levels (Louw et al., 2014:29-30).

Elements of the sociological approach to child rights are echoed by the views underlying social constructionism. Morrow and Pells (2012:915-916) emphasise that rights as rules may be contrary to the social and cultural norms according to which people interpret and make meaning within their specific context. Furthermore, child rights as processes will be influenced by the conceptions based on the local culture and traditions, for example views on child participation. Social constructionism explains the unique way in which individuals, groups and communities interpret and make sense of their world through their interactions within their specific socio-cultural context (Hall, 2005:2; Moore, 2016:475).

It is important to acknowledge that child rights in particular and human rights in general, should begin in the individual's locality, including the home, school and the neighbourhood. To this effect, Eleanor Roosevelt is believed to have said that rights must be relevant and should gain legitimacy at the local level (Morrow & Pells, 2012:906). The researcher proposes that two core principles that underlie the implementation of the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) can support a nuanced implementation of children's rights in different contexts.

3.4 THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The CRC is hinged on four guiding principles, namely non-discrimination (Article 2), the best interests of the child (Article 3), the right to life, survival and development (Article 6), and the right to be heard in all matters regarding them and their views be taken seriously (Article 12) (UNICEF, 2010a; UNICEF, 2014b). The four principles are "of fundamental importance for the implementation of the whole Convention" (Memzur, 2008:3). The first two of these principles, namely the best interests of the child and non-discrimination, which are not included in the categories of principles indicated by UNICEF (2014c, 2014d, 2014e), will be discussed in this section, with reference to similar principles described in the ACRWC (African Union, 1990).

3.4.1 The best interests of the child principle

The advent of the CRC popularised the principle of the best interests of the child as one of the guiding and overarching principles of the Convention. Child rights are human rights of children (Zermatten, 2010:483). The principle of the best interests of the child implies that whatever is being done to advance children's rights, their welfare, well-being and protection should be

centred on their best interests. These interests should be interpreted in the global spirit of the CRC (Zermatten, 2010:485). All decisions in respect of children must be taken to enhance their development and growth (Kaime, 2005:232). Whereas the CRC is credited for popularising the principle, the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child did make provision for the best interests of the child, which it viewed as the totality of the child's personality, encompassing the physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social domains (Children's Rights Knowledge Centre, 2014).

Freeman (2007:3) breaks down the best interests of the child into basic interests, developmental interests, and autonomy interests. Physical, emotional and intellectual care is identified as *basic interests*. The child's best interests are not static, but dynamic. They change with the age and context of the child, hence current best interests of the child when applied in future may in fact conflict with what the child may need in the future (Freeman, 2007:3). *Autonomy interests* refer to rights related to freedom to choose a lifestyle of their own while *developmental interests* are those interests related to allowing the child to transition into adulthood without disadvantage (Freeman, 2007:3). From a holistic perspective, any practices that allow discrimination towards children, limit their participation, or hamper their development and growth are not in accordance with the best interests of the child principle (Kaime, 2005:232).

The CRC (OHCHR, 1989) spells out the principle of the best interests of the child (Article 3) as follows: "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." It is further stated that States Parties should ensure the protection and care of children necessary for their well-being, with consideration of the rights and duties of parents, legal guardians or other individuals who are responsible for the child. States Parties should provide proper legislation and administrative measures for this purpose. The ACRWC (African Union, 1990) stipulates the best interests of the child principle in Article 4: "In all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority, the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration." The major difference between the two documents is that the CRC considers the best interests of the child as 'a primary consideration' whereas the ACRWC consider it to be '*the* primary consideration' (Memzur, 2008:9). Considering the terminology used by the CRC and the ACRWC on the same principle, the ACRWC is viewed as being more emphatic towards the principle, making it obligatory for authorities to consider the best interests of the child always and as a must. The terminology used in the ACRWC thus "maximises the influence of this principle" (Memzur, 2008:9). Both the CRC and the ACRWC bind parents and legal guardians to be guided by the

best interests of the child; the ACRWC doing so in Article 20 whereas the CRC expresses the obligation of parents and guardians in Article 18 (African Union, 1990; OHCHR, 1989).

The principle of the best interests of the child is extended to the implementation of other articles of the CRC, specifically Articles 9, 18, 20, 21, 37 and 40 (Zermatten, 2010:491-492). Article 9 relates to the consideration of the best interests of the child in terms of living with his or her parents. In cases where it is not in the child's own best interests to remain in the family, the State should provide special protection and alternative care (Article 20). In the same vein, adoption systems should have the best interests of the child as a paramount consideration (Article 21). Article 19 indicates that both parents should uphold the best interests of the child in their duties towards the development and upbringing of the child. Articles 37 and 40 focus on maintaining the best interests of children involved in the juvenile justice system (Zermatten, 2010:492).

Besides the popularity of the principle to the extent that it is enshrined in almost every child protection law among the State Parties to the CRC, it remains vaguely understood and its content for application is regarded as ambiguous (Child Rights Knowledge Centre, 2014:2). Zermatten (2010:485) points to various aspects that make interpretation of the principle difficult, amongst others, knowing for sure what the best interests of a child or a group of children would be. Another aspect that contributes to uncertainty is the personal subjectivity of different role players such as parents, caregivers, children, legal representatives, and decision-makers regarding the concept 'best interests' (Zermatten, 2010:494). The indeterminate and subjective nature of the principle is regarded as criticisms against the best interests of the child principle (Boyd, 2015:21-22). The complexity of this matter is captured by the statement: "The best interests of the child principle are one of the most important provisions of the CRC and one of the most difficult to explain" (Zermatten, 2010:498).

The best interests of the child principle must be applied to all the rights accorded to children, given the interdependent nature of rights. Boyd (2015:28; 30-31) found that in South Africa the application of the principle is often more pronounced in matters relating to custody rights and relocation cases, and that court officials, including the social worker, use the best interests of the child principle as enunciated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 to guide their decisions. Similarly, Toros, Valma and Tiko (2014:297) in their research findings on the application of the principle of the best interests of the child in Estonia, found that the application of the principle is more prevalent when dealing with custody rights in circumstances such as divorce and separation of parents. The social worker is then guided by the principle to arrive at a recommendation as to who must have custody rights over the other by considering the child's developmental, emotional, and intellectual needs. Toros et al. (2014:297) conclude that the

best interests of the child principle are highly relevant to circumstances where parents have irreconcilable disputes over custody rights.

The UNHCR Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2008) provide information for the implementation of the best interests of the child principle for international governmental and non-governmental organisations focussing on refugee children. The principle is normally applied in the circumstances related to family reunification, temporary care, separated and unaccompanied children, children experiencing severe harm inflicted by parents and legal guardians, and in cases of parental separation and custody rights (UNHCR, 2008:30-42).

Despite criticism against the principle, Boyd (2015:24-26), considering the views of different authors, indicates the advantages of the best interests of the child principle. The author states the advantages as that the standard is flexible and adaptable to all circumstances, that it represents a child-centred approach that acknowledges children as bearers of substantive rights, that it promotes child participation, and that it leads to the adoption of a holistic approach to child well-being. Memzur (2008:18) lauds the relevance of the principle as follows:

The principle of the best interests of the child connotes the yardstick by which to measure all actions, laws and policies affecting children. Its transformation into a principle that applies to all actions concerning children, both individually and as a group, is arguably one of the most significant accomplishments of the CRC.

The principle of the best interests of the child is meant to assign the child the status of being an individual who is entitled to all human rights (Zermatten, 2010:483-484). As evident in the discussion in this section, the principle relates to child well-being in all levels of the environment, for example interventions for children within their family context as well as services, resources, policies and laws that concern governmental and non-governmental organisations on national and international levels. The principle is thus relevant to all levels of the ecological systems theory, the micro, meso, exo and macro levels (Berk, 2013:27-28; Louw et al., 2014:29-30), which is one of the theoretical frameworks for the study. The fact that the principle is viewed as ambiguous and open to subjective interpretation by different (Boyd, 2015:21-22; Zermatten, 2010:494), show the potential for different constructions of the principle in different socio-cultural contexts, as explained in the theory of social constructionism (Moore, 2016:475; Schenk, 2019:71).

3.4.2 The principle of non-discrimination

The principle of non-discrimination is one of the CRC's over-arching guiding principles to the implementation of child rights (Memzur, 2008:3). The principle was not brought in by the advent of the CRC but was ultimately popularised by this Convention. As indicated by Save

the Children (2008:3-5), the following United Nations conventions and treaties all sought to uphold the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment and equal opportunities:

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Convention against Torture
- Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The principle of non-discrimination is described as follows in Article 2 of the CRC (OHCHR, 1989):

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

The ACWRC (African Union, 1990) captures the CRC's provisions in terms of non-discrimination in Article 3, stating:

Every child should be allowed to enjoy the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this Charter irrespective of the child's or his/her parents' or legal guardians' race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.

Of interest, is that both documents extend the child's right to non-discrimination to the status of the child's parent or legal guardian. The Child Rights Information Network (2009:6) and Save the Children (2008:6, 9) add to the elements underlying discrimination provided by the CRC and ACWRC by including sexual orientation, HIV and AIDS, geographical inequalities (rural versus urban; rich suburbs versus poor suburbs), and poverty as factors that accord some children differential treatment based on their status.

The principle of non-discrimination is evident in descriptions in the CRC such as equal opportunity (Articles 28, 31), equality of sexes (Article 29), and conditions of equality (Article 40). The ACRWC points to equal access to education (Article 11), "equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity" (Article 12), and addressing the special needs of children who live in environments where governments practice "racial, ethnic, religious or

other forms of discrimination” and the “elimination of all forms of discrimination and Apartheid on the African Continent” (Article 26). Save the Children (2008:11) defines the principle of non-discrimination as equal treatment, equal opportunities, and equal access to services. Besson (2005:435) suggests that the principle of non-discrimination is underpinned by the concept of equality, which guides how other rights are applied. Non-discrimination should, therefore, be regarded as the prevention of discrimination but also ensuring “the positive enjoyment of the rights which enable all children to be recognised as equally valuable members of the society” (Kaime, 2005:229).

Furthermore, equality prohibits unjustified distinction and differential treatment of similar situations, thereby ensuring that all rights holders (children) enjoy their rights equally (Besson, 2005:435; Save the Children, 2008:6). Despite the principle being widely endorsed by various human rights laws at the international level, less attention has been given to its practical implementation (Besson, 2005:434; Child Rights Information Network, 2009:4).

3.5 THE REALISATION OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

Child rights are universal, and the CRC is an attempt to universalise, standardise, and set uniform norms for child rights across the world (Twum-Dansolmoh, 2013:474), as is the ACRWC on the African continent (Mulinge, 2010:10-11). However, children across the globe are facing an array of obstacles to the realisation of their rights; be it in Japan where their freedom of association is tightly controlled by their parents, in Syria where children under the age of 18 are considered incompetent to testify in a court of law except in cases of rape, or in Kenya where nationality is only granted formally when one reaches the age of 18 (Child Rights Information Network, 2009). Critics of the CRC and the ACRWC as a means of promoting child well-being assert that many years after the CRC came into effect, children’s well-being and status remain mostly unchanged (Grugel, 2013:19; Mulinge, 2010:11). This situation is evident in many African and Sub-Saharan countries, including countries in Southern Africa in which the Xitsonga-speaking people – the group relevant to this study – mainly live.

Demographic trends show a sharp rise in the child population in Africa. In the UNICEF report, *Children in Africa*, it is estimated that the child population of Africa will rise by 130 million between 2010 and 2025; and that by 2050, one in three children will be from the African continent (UNICEF, 2014a). In terms of the protection of children’s rights on the African continent, Mulinge (2010:11) states the following:

... the bulk of children across most of Africa continue to be victims of child labour and exploitation, have limited access to education, suffer the effects of inadequate or total lack of access to health care, suffer from physical abuse and neglect, and are victims of sexual exploitation – all in violation of the rights of the child as guaranteed by the 1989 United Nations CRC.

UNICEF (2014a) indicates that, although mortality rates of children under five have decreased, half of the deaths of children under five still occur in Africa. These deaths are mostly due to pneumonia, malaria, and diarrhoea. Moreover, in 2011 one in 3 children under five living on the African continent were stunted, and in 2012 it was estimated that 2.9 million children under the age of 15 years in Sub-Saharan Africa lived with HIV. Africa also hosts half of the out-of-school children of the world.

Sub-Saharan Africa has been prone to many socio-economic challenges, some of which include extreme poverty, social inequality, poor rural development, poor work policies and remuneration, poorly resourced families, HIV and AIDS, a high infant mortality rate and harmful cultural practices (Atilola, 2014:1; Population Reference Bureau & Health Research Centre, 2008:2; World Bank, 2005:23). In their report on child poverty in Africa, Watkins and Quattri (2016:8) state that “Sub-Saharan Africa’s children account for a large and fast-rising share of world poverty” and estimate that by 2030 – the target date of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for eliminating extreme poverty – these children will constitute 43% of the global poverty figures. Mulinge (2010:11) highlights the rising levels of poverty in developing countries, including countries on the African continent. Poverty is defined as the inability to meet one’s basic needs for nutrition, health, education, shelter as well as one’s social and recreational needs (United Nations Development Program, 1996, 2007 in Mulinge, 2010:11). Poverty holds profound disadvantages for child well-being, including children’s health, nutrition, and education, and increases their vulnerability for abuse, abandonment and human trafficking (Mulinge, 2010:12; Watkins & Quattri, 2016:22). The financial impact of HIV and AIDS on African families resulted in many children dropping out of school to go to work to ensure food on the table or to care for their parents and siblings, which infringed on the rights of children to education, play and care, amongst others (Mulinge, 2010:14).

Despite accepting the importance of *provision rights* (the right to life, survival and development) among professionals, state agencies, families and children, the CRC and the ACRWC come under scrutiny for failing to transform the lives of many children through bringing meaningful material benefits to children in developing countries, especially in the global South (Grugel, 2013:19; Mulinge, 2010:11). On the African continent, there appears to be numerous challenges in meeting children’s rights to provision. In Ghana, for example, there is little progress in ensuring that Ghanaian children experience the material benefits that are anticipated to come from the CRC. This lack of progress is attributed to lack of adequate resources by the government of Ghana (Manful & Manful, 2014:313-314). The excuse of a lack of resources has become a perennial rhetoric of most African states who are struggling to create a safer, secure, and free environment for children (Boussena & Tilioune, 2015:145). Thus, for most African families and children, a rights mantra which does not tackle the real

and lived challenges of poverty, hunger, starvation and constraints to access essential services such as education and health, is empty and lacks meaning.

It is then important to devote time interrogating the provisions group of rights as they seem to answer some of the expectations of most African children and families. The rights to life, survival and development in most African countries are the most popular and known rights by adults and children (Boussena & Tiliouine, 2015:140). Consequently, governments in Africa normally focus more on the provision of education, health care through health screening of all registered children, free health services for some younger children, and provision of birth registration services among many life and survival critical services. A study conducted in Algeria points to the fact that the country has made great strides in satisfying provisions rights especially in the area of health and education, yet it continues to lag in the protection of children from harm (Boussena & Tiliouine, 2015:132). This example is testimony that countries are still grappling with the natural truth that rights are indivisible and violation of one right leads to violations of other rights.

Mhaka-Mutepfa, Maree and Chiganga (2014:242) posit that in Africa both children's *provision rights* and their *protection rights* are infringed. In particular, the following rights are trampled upon: the right to education, health and security, child labour and participation in armed conflicts, forced circumcision, punishment and child marriages, among other issues. In Sudan, the formal child protection system remains weak, yet children who are denied birth registrations further suffer exclusions in accessing health, education and other key services important in ensuring the child's right to life, survival and development (UNICEF, 2013b:6). This is testimony that many African countries still struggle in terms of the nexus between children's protection and provision rights.

Southern Africa, like the rest of the continent, is home to diverse traditions, customs, beliefs, and values amounting to cultural practices that can be beneficial but sometimes harmful to children (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28). Some of the harmful practices include but are not limited to virginity testing, forced marriages, and male and female circumcision (Kaime, 2005:229-230; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28). It appears that girls in many Sub-Saharan countries are at risk for child marriages and female genital mutilation and are less likely than boys to be enrolled in school (UNICEF, 2014a). Female genital mutilation (FGM) is regarded as a painful and traumatic experience that violates girls' and women's right to health, life and security, amongst others (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:81). Other examples of gender-based socialisation practices in Africa include the unequal allocation of family resources between boys and girls, resulting in girls having more limited access to educational opportunities, health services, career choices and play, which ultimately affect their life-long developmental

potential (Kaime, 2005:229). Gender norms in Sub-Saharan Africa generally continue to be a paramount factor impacting on child-rearing practices (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28). In this respect, any cultural practice that includes gender discrimination violates the rights of the child (Kaime, 2005:230). However, one cannot discuss culture as harmful without thorough multi-disciplinary research (Maitra, 2005:253-259).

In many African countries violation of child rights manifests itself through child marriages (Nour, 2006:1644). Child marriage is legally defined as the marriage of a boy or girl under the age of eighteen years (UNICEF, 2015c). Mwambene and Mawodza (2017:21) assert that child marriage occurs when one of the parties is below the age of 18. Despite the presence of various international laws, child marriage in Africa remains high, with dire consequences for girls in terms of their education and health (Nour, 2006:1644). Childhood marriages are widespread across least developed countries and this in turn leads to high maternal and child mortality rates, school dropouts and low school completion rates, lower levels of education among girls and gender inequality in general (Human Rights Watch, 2014:3; Mwambene & Mawodza, 2017:21). Child marriage is thus not a singular but multiple violation, including violation of the rights to health, education, life, safety, and security (Human Rights Watch, 2015:12).

Child rights in Africa are largely related to the socialisation mode where generally children are subjected to strong control by parents, with a set of rules for children to conform to (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108). In some societies, voice-based *child participation* seems to suffer a major blow, possibly due to culture, traditions, and constructions of childhood (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108). In countries such as Zimbabwe, child participation is very low; a situation that is attributed to the constructions of childhood in the country where children are construed as immature and incompetent, which then subject them to arbitrary decisions from adults (Mhaka-Mutepfa et al., 2014:242). Lansdown (1994:41) asserts that participation rights are less accepted and less supported due to its challenge to the structural system and status quo of adult autocracy.

Although the importance of child participation is recognised in international human rights law, in practice this right of children is met with numerous challenges and child participation in both private and public matters is marginal (Gal, 2017:63). Collins (2017:15) ascribes this situation to aspects such as age discrimination, children being denied opportunities for participation, and tokenism and irrelevant or meaningless opportunities for participation. There are also differing perspectives related to physical and material participation versus voice-based participation. As such, child labour in Africa is largely viewed as a form of participation, hence it is not regarded as an issue that infringes on children's rights (Nhenga, 2008:xvi). In terms of

the CRC, the widespread occurrence of child labour is a contravention of child rights (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:82). Jha (2009 in Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:82) differentiates between the concepts 'child labour' and 'child work' in that work refers to doing chores around the home or earning pocket money with the intent to prepare children for becoming productive members of society. On the other hand, child labour is exploitative, unhealthy, keeps children from attending school, and robs children of their childhood. Besides criticism that may be levelled against the CRC and the participation rights of children, it is pertinent to uphold children's participation rights for a more inclusive, fulfilling, safe and secure community for the child (Lansdown, 1994:41). In this respect, Zermatten (2010:496) comments: "Indeed, how could a decision-maker determine the best interests of a child, without first asking the child in question about his/her opinion on the matter at hand?" Furthermore, the reality of children growing up in poverty-stricken communities' demand of children to contribute to the survival of the family, which then involves child labour (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:82).

The above discussion of the realisation of children's rights in Sub-Saharan Africa emphasise the need for critical consideration of the nexus between the three categories of rights as discussed under point 3.3.4. Considering the connection between the different categories of rights, children's rights to provision and participation cannot be ignored when focusing on their rights to protection. The child protection system plays a critical role in the protection of children against harm, regardless of their geographical and social contexts. In this sense, note can be taken of the following statement by UNICEF (2010b:26):

In remote villages or central cities, communities need to know when the rights of children are being violated, how best to respond, and whether rights violations are being addressed equitably. Creating the capacity to meet the challenge on a scale commensurate with the challenge requires a dedicated, systematic response tied to the rights of children.

As stated in the CRC (UNHRC, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), Governments should take responsibility for upholding children's rights. To this effect, Mulinge (2010:16) urges African governments to show evidence of their commitment to child rights by taking "deliberate, tangible and carefully targeted steps to strengthen protection of the rights of children living under conditions of poverty, those affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as those living under conditions of war." Governments fulfil this responsibility using child protection systems (UNICEF, 2019:4), as will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter an overview of children's rights was given. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (OHCHR, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (African Union, 1990) as the key documents related to the

rights of children internationally and on the African continent, were discussed and emphasis was put on the UNCRC's four guiding principles and the three categories of child rights, namely protection, provision and participation rights. The nexus between the three categories of children's rights was highlighted and the literature review was concluded with evidence that the realisation of the rights of children living in Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa was hampered by various challenges. The following chapter, Chapter 4, will focus on child protection and the role of child protection systems in securing children's right to protection.

CHAPTER 4

CHILD PROTECTION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of the study was on the potential use of IKS to enhance child protection, based on the IKS of the Vatsonga people. This chapter contains a discussion of child protection and child protection systems as formal structures intended to uphold children's rights to protection, including a developmental social welfare approach to child welfare and child protection. In addition, the state of children and child protection in Southern Africa is discussed. In terms of rights being locally relevant and gain legitimacy on the local level, as proposed by Eleanor Roosevelt (Morrow & Pells, 2012:906), it is imperative to unpack local social constructions within the African context that are seen to influence the protection of children. Child protection in the three countries in which the largest populations of the Vatsonga live (Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe), and thus of interest to the study, will be briefly described.

4.2 CONCEPTUALISING CHILD PROTECTION

Children's rights to protection are recognised as an important human rights law that protects children from repression within the political, economic or social environments (Chidozie & Oghuvbu, 2020:277-278). Children's exposure to adverse experiences such as violence and war, demands that child protection should be regarded as a priority internationally (Collins, 2017:15). Goldhagen, Shenoda, Oberg, Mercer, Kadir, Raman and Spencer (2020:80) posit that armed conflict and violence compromises the child's well-being and development by weakening their access to other basic rights such as health, peace and education. In this section, child protection and child protection services will be conceptualised.

4.2.1 Child protection and child protection services

Child protection refers to the prevention of and response to violence, exploitation and other forms of maltreatment to children (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2016). Child protection entails services aimed at protecting children at risk of maltreatment, which encompasses physical, sexual and psychological abuse, child neglect and psychological maltreatment (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:286). UNICEF (2006:1) adopts a wider definition of child protection that includes harmful cultural practices and societal issues and refers to child protection as "preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage." In addition, the organisation focuses on children who are vulnerable to such abuses, for example children who

live without parental care, children in conflict with the law, and children who are exposed to armed conflict. Munro (2019:1, 13) argues that child protection work is ambiguous, vague, and complex, which makes conceiving child protection a mammoth task.

In essence, child protection services could be viewed as services seeking “to guarantee the right of all children to a life free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect in both emergency and non-emergency settings” (Save the Children, 2013:1). Child Frontiers (2013:3) view the goal of child protection as to “promote, safeguard and fulfil the right of children to protection from abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect” so that children can live in supportive and caring environments in which they can develop optimally and in which their rights are realised. Therefore, child protection services are aimed at fulfilling children’s right to being protected from all forms of maltreatment. Of note, is the proposal that, although many children may have specific protection needs, child protection is relevant to all children and not only those who are considered at high risk of violation of their rights (Child Frontiers, 2012:3).

The Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce (UNICEF, 2019:4) emphasise the responsibilities of State Parties to establish effective child protection systems, stating:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes every child's right to protection from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, to access justice and to quality care. In accordance with the Convention, states have the primary obligation to ensure that all children are protected and cared for. To meet this obligation, it is imperative for States to establish strong child protection systems to prevent and respond to all child protection risks and concerns.

The obligation of States Parties to establish child protection systems is specified in both the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990). In Article 19, the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) obliges States Parties to ensure that child protection systems are in place for protecting children from various forms of maltreatment, stating:

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

The above stipulation is reflected in Article 16 of the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), which instructs State Parties as follows:

State Parties to the present Charter shall take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse, while in the care of the child.

Child protection thus entails a coordinated set of formal and informal efforts towards the prevention of and response to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of children (Davis et al., 2012:6). Save the Children (2009 in UNICEF, 2010b:12) indicates that the functions of child protection systems fall within two categories, namely functions related to decision making such as investigations, assessments and placements, and functions related to support, for example, capacity building, resources, coordination, research and evaluation. Children need to be protected from violence and all forms of maltreatment for sustainable growth and development during their lifetime. The urgency of these efforts is emphasised in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in which specific goals for the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against children are for the first time specified, and also in the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (UNICEF, 2019:4). The Sustainable Development Goals Report shows that especially Goal 1 on ending poverty, Goal 2 related to ending hunger and starvation, Goal 3 focusing on good health and well-being, Goal 4 that relates to quality and equitable education, Goal 6 that stipulates access to clean water and sanitation, and Goal 16 that is aimed at peace, justice, and strong institutions, directly refer to children and have specific targets related to children (United Nations, 2017:3-5, 11).

Within the child protection system, child protection services entail the interventions to protect children from any form of maltreatment, and include different services, programmes and measures that are designed and employed to uphold children's right to protection (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:286; UNICEF, 2013a:7). UNICEF (2019:4) emphasises the importance of an efficient social service workforce in child protection services:

[a] vital element of this system is a strong social-service workforce (SSW) with a clear mandate to protect children. A well-planned, trained, and supported social service workforce (SSW) plays a critical role in identifying, preventing and managing risks, and responding to situations of vulnerability and harm.

An effective child protection system is normally characterised by various elements. These elements include suitable policies, legislation and regulations; specific structures that have specified functions and sufficient capacities; effective interventions for the promotion, prevention and response to child maltreatment; social norms that are in support of child protection efforts; high-quality data and evidence that informs decision-making; and effective management and allocation of funding and resources (Inter-Agency Group, 2013:81). When the child protection role players interact with the various elements in the child protection system, a robust system is created which can protect all children in the best possible way (Inter-Agency Group, 2013:82).

A strong child protection system will support the SDG targets for child protection as well as Goal Area 3 of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 in that it can implement strategies such

as identifying and addressing risks, alleviating poverty to enhance the well-being of children and families, reducing discrimination, promoting social justice, changing social norms and harmful behaviours, and preventing and responding to situations of child maltreatment and family separation (UNICEF, 2019:5-6).

4.2.2 Levels of intervention

Child protection services are delivered at different levels of service delivery, namely macro, mezzo and micro levels, in performing promotive, preventive and response services (UNICEF, 2019:11). On the macro level, *promotive services* are aimed at advocating for resources, policies, and programmes and evaluation of child protection services, whereas these services on a mezzo level involve dialogue with community leaders and mobilisation of entire communities in child protection efforts. *Preventive services* are aimed at enhancing protective measures in communities (mezzo level) and providing support programmes for parents and caregivers, as well as programmes for family preservation and reunification (micro-level). It is noted that interventions focussing on cultural norms are conducted on the mezzo level. *Response services*, implemented at the micro-level, include a variety of services towards meeting the needs of children who have experienced various forms of maltreatment. High-quality response services for children and families include services from the social services, health settings, the justice sector, schools, and relevant institutions (UNICEF, 2019:11). The different levels of services are thus provided in different ecological levels in the child's environment, from the micro to the macro level described in the ecological systems theory (Keenan & Evans, 2010:35; Saraw, 2009:2), one of the theoretical frameworks of the study. In this regard, McCormack, Gibbons and McGregor (2020:147) view the ecological systems approach as a valuable framework in guiding the decision-making processes in child protection.

It is proposed that child protection systems should adopt a stronger preventative focus to be a system that not only responds to child protection issues. Child Frontiers (2012:3) states in this regard that the best approach to child protection is the establishment of systems and protective environments that aim to reduce or remove risks to the well-being of children. Preventive and early intervention services for strengthening caregiver capacity and preserving families have shown to be effective and is said to be most suitable strategies for developing countries because of the more optimal use of sources and greater sustainability of interventions (Child Frontiers, 2012:3; UNICEF, 2019:11).

The value of a protective environment for all children, as emphasised by Child Frontiers (2012:5), can be observed in the following statement in the document *A Framework for the Protection of Children* (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2012:7):

Children are also highly resilient and find ways to cope and move forward in the face of hardship and suffering. They draw strength from their families and find joy in friendships. By learning in school, playing sports, and having the creative space to explore their talents and use some of their skills, children can be active members of their community. We need to work with children and empower them to advocate for their rights and their protection.

Child Frontiers (2012:6-7) identify eight interrelated elements characteristic of protective environments for children:

- Societal attitudes, customs, traditions, practices and behaviours that respect children's rights and condemn all forms of maltreatment and violence against children,
- Governments that are committed to fulfilling their fundamental role in child protection,
- Freedom of children and communities to speak up about child protection issues,
- A suitable legislative framework in support of child protection,
- Empowering individuals, families, traditional and religious leaders, professional persons, and communities to identify and respond to child protection concerns,
- Educating children and caregivers about children's rights and promoting life skills and resilience in children,
- Provision of an effective monitoring system to support strategic interventions, and
- Providing social services to children who experience any form of maltreatment.

The above elements point to the involvement of different role players in the child protection system. Multiple actors involved in the child protection system work at different levels, ranging from individuals to organisations, towards the common goal of child protection (UNICEF, 2010b:14). The child protection actors include but are not limited to families, children and youth, communities, civil society, government, and private organisations (Save the Children, 2013:1). In agreement, Child Frontiers (2012:7) propose that child protection is relevant to all people from all levels of society, including parents, children, community members, staff at non-government organisations, policy and lawmakers, and government. Collaboration between all sectors in society is important for addressing the complex issue of child protection. Role players are from multiple sectors such as social welfare, justice, health, and education, with social work as the profession that is mostly involved with direct social services (UNICEF, 2019:9, 12).

4.3 CHILD WELFARE AND CHILD PROTECTION

Child welfare refers to a "network of policies and programmes designed to empower families, promote a healthy environment, protect children, and meet children's needs" (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:280). Kirst-Ashman (2013:280) indicates the basic goals of child welfare as follows:

- To meet unmet emotional and behavioural needs of vulnerable children,
- To provide sufficient resources for addressing external conditions such as poverty and insufficient health care so as to create a healthy and nurturing social environment for children to develop and thrive,
- To empower families by building parents' strengths for providing for and protecting their children,
- To provide supportive family services to enhance family functioning in areas such as communication, interpersonal dynamics, family conflict and substance abuse,
- To safeguard children from any form of maltreatment, and
- To arrange for permanent family living conditions through adoption or a change of guardianship, where needed.

The above definition and basic goals of child welfare show that child welfare services are broad and inclusive of child protection. Whereas it is recognised that multiple professional and non-professional persons form part of the social services workforce in child protection, "social work as a distinct profession is at the core of such efforts" (UNICEF, 2019:9).

4.3.1 The social worker as role player in child protection

Social work as a profession plays a central role in child protection policy and practice; in particular, the social worker is a catalyst in family support and protection services aimed at ensuring that children are not harmed and not at risk of harm (Verhallen et al., 2017:3). Social workers work with multi-agencies to ensure the protection of children and, in doing so, the social work profession assumes multiple roles. These roles include but are not limited to referrals and coordination; treatment plans such as child-care plans; family preservation services to ensure that the family bonds are maintained and strengthened; crisis intervention to stabilise crises and increase family skills and competencies; facilitation of the use of formal and informal resources for child care and child protection; and prevention of unnecessary removal of children from their families to alternative out of family care such as residential care (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:290). Doherty (2017:703, 705) adds that social workers dealing with children exposed to neglect and harm perform specific roles which include decision making about child well-being and protection for the case at hand, case planning and case progress evaluation, and admission of children to alternative care institutions. In addition, the child protection social worker dealing with maltreatment also has a role in court proceedings involving children (Doherty, 2017:704). More so, social workers act as brokers and advocates in the establishment of community-based responses in child protection (O'Leary, Young, McAuliffe & Wismayanti, 2018:7).

UNICEF (2010b:5) proposes that, internationally, childhood is a life stage in which children's vulnerability and need for protection are recognised. However, child protection interventions are not universal, and the responsibilities and strategies related to child protection differ per country's geography, social structure, wealth, religion, cultural beliefs, and political and social history. Literature provides examples of social work roles in child protection with various service users in many countries. O'Leary, Hutchinson and Squire (2015:718-719) describe social work roles with refugee families and their children in Palestine as building resilience and hope, enhancing social well-being and restoring social functioning. The social worker fulfils the role of a case manager, which involves a process of case intake and identification, risk assessments, compiling a care plan, and making referrals to other role players in the child protection system, among other tasks. Like in many other countries, social workers in Guatemala are at the centre of carrying out assessments which result in the placement of children in residential care and facilitate adoption cases; assuming their statutory authority which is based on international child protection laws such as the CRC and the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption which the government of Guatemala has ratified (Bunkers, Groza & Lauer, 2009:650).

In addition, there is a sustained rise in international social work in child protection which refers to dealing with child protection issues through international agencies such as UNICEF and Save the Children (O'Leary et al., 2018:2). Social workers in the United Kingdom are assigned statutory power to protect children from neglect and abuse (North, 2018:3). In Malawi, like most former British colonies, the social worker's central task is to ensure that children are protected from harm, including protection from their parents who sometimes subject them to child labour (Laird, 2016:308). In New Zealand, the social worker's central thrust is on relationships building with clients and their specific roles in child protection focus, amongst others, on risk assessment, placement of children in institutional care, foster care, reunification and reintegration services, counselling, vocational skills guidance for children, restoration of parent-child relationships, and ongoing monitoring and support of families (Keddel, 2011:604-605).

Examples from the literature show a variation in the recognition of the social work role as well as of resources available for child protection in different contexts (Midgley, 2017:98-100). In Sweden, the public views the role of a social worker as that of being a friendly and kind helper (Johansson, 2010:537). The Swedish social worker holds power that is derived from the resources and services they hold and their expertise in child protection. Consequently, their role in child protection is largely to do assessments, including means-testing and placement of children in institutions of care and in foster care (Johansson, 2010:542). Social workers in Guatemala, on the other hand, have to deal with multifaceted challenges, including a failing

economy, high infant mortality, chronic levels of malnutrition, family violence, and child neglect, and minimal budgets assigned to children's issues at a national level (Bunkers et al., 2009:649). In Indonesia, social workers have limited recognition and receive poor remuneration, as is the case found in most Asian countries (O'Leary et al., 2018:1). Despite this situation, social workers in Indonesia play a key role in child protection and family support. The emphasis of child protection is on the prevention of risks and harm through family support and community-based care options as opposed to institutional care. Paradoxically, in practice, the Indonesian child protection system largely relies on institutionalisation as an option of care and protection, however, there is a noticeable effort for Indonesia to gravitate towards a community-based response as opposed to institutional care (O'Leary et al., 2018:1). Institutionalisation is regarded as a devastating phenomenon that characterises most child protection systems of low to middle-income economies (Uliando & Mellor, 2012:2280). Thus, many countries adopt a developmental rather than a remedial approach to social work and child protection (Conley, 2010:39).

4.3.2 From remedial to a developmental approach to social work

Social work in the past has been criticised for having adopted a medical model in service delivery, which focused on the people's deficits and problems, therefore regarded as a deficit model. More recently, there has been a shift towards an ecological model and a strengths perspective in social work (Zastrow, 2013:405). Kirst-Ashman (2013:7) and Patel (2015:124) refer to three widely recognised perspectives or approaches that inform social welfare and social welfare programmes, namely a residual, institutional and developmental perspective.

The *residual approach* in social work focuses on problems and deficits, implying that social welfare services are required when people experience problems, and thus refers to the medical model described by Zastrow (2013:405). The residual approach tends to be critical of people and blame them for their failure to meet their own needs. The *institutional approach* adopts a more supportive stance, viewing people's problems as a normal part of life, thus having the right to benefits and services provided by society. From an institutional perspective, governments are assigned with the main responsibility for delivering social services; an approach often associated with modern industrial societies. The more recent *developmental approach* to social welfare focuses on addressing social problems through interventions that positively impact economic development. The approach was initiated to address the human development needs of poor nations who gained independence from colonial rule (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:7; Patel, 2015:18-22, 28).

Social work in the Global South has been criticised for its remedial nature which grew as a by-product of colonialism. This approach was introduced soon after the Second World War at a

point where countries needed to respond to increasing social problems in urban areas, such as juvenile delinquency, child neglect, homelessness and begging (Midgely, 2010:6-7). In the Southern African region, South Africa is the only SADC country that formally adopted the social development approach (Patel, 2015:29). Developmental social work, based on the social development approach, emphasises human agency, social change and challenging the status quo. Patel (2015:127) explains developmental social work as follows:

[d]evelopmental social work is informed by the social development approach to social welfare and involves the practical and appropriate application of knowledge, skills, and values to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities in their social context. ... Developmental social work aims to promote social change through a dual focus on the person and the environment and the interaction between them. ... to bring about change at both micro-, mezzo- and macro levels.

Patel (2015:122-123) describes the driving force behind the social development approach as human agency and the power of actors - including individuals, families, groups, communities and organisations - to take action and optimally use opportunities to change their circumstances and improve their lives. The goal of this approach is the attainment of human and societal well-being and security through the involvement of multidisciplinary and multisectoral role players, both professional and paraprofessional, from health, education, social work, social services and social protection fields, amongst others (Patel, 2015:124). The social development approach has a distinguishing feature, namely that it also focuses on economic development (Patel, 2015:125).

Developmental social work is person-centered and is guided by theoretical constructs such as strengths, empowerment, capacity building, resilience, self-determination and participation of service users, social justice and equality, investment and social rights, social constructionism and sustainable livelihoods, all related to a central concept of change (Lombard, 2019a:48; Midgley, 2017:168; Midgley, 2010:12-13). A person-centred approach is thus an application of social constructionist perspectives (Schenk, Nel & Louw, 2010:222). The goals of a social development approach to welfare are to promote social and economic development, to enhance the participation of persons who are socially excluded in developmental interventions, to achieve improvement in people's quality of life, and to promote human development and people's social well-being (Patel, 2015:124).

The developmental approach to social welfare has a strong focus on a continuum of service delivery, in which interventions are determined by the type and intensity of people's needs (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:352). In their adoption of a developmental approach to social work, the South African Department of Social Development prioritises services on a preventative level, followed by early intervention services to those considered to be at risk of harm, statutory

services of which child protection services form part, and, lastly, reunification and aftercare services (Department of Social Development, 2011:29-30). Preventative services focus on capacity building and enhancing resilience and well-being as well as prevention of risk or social challenges. Early intervention services focus on the early identification of risks, limiting the effects of risk, and the prevention of the onset of social problems. Services on a statutory level include rehabilitative or restorative services as well as protection services that could involve alternative care or residential care. Reunification and aftercare services promote self-reliance and optimal social functioning.

There is thus a move away from the social treatment or remedial model of welfare services by adopting the following features of service delivery (Lombard, 2019a:56-60; Patel, 2015:129-130):

- service delivery is implemented from a rights-based perspective, including the protection of the rights of people at risk and the advancement of human rights and human development,
- service delivery is family-centred and community-based and engage people in their development, amongst others by using the indigenous knowledge of people,
- services integrate micro and macro practice and are delivered at multiple levels of intervention, including work with individuals, groups, families, and communities,
- services focus on community development to improve communities' social, economic, psychological, environmental, and cultural conditions, and
- services are based on partnerships between government, non-government or voluntary organisations, informal social support networks, and business sectors.

The empowerment perspective of developmental social work focuses on developing personal, interpersonal, socio-economic, and political strengths of people, whilst the strengths perspective emphasises the need to build on existing resources (Zastrow, 2013:406). Specific interventions emerge within developmental social work, such as community development, asset building, resource development, services to support vulnerable groups, engaging social excluded persons in productive employment, strengthening the formation of social capital, and promoting democracy and good governance (Patel, 2015:125). In practice, developmental social work promotes community-based services such as day care, pre-school centres for poor children, group work, self-employment, and literacy programmes in community centres that are easily accessible, rather than office-based services. Residential services are avoided unless these are needed. Interventions are aimed at investing in people's skills, building assets, and enhancing their socio-economic well-being. In all these endeavours, the

professional relationship between the social worker and service user is of primary importance (Midgley, 2010:18-20, 22).

The social worker adopts a variety of roles to deliver services on the continuum of services and with different service users. These roles include the following (Patel, 2015:142-145):

- the enabler, aimed at empowering others,
- the mobiliser, by mobilising resources to meet people's needs,
- the facilitator, to guide and facilitate experiences, interactions, decision-making and actions,
- the educator, through sharing information and skills training,
- the counsellor, who provides guidance and support to individuals, families and groups to solve their problems,
- the conferee, who facilitates discussion forums with service users, families or members of the multi-disciplinary team,
- the broker, in linking service users with resources such as educational, social, financial and physical sources to meet their needs,
- the networker, by forming partnerships between organisations and between people and organisations to enhance the provision of services,
- the mediator, in which the social worker provides interventions to solve conflicts between parties, for example in family group conferences and mediation between different persons or groups,
- the advocate, which is a significant role in upholding the rights of people, for example in advocating for a service user, a cause, policy or programme,
- the social protector, in which the social worker is involved in the protection of the rights of people or populations at risk, for example protecting the rights of children, of people with disabilities or the elderly, and
- the innovator, which involves the development of practices and services that will be appropriate to local, regional, or global problems.

As developmental social work involves a holistic approach to service delivery and provides interventions at micro, mezzo, and macro levels to different service users, it aligns well with the general systems and ecosystems perspectives (Patel, 2015:137), one of the theoretical frameworks for the study.

Africa and the world at large have grappled with the fight to transform social work into a profession which brings sustainable, transformative, empowering and developmental interventions and that push has found an impetus in the United Nations Development Goals

especially the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which covered the year 2000-2015 and its successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will cover the years 2016-2030 (United Nations, 2017:4-5; United Nations, 2015:5). In this respect, Lombard (2019a:53-54) propose that social workers can directly or indirectly contribute to the SDGs, amongst others, through interventions aimed at the eradication of poverty, upholding human rights, and promoting social, economic and environmental justice.

4.3.3 A developmental approach to child welfare services

Conley (2010:31-33) describes how, historically, child welfare services in Anglo-American countries followed a remedial child protection paradigm biased towards coercive treatment of families, a crisis orientation, removal of children from their homes and families, and the use of residential care. In this child protection paradigm, child maltreatment was seen as a result of parental deficiencies, irresponsibility, and/or incompetence; thereby focussing on problems that are situated at the micro-level, without considering possible issues on the macro-level of society (Conley, 2010:31-33). Consequently, priority was given to placing children at risk of harm in out-of-home placements such as in children's homes and foster care. In Australia, historically there has been adoration of foster care, which resulted in various challenges such as multiple placements, children running away from foster care, poor educational attainment, limited involvement of children in foster care decision-making, poor youth mental health, and further abuse whilst in foster care (Ainsworth & Hansen, 2014:88-89). In addition, studies conducted in Australia have shown a higher rate of formal foster care placement among indigenous children.

The priority placed on alternative care options has led to a revolution in the child protection sector, where removal of children from birth parents is discouraged and programmes aimed at strengthening the caregiving capacity of birth parents has become the focus (Ainsworth & Hansen, 2014:88-89). In addition, there has been a realisation that parents and families are rendered powerless by a remedial approach to child protection. Hence, interventions moved away from the removal of children from their parents and families towards the promotion of inclusive child protection practices (Ainsworth & Berger, 2014:60; Hawkins, 2014:82). Inclusive child protection practices recognise that parents and families remain an important institution in children's care even though some of the abuses emanate from them (Ainsworth & Berger, 2014:64). Children still need contact with their parents even if the parents are a source of harm, therefore, there is a need for a balance between protection of the child and the need for the child to belong to a family (Hawkins, 2014:86). Hawkins (2014:83-84) criticises remedial child protection approaches especially for the following:

- It is disrespectful to parents,
- The system is heavy-handed in the use of power, making the approach unsustainable,
- Practices are harmful to children, including causing mental health problems,
- Mothers are re-victimised and traumatised because of the removal of their children,
- Formal child protection systems become overwhelmed and struggle to deliver services, and
- The required home visits and follow-up services are costly, therefore there is a need for cost-effective approaches.

Hawkins (2014:86) suggests that when child abuse is reported, the social worker should consider it as an opportunity to support the family rather than to view it as solely a child protection case. In the same vein, Wilson et al. (2008:466) note that interventions by social workers working with children and their families should be family-centred, yet child-focused; hence an ecological approach becomes more suitable given that a child stays within a broader system with its sub-systems.

Conley (2010:31) points to an urgent need to refocus child protection towards prevention work as opposed to mere responsive interventions. The author proposes that a developmental approach to child welfare can influence how child protection services are delivered (Conley, 2010:39):

The developmental approach to child welfare is exemplified by programs that promote early childhood care and development, involve communities and the extended family, and enable families and youth to accumulate assets. ... such efforts are ... a reaction against ineffectual remedial approaches to child protection that fail to address problems of poverty, stress, and social isolation at the root of child maltreatment. Many countries in the developing world have long recognized that a child protection orientation based on the Western model is ineffective in dealing with social problems in societies marked by poverty and deprivation.

A reformed (developmental) perspective to child protection takes a child rights approach, emphasising collaboration and the involvement of and partnerships with parents, the extended family and the community to ensure holistic protection and care of the child (Conley, 2010:43). Child protection interventions guided by the tenets of social development are to focus on the child and the environment, with goals such as poverty reduction to address child protection risk factors. Interventions include food security programmes and community-based child protection mechanisms such as the Community Child Protection Committees (CPCs), the *Isolobantwana* (Eye on the Children) model and the *Isibindi* (One has Courage) model of care developed in South Africa, and the National Case Management System of Zimbabwe (Patel, 2015:217, 221; Zimbabwe, 2013). This approach builds the capacity of families and

communities to be in a position to provide sustainable care and protection to children through interventions that target poverty eradication and promote social investments, early childhood programmes, educational and recreational activities, parenting classes, collaboration and partnerships with community systems, and coordination of local services (Conley, 2010:32, 42).

Indeed, over the past decades, the concept of child protection in developed countries such as the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom have changed from a historical focus on placing children who have been exposed to maltreatment in out-of-home care, to a developmental approach to welfare that emphasises prevention and the strengthening of families (Conley, 2010:31). This implies “that social workers need to move away from an almost exclusive emphasis on child protection towards family support” (Wilson et al., 2010:471). The emphasis on prevention, strengths and empowerment resonates with the developmental welfare approach that was initiated mainly in the USA and is actively promoted within the African context in countries such as South Africa (Midgley, 2010:11-12).

This wider focus of child protection is aligned with the ecological approach as described in the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which recognises the influence of the immediate and wider environment on children’s development and well-being (Berk, 2013:26-27; Louw et al., 2014:29-30). Walker (2012 in Lombard, 2019b:399) emphasises the relevance of ecological systems approaches to social work interventions in indigenous settings, where a community perspective and belonging at the community level are valued. In adopting a systems approach, child protection assumes a holistic view that includes all children and role players, rather than address each child’s situation in isolation (UNICEF, 2010b:6).

Of relevance to this study, is the symbolic and concrete meaning of the developmental approach to the local African context. Patel (2015:125) points out that social development refers to some beliefs and principles that are valued by African people which focuses on the creating of a caring society, collaboration, partnerships, and human agency and diversity. This worldview, *ubuntu*, proposes support to those who are most disadvantaged in society and the promotion of an acceptable standard of living for all. In this regard, developmental social work considers child welfare expenditures as investments in the functioning of children and families (Conley, 2010:31). This notion resonates with the notion that “[a] developmental approach to child welfare promises greater attention to child well-being” (Conley, 2010:48).

It is, however, recognised that many children may still need to be protected and their well-being promoted through the formal child protection processes (Wilson et al., 2010:474). A concerning aspect of child protection remains the high number of children from poor families and poor communities who end up in the formal child welfare system. Research findings on

child maltreatment show higher rates of child maltreatment among the poor (Conley, 2013:40). The UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2020 (UNICEF, 2017:9) state five primary goals areas that apply to every child worldwide:

- every child should survive and thrive,
- every child must be able to learn,
- every child should be protected from violence and exploitation,
- every child should live in a safe and clean environment, and
- every child must have an equitable chance in life.

However, in terms of Goal Area 3, focusing on every child's right to protection, millions of children are exposed to some form of harmful practice or violence worldwide (UNICEF, 2017:17).

4.4 CHILD PROTECTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

The child protection system in Sub-Saharan Africa is shaped and guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Save the Children, 2013:2). Although child welfare legislation in many countries is intended to promote good care for children, the widespread prevalence of child abuse and neglect led to the need for state intervention (Midgley, 2017:67). UNICEF (2010b:5) suggests that a lack of sufficient protection to children maybe because of risks in the family environment, in the socio-economic and political contexts, or due to natural or man-made emergencies.

The UNICEF Report on Child Protection highlights that violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect of children stem from economic and social inequality and from social norms that condone violence as a way to resolve conflict and discipline children; and that these are factors that encourage discrimination (UNICEF, 2015d:3). The report indicates that child maltreatment is often viewed as an individual problem, whereas it is a societal problem. As an example, a strong link between poverty and child maltreatment exists, and many children from poor homes and poor communities end up in the formal welfare system (Conley, 2010:40). The situation is worsened by an absence of policies, legislation, and effective measures for the prosecution of perpetrators and treatment of victims (UNICEF, 2015d:3-4).

Some of the major **challenges to child well-being**, and thus child protection, faced by Africa as a continent include poverty, HIV and AIDS, economic upheavals, war and conflict; the phenomena of refugees, child soldiers, child labour, sexual abuse and starvation; the burden of debt, the burden of dependency and harmful local practices (Lachman & Poblete, 2002:587; Nhenga, 2008:xvi). Midgley (2017:65) describes how disasters, violence, and endemic

diseases such as HIV and AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa and the recent Ebola crisis in West Africa placed unprecedented demands on families and undermined traditional family and community support systems.

Similarly, Southern Africa is home to a litany of challenges that overwhelm the child protection systems of the region. These challenges include HIV and AIDS, poverty and unemployment, gang violence, illegal drug dealing, financial stress, persisting war, conflicts, and displacements, resulting in gender-based rights violations, especially the violation of adolescent girls' rights (Falb, Asghar, Laird, Tanner, Graybill, Malinga & Stark, 2017:278-279). Mathews and Benvenuti (2014:32) concur with the view that Southern Africa is home to a host of challenges affecting children, mentioning the effects of poverty, child marriages, harmful cultural practices, and sexual violence. Available research evidence points to high levels of child physical abuse in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and in South Africa's Mpumalanga and Western Cape provinces, with girls constituting 72% of those abused whilst boys constitute 71% of physical abuse cases (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28). Such challenges demand political will of governments and collaborative efforts of all child protection system actors to mitigate the detrimental effects of the many social vices tormenting children and their families in the region.

Furthermore, African countries experience a **disconnection between formal and informal service delivery systems** (Davis et al., 2012:13; World Bank, 2005:23). In The African Report on Child Well-being (The African Child Policy Forum, 2013:xvi-xvii) it is suggested that "African governments are still not investing adequately in children" indicating that child deprivation is a systemic issue which hampers children's rights to development and health. Amidst numerous challenges, governments in Africa tend to focus more on the provision of education and health care through health screening of all registered children, free health services for some younger children and the provision of birth registration services, among many critical life and survival services (Boussena & Tilioune: 132-145). There is a stronger focus on physical and material well-being than on child protection and the voice-based participation of children.

In addition, Africa's child protection issues revolve around the **interpretation of legislation**. There seems to be a lack of clarity on whom the law seeks to protect due to different definitions of the child in different pieces of legislation within different countries (Nhenga, 2008:xvi, Wyness, 2013:342). Shumba and Moorad (2000 in Rapholo & Makhubele, 2018:311) share the example of situations where legislation that stipulates human rights and norms as well as the rights of children, are viewed in some cultures as foreign ideas that infringe on the African culture and tradition. This situation poses a challenge to a region where formal child protection services are still considered to be a relatively new phenomenon, with limited research on the

topic although there is an encouraging sustained increase in research related to child protection (Lachman & Poblete, 2002:588-590). Hawkins (2014:84) emphasises that more research in the field of child protection is needed in the Global North, suggesting that there is an even stronger need for research in the Global South.

Furthermore, child rights and child protection in Africa are largely influenced by **cultural norms and practices** related to the upbringing and socialisation of children (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108). Many of the traditions, customs, beliefs, and values among the people of Southern Africa can be harmful to children, including cultural practices such as virginity testing and child marriages (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28). In this regard, UNICEF (2017:17) states that every child has a right to be protected, “yet, social norms, cultural practices ... and other harmful actions undermine children’s safety and well-being in every country.” A need to increase efforts to enhance children’s rights to protection has thus been identified for the greater Sub-Saharan region, as well as the Eastern and Southern African regions (Davis et al., 2012:31).

Given the central role of social work in child protection efforts (UNICEF, 2019:9; Verhallen et al., 2017:3), the profession forms a core component in child protection in Africa and beyond. The profession is optimally placed to protect children given its value system, ethics, principles, techniques, and methods which are associated with the work of protecting, caring for the child, and strengthening families through family support services. **Social work as a profession** is facing a litany of challenges as it grows as a role player within the host countries’ child protection systems; challenges that include poor access to resources, instability in governments, language barriers, and the use of Western theories and models (O’Leary et al., 2018:4-5). Furthermore, a shortage of social workers hampers the delivery of social work services (Earle, 2008:74; Nhedzi & Makofane, 2015:356). These aspects also pose a challenge to child protection services as “... limited resources and capacity within the social welfare sector affect the capacity to plan, implement and coordinate institutional arrangements, human resource development, legislation and finance, and budget for an effective child protection system” (Davis et al., 2012:31).

To deal with the challenge of scarce resources, Hepworth et al. (2017:431) recommend that social workers seek and utilise support systems in the natural environment, such as relatives, neighbours, and congregations. These systems can be valuable as they can be immediately available in times of crisis and provide ongoing support in the immediate environment. This suggestion correlates with the views of the Inter-Agency Group on Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (Davis et al., 2012:8) that child protection work should include actors from formal sectors such as professional and paraprofessional persons, as well as from

informal and traditional sectors such as family and kinship networks. Such an approach could support more effective and sustainable services and supplement scarce resources (Davis et al., 2012:7).

Suggestions to seek collaboration with formal and informal support systems in the environment are reflected in the principles and values of child protection suggested by Child Frontiers (2012:10-12) and the UNHCR (2012:15-17). These principle and values include respect for children's rights, non-discrimination, best interests of the child, respect for cultural values and positive indigenous practices, child participation and partnerships with children, families, and communities. Furthermore, the principles and values emphasise the adoption of a strengths perspective and a holistic approach to interventions, capacity building of caregivers, ongoing needs assessment, and preventative interventions to minimise risk to children in order to create a protective environment for children.

It is, however, recognised that child maltreatment is not an objective reality, but rather "... a social construction that is culturally defined and shaped by prevailing values and norms about children, child development, and parenting ...". Thus, the understandings or social construction of childhood will determine how society thinks about and responds to children. Wilson et al. (2010:468) explain that these constructs will manifest in rules and laws on what children are allowed; what is expected of them; the state's and families' responsibilities towards children; and the extent of children's involvement in decisions affecting them. Therefore, child protection must recognise the link between child protection systems and social issues and social norms related to care and justice (UNICEF, 2013a:7-8).

4.5 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS INFLUENCING CHILD PROTECTION

Literature indicates that social constructions related to child protection differ between Western and African contexts. This phenomenon can be explained by social constructionism theory (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:104; Hall, 2005:2; Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2014:232; Stam, 2001:291; Wyness, 2013:341). Social constructionism maintains that people experience and interpret reality in their social relationships and within their socio-cultural contexts (Hall, 2005:2; Schenk, 2019:71). People's socio-cultural contexts will therefore influence their worldview, or the understanding of their world (McLeod, 2013:287, 290).

People's worldview is defined as "the way a person tends to understand his or her relationship with social institutions, nature, objects, other people and spirituality" (Barker, 1999:522 in Thabede, 2008:234). Thabede (2008:234) explains that people's worldviews are informed by their culture; indicating the influence of culture on how people socially construct phenomena. In this respect, Smith et al. (2011:71) state that social constructionism places a lens on culture

and context to understand societies. On the African continent, the African worldview thus “informs how Africans relate to phenomena” (Thabede, 2008:233).

Culture and the influence thereof on people’s beliefs, norms, and practices will be discussed in the next chapter as a background to the discussion of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). The discussion in this section will focus on differences in social constructions that relate to core issues underlying child protection. These themes focus on the social construction of the child and childhood, child well-being, equality and the status of the child, child-rearing, and child protection.

4.5.1 The construction of childhood

In modernised and highly legalised world contexts the terms ‘child’ and ‘childhood’ seem to have an obvious meaning from a mere glance. However, from a sociological perspective, these terms will have a different meaning to different groups of people and in different contexts, especially for those in Africa whose understanding of terms is based on the culture and history of a particular community (Andrews, 2019:39; Lit & Shek, 2002:105). Different cultures and societies have different perceptions of childhood, the status of children of different ages, as well as of children’s capabilities, responsibilities and rights (Gal, 2017:62). In international law applicable to children, a child is defined in Article 1 of the CRC as any person under the age of 18 except in cases where the age of majority is attained earlier (OHCHR, 1989). This is also the case in the African region, in which the ACRWC defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years (African Union, 1990). The footprints of these two documents are evident in countries such as Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe as countries that adopted the CRC and ACRWC in their national constitutions and child laws (African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Children [ACERWC], 2019; Kids Rights Index, 2015).

However, the *age determinant* of childhood is problematic, given that these laws emphasise chronological age to define a child, which is not a consideration for many Africans who understand child and childhood in terms of views and practices related to the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood (Bekker, 2008:395). Thus, a child among African peoples practising rites of passage is defined in terms of having successfully undergone rites of passage ceremonies such as circumcision among the Xhosa, Pedi, Venda, Lobedu, South Sotho, Tsonga and Tswana (Bekker, 2008:395). Child rights research is increasingly leaning towards social constructionism to discuss notions of childhood(s) to accommodate the diverse peoples of the world (Pupavac, 2011:287).

In discussing the construction of childhood, the ground-breaking work of Ariès (1962) whose work has earned him the position of the pioneer of social constructions of childhood, must be

acknowledged (Pupavac, 2011:287). Ariès (1962) claims that childhood is neither universal nor a natural phenomenon but is rather socially constructed (Giesinger, 2017:202). The social constructionist perspective challenges the concept that childhood is universal as set in the CRC's global childhood standards and brings in cultural factors and the context in which the child is raised as a factor in understanding childhood (Pupavac, 2011:287).

The CRC in its preamble endorses the notion that childhood is a stage of *innocence and vulnerability* as romanticised by Rousseau and others (Andrews, 2019:40). Thus, the ideal childhood is given as one filled with joy, happiness, and peace, as captured in the Preamble of the CRC (UN CRC, 1989:1). These views are reflected in the ideas of Rousseau, who viewed children as naturally good and a period of innocence, only corrupted by the adult world, the ideas of Pestalozzi who proposed that children should learn through action, and those of Froebbell who viewed childhood as a kindergarten (Blundell, 2012:128).

Another dominant view on childhood is the adult-centric view that views *childhood in futuristic terms*; that is, a child is a person in a process of becoming a full human being whilst the *moralists* see children as defective and evil who need education to purify them (Giesinger, 2017:201; Brighouse & Swift, 2014:65; McLeod, 2013:14). Childhood as a preparatory phase for adult life is denoted by the popular Tsonga phrase: “*Vana vahina hivona lamunzuko*” (our children, they are our tomorrow). Again, using a social constructionist lens, these views of childhood are not a singular truth as other cultural groups will have their perceptions on what they consider childhood. If there is no one truth to childhood, what then do society consider as a child? Such a question was asked in 1550 by Thomas Beacon and centuries later there is still no clear answer (Cunningham, 2006:12).

Current trends, debates, and issues point to the emergence of multiple conceptualisations of childhood, with one example of a distinct and opposing view of childhood being Eurocentric views of a child as an *autonomous individual* with rights, in comparison to the Afrocentric views of a child as part of a larger group who cannot survive on their own but has to depend on the group through the *ubuntu* philosophy. *Ubuntu* is a philosophy common to many cultural groups in sub-Saharan Africa, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. The Eurocentric notions of childhood are informed by capitalism and romanticism as advanced by Rousseau and others (Powell, Taylor & Smith, 2013:291).

In summary, it is important to highlight the main arguments advanced by the theory of social constructionism in understanding childhood. In doing so, the researcher employs the work of Giesinger (2017:208-210) who gives the following as main arguments in this regard:

- There is no ideal childhood but that there are diverse childhood(s) based on context, culture and historical experiences of a particular community or country,
- Childhood is neither natural nor universal as insinuated by the CRC but rather differs from region to region, country to country, and from community to community,
- Modern notions of childhood as shaped by the CRC are not static or fixed but change and can be changed through space and time, and
- Perceiving childhood through chronological age is faulty. Societies in Africa use various markers to construct childhood and adulthood, with some of these indicators being marital status, rites of passage, initiation ceremonies, and interpersonal relationships, amongst others.

4.5.1.1 African constructions of childhood

The study focussed on the phenomenon of child protection in an African context, namely that of the contribution of Tsonga IKS to child protection in Southern Africa. It is imperative that when seeking an understanding of 'child' and 'childhood' an African worldview is sought, debated, and discussed. The discussion of African conceptions of childhood is hinged on what Africans consider a child, their perceptions and views on children, and what they consider as a state of being a child (childhood) within an African context. In discussing African conceptions of childhood, one seeks to address pertinent questions asked by critical scholars on whether there is anything called an "African" child, let alone a "traditional African" child (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108).

Conceptions of child and childhood are not static but are in perpetual change, influenced by an array of factors, chief among them being colonisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, globalisation, politics, economics, and culture (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:104, Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2014:232-233). Pessimists have concluded that traditional Africa with all its glorified systems is fading away at an alarming speed (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:104). Also, whereas Africa has a lot in common in terms of culture, spirituality, beliefs, and practices it is by no way homogeneous (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:104). Optimists have argued that while Africa is diverse, there are more commonalities among its peoples, which warrants consideration of Africa as more homogeneous (Kanjere, Thaba & Teffo, 2011:245-246; Thabede, 2008:233). It is prudent to consider Africa as having a common culture, though there are minor variations, which makes it possible to then generalise conceptions of childhood by certain ethnic groups to the rest of Africa (Thabede, 2008:233). This is the stance taken by the researcher in discussing African conceptions of child and childhood.

A child in Africa is defined by *social indicators of maturity*, including rites of passage and religious practices as well as gaining a new social status such as marriage. The Akan ethnic

group of Ghana provides a good example. An Akan girl and boy child must go through some rites of passage known as the *bragaro* (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108). Under the *bragaro* girls were initiated from childhood to adolescence at their first menstrual cycle whilst boys underwent circumcision or must hunt for a dangerous animal in the dark to prove whether they were now mature men or still boys. Thus, age is not used to determine who a child is, but rather social status. Therefore, an adult who has not completed the initiation rites in Western Africa remains a child (Ndofirepi, 2013:89). This is also the case in Southern Africa among the Tsonga, Lobedu, Xhosas, and Zulus, among others (Bekker, 2008:395). The Platonic view that adults by age, who fail to satisfy adult roles, remain children, resonates well with the African worldview of the rites of passage as a pre-requisite for one to be considered an adult (Ndofirepi, 2013:78).

Children in Africa are conceptualised as immature, both biologically and socially, therefore have a *lesser status as compared to adults* and are in a developmental state of becoming full human beings (Ndofirepi, 2013:75). Children in many societies in Africa are viewed as blank slates needing an adult to fill them with what society expects (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108). This view is closer to Aristotle's submission that the child is an incompetent and incomplete being whose capacity is still evolving (Kennedy, 1984:31, Brannen & O'Brien, 1995:70 in Ndofirepi, 2013:75). The latter view of children leads to societal attempts to subject children to some form of education to moralise, purify and pacify children through myths, tales, songs, and dance in traditional Africa, whereas modern Africa subjects the child to a formal schooling system which serves the same purpose. Radicals see the formal schools as a way of removing the 'Africanness' within the African child and replace it with the character of the former colonial master (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:74-75).

A child in Africa is a *valuable possession* (property) owned by an adult or adults who are their parents, extended family, or the community. This view is buttressed by the Tsonga phrase when referring to children that "*vana vahina hivona lamunzuko*" (our children they are our tomorrow) as well as in some sections of the Shona ethnic group who, when referring to children, use phrases such as "*kuita mwana*" (having a child) and "*mwana wangu*" (my child) that all point to the idea of possession and ownership of children in Africa (Ndofirepi, 2013:89). This value placed on children leads to a protectionist and caring approach to child protection issues. Thus, in Africa the responsibility to care and protect the 'jewel of the society' (child) was not only the responsibility of individual parents but the community as a whole (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:109; Ndofirepi, 2013:78; Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2014:233).

Most importantly, children in Africa are also viewed from a *spiritual perspective* as ancestors incarnate. A child is viewed as a re-birth of a deceased family elder or an important member

of the community; hence it was a common practice for children to be given names of the deceased elders. This practice resulted in children being accorded protection, socialisation, and care because failure to look after them means that their deceased namesakes would be angry (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108).

In summary, a child in Africa is not defined by age but by social roles that they are able or unable to assume. The African child is then viewed as valuable, a family asset, and an incompetent, delicate human becoming, amongst others. Politics, globalisation, modernisation, wars, and the scourge of HIV and AIDS have impacted on Africa's social structure (Midgley, 2017:65), which then transformed the conceptions of child and childhood. These factors, especially poverty, HIV and AIDS, and wars have collapsed the extended family and depleted its social networks and capacity to care for and protect the child (Midgley, 2017:65-66). Africa views a child as belonging to everyone. In this regard, the orphan crisis was an unknown phenomenon given that a child was easily absorbed into the kinship care system, however, all this is at the brink of total obliteration due to the magnitude of the HIV and AIDS problem (Tanga, 2013:174).

4.5.1.2. Comparisons of Western and African constructions of childhood

Western conceptions of childhood are widely publicised through research reports, laws, media, and artistic work. This wide popularisation of Western conceptions of childhood makes it difficult to distinguish it from what one can term "an internal conception." Western conceptions of childhood are largely attributed to the works of great philosophers such as Rousseau, John Locke, Plato, Aristotle, and Aries (Ndofirepi, 2013:73-74). Thus, Western childhood is tied to chronological age, romanticism, the innocence of childhood, a child as vulnerable, irrational, evil, a family liability, incompetent, incomplete and, most recently, a child as a rights holder.

The works of Aries, Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant and Locke are credited as some of the founding philosophers on Western conceptions of childhood in which children became viewed as innocent, irrational and evil (Woodhead, 2009:2017). This understanding is augmented in international laws where children are subjected to parental guidance because they are deemed still evolving (CRC, Article 5) and the protection of their right to education is prioritised. Whereas the West is largely seen as an example in issues of children, some of their philosophers bemoaned how children were subjected to arbitrary schooling and treated as mere subjects who are irrational. Thus, the earlier romanticisation of childhood in Western countries as a period of innocence and purity has led to child laws that sought to perpetuate adult control over a child's affairs (Caputo, 2017:76; Wyness, 2013:340).

Western notions of childhood denote that childhood is a natural phenomenon, *marked by age*, hence it is *universal*. Aries' work contests this view and advances an alternative conception that childhood is the product and by-product of what societies perceive as the meaning of being children based on their context (social construction) (Aries, 1962 in Ndofirepi, 2013:73). However, the conceptions of childhood as natural, biological, and universal still receives prominence, shaping child protection laws and policies. There is an over-reliance on age to mark childhood, consequently, childhood is seen as ending at the age of eighteen (African Union, 1990; Ndofirepi, 2013:73; OHCHR, 1989; Zimbabwe, 2013). The concept of placing age as a marker was seen as built around eligibility for franchise and military conscription (Morgan, 1996:14). This view stands contrary to the African notions of childhood which emphasises social markers to mark childhood as opposed to age, as discussed in the previous section.

In the 21st century Western notions of childhood have significantly shifted to a new era where a child is viewed as a full human being endowed with individual inalienable rights (Ndofirepi, 2013:83). The child as a rights holder is viewed as a rational, full social actor who can contribute to decision making processes; hence, children should be consulted when decisions that affect them are made (Caputo, 2017:76, Wyness, 2013:340). Thus, decisions within the family and other forums should be made based on discourse and equality between an adult and the child (Wyness, 2013:340). Again, this view is contrary to African notions of childhood that continue to subvert an individual to the rights and goals of the community in the spirit of *Ubuntu* which creates communocratic societies (Ndofirepi, 2013:80). Africa, based on its cultural context, does not view a child as an individual but as belonging to a bigger group in the spirit of *ubuntu* (Ndofirepi, 2013:83), as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. On the contrary, Western societies, based on capitalism and individualism, see a child as a unique individual with own full rights.

The Western philosophy is codified in the international and regional laws such as the CRC and ACRWC, which give children rights. However, the differences noted between the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) and the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) are a sign of a tug of war between the two worlds. Whereas the CRC gives children rights and places responsibilities on the parents for the fulfilment of the rights, the ACRWC in Article 31 also places responsibilities on the child to foster unity, cohesion, perpetuate African culture and to respect elders. However, the differences between the CRC and the African Charter are not that fundamental as the two documents both entitle a child to some rights (Memzur, 2008:24-25). It must be noted that whilst the child in Western conceptions is largely a full rights holder, certain principles of the CRC such as the principle of the best interest of the child still leave adults with much power to decide for children what is best for them, with little consultation (Mahuntse, 2015:19-20).

Nhenga (2008:xvi) observes that the West views childhood as a phase of innocence and physical weakness hence to them child labour is an issue and a form of abuse. On the contrary, Africa views childhood as a period of character building and amassing technical skills, hence the concept of child labour is unknown to Africa, and children's engagement in household and agricultural chores is regarded as a normal way of raising a responsible child (Nhenga, 2008:xvi). A difference in conceptions of child labour creates another dilemma related to child participation and agency of the child. In Africa, due to the conceptions presented by Nhenga (2008), one would see that child participation is largely in material and physical forms whereas the child's voice is muted while, on the contrary, Western societies amplify the child's voice and mute material and physical participation of the child (Wyness, 2013:341). Thus, African societies seem to favour conceptions opposed to those that view a child as having an equal voice to an adult (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108).

The differences in conceptualising childhood results in accusations and counteraccusations on child abuse between the West and Africa. Africa, since its "discovery" by Europe, continues to be viewed as a dangerous, child unfriendly and insensitive environment for the child, characterised by abuse, maltreatment, and neglect (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108). Africa is at the receiving end of harsh criticism for child abuse but some of these perceived abuses emanate from the intolerance of the view that there are multiple conceptions of childhood in the world and, where an African view of childhood deviates from the Western view, it does not always amount to child abuse (Nhenga, 2008:xvi).

Wyness (2013:341) posits that whereas there are differences in how non-Western and Western societies construct childhood, globalisation has created convergence in the understanding of childhood in the world. Thus, globally, the world now enjoys universal standard conceptions of childhood, though it is clear that Western notions are subverting the African notions of childhood (Wyness, 2013:341). This situation raises the question of how a universal understanding of children can exist when the process of understanding childhood is socially constructed (Fayemi, 2009:167; Wyness, 2013:341). It creates a situation that demands engagement in research to document and analyse people's perceptions in order to have an understanding of a particular society's notions of childhood (Fayemi, 2009:167). Reconciling the two divergent worlds, one can acknowledge that though there are differences in conceptions of childhood, there are common issues which include conceptualising a child as delicate, vulnerable, and innocent.

In summary, childhood is largely not natural and universal, but rather socially constructed (Fayemi, 2009:167; Wyness, 2013:140). As such there are multiple and diverse conceptions of childhood in different societies. Thus, when approaching child protection issues in Africa

social workers need to be mindful of the Afrocentric view of child protection (Sewpaul, 2016a:30) and that deviation from Western notions of childhood is not tantamount to violations of child rights. In the opinion of the researcher, it is entirely up to Africa to put up robust research in the field of African philosophy of childhood from an African worldview in order to demystify the notions that deviation from the Western standards of childcare is perceived as harmful and putting children in danger.

4.5.2 The concept of child well-being

The concept of well-being in general and in particular, is difficult to define, comprehend, and measure (Morrow & Mayal, 2009:221; Thomas, 2009:11). Well-being is a concept that can be understood in varied ways (Holden, 2010a:1138). The notions of well-being revolve around issues of needs, rights, poverty, quality of life, and social exclusion (Axford, 2009:372-273).

Well-being is generally understood as concerned with people's quality of life and is further comprehended through objective indicators such as household income, health status and educational resources, as well as subjective indicators which include perceptions of one's quality of life, life satisfaction and happiness (Statham & Chase, 2010:2). Holden and Williamson (2014:1138) tend to concur with most suggestions that major indicators of child and youth well-being can be divided into physical health, mental health, academic achievement, and behavioural indicators. These domains and the indicators of well-being are not uniform but varied domains and measurement indicators are used across the world to understand child well-being (Statham & Chase, 2010:2). Despite the lack of uniformity there is emerging consensus across countries and professions that child well-being is multi-dimensional, hence it revolves around facets of physical, emotional, and social well-being focusing on the immediate and future lives of children according to both objective and subjective measures (Statham & Chase, 2010:2). There is a noticeable shift from overly relying on objective well-being measures towards the inclusion of the children and young people's voices in conceptualising child well-being through the use of subjective measures such as asking children to express how they are feeling and what they perceive as well-being as opposed to measuring rigid indicators (Statham & Chase, 2010:2, 5).

Child well-being can be understood through two main perspectives, namely a developmental perspective and a child rights perspective (Pollard & Lee, 2003:59-61). A developmental perspective focuses more on measures of deficits such as poverty, ignorance, illness and policy intervention in a paradigm that tends to focus on redressing social exclusion and inequalities as they are seen as vices that undermine the child's health and well-being. As such, the developmental perspective relegates the child's inner strengths, attributes and potential to the periphery (Stratham & Chase, 2010:5). On the other hand, a child rights

perspective of well-being focuses more on providing opportunities and improvement of the child's quality of life, both in the current life and the future, taking into consideration issues of environmental sustainability as well (Morrow & Mayal, 2009:221). Government policy makers normally draw from the developmentalist and child rights perspectives on child well-being and use five different lenses to understand child well-being (Statham & Chase, 2010:6):

- the *needs* of children and families within a certain context,
- a focus on *child poverty*,
- *quality of life* of children focusing on creating safe play facilities, social and emotional learning in schools,
- *social exclusion*, focusing on the reduction of teenage pregnancies, improving attendance and progression rates in schools, and
- a focus on *child rights*.

Childhood well-being is thus a social construct of a given context; therefore, various countries have their own benchmarks of child well-being, though these normally converge on certain areas as already noted. In England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales childhood well-being is viewed holistically and is construed to mean positive outcomes for children in terms of health, education, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes, and most of the monitored indicators include play and leisure, a safe home and community, rights and respect, and economic well-being (Statham & Chase, 2010:9). In Scotland, the notions of child well-being gravitate towards the idea that a child should be healthy, safe, respected and responsible, and participate and be included in all issues relevant to the child (The Scottish Government, 2008:5). In Australia, the notions of child well-being are conceived as a child having a fulfilling sense of self, being safe and sure, and having agency (child participation) (Statham & Chase, 2010:10). Statham and Chase (2010:13) goes on to argue that the well-being of the child is not static but can change over time either for the better (improved positive outcomes) or for the worse (regression into negative outcomes). The Australian, Scottish, Irish and English examples of how child well-being is construed point to the fact that whilst various nations and continents have their unique conceptions of child well-being there are overarching themes, hence making it possible to establish common ground on what child well-being is all about.

Some of these overarching themes are evident in the document *Agenda 2063. The Africa We Want* (African Union Commission, 2015), which focusses on both developmental and rights-based views of well-being. In the document, Section 6, the African aspirations for its people put forward the following:

... our desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls are realized, and with freedom from fear, disease, and want.

Several sections in the Agenda 2063 document (African Union Commission, 2015) point to aspects such as an adequate standard of living and quality of life, good health and well-being (Section 10), the provision of basic services such as health, education, nutrition, shelter, water and sanitation (Section 11), investment in early childhood development and in basic and higher education (Section 12) as well as having an “entrenched and flourishing culture of human rights” (Section 34) and safe and peaceful spaces in communities (Section 36). With specific reference to children, the aspiration is, amongst others, to put children first, promote full gender equality (Section 49), and to empower children by the full implementation of the ACRWC, as stated in Section 53 of the Agenda 2063 document.

The African Union (2019), in a document *Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs*, indicates how Agenda 2063 supports certain UN Sustainable Development Goals, for example, those related to quality education opportunities for all (SDG 4), ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all persons of all ages (SDG 3), and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16). Noteworthy, is that Agenda 2063, Sections 51 and 72(k), proposes efforts to end all harmful cultural practices, specifically female genital mutilation and child marriages, that discriminate against girls and women and pose barriers to their health and education. The role of families in child well-being is emphasised by Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000 in Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29) who state that “Families play an important role in the wellness of children, for example, social wellness, psychological wellness and physical wellness.”

The concept ‘child well-being’ represents the holistic nature of a child, including aspects such as physical health, safety, psychological and emotional development, behavioural and cognitive development as well as social development (Moore, 2013b:3). Child well-being is an outcome, not an input, and the well-being outcomes can be both positive and negative. Hence it is important to also pay attention to poor outcomes as the effects of these outcomes are stronger and impact the child adversely (Moore, 2013b:7-8). An example of some of the inputs of childhood well-being could be captured diagrammatically as follows:

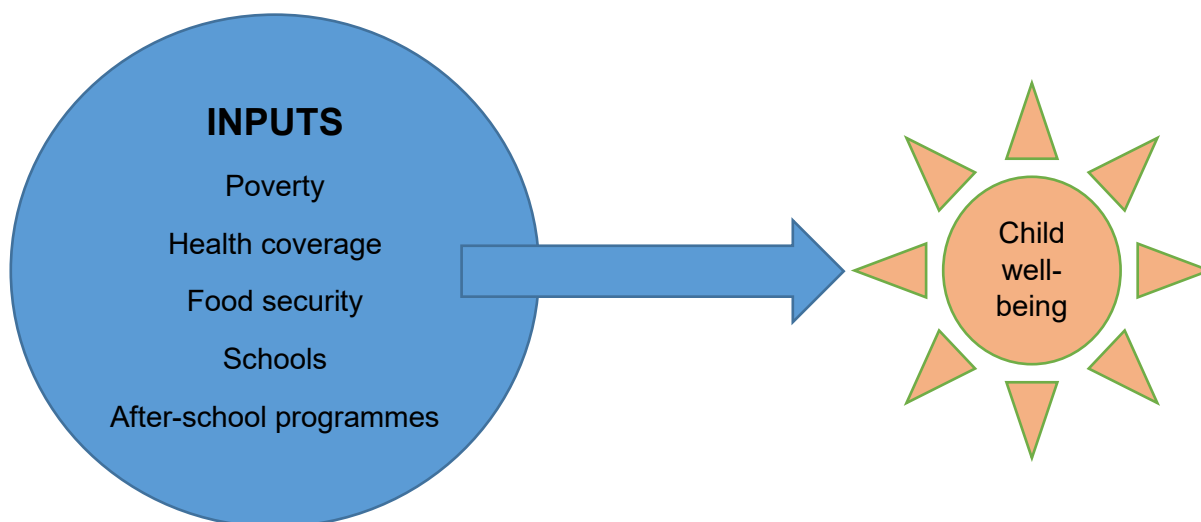


Figure 4.1 Child well-being inputs (Adapted from Moore, 2013b:8)

The above diagram depicts that in order for a child to enjoy well-being, aspects such as poverty has to be eradicated, health coverage increased, food security enhanced, and access to education guaranteed (Moore, 2013b:8). Clark, Coll-Seck, Banerjee, Peterson, Dalglish, Ameratunga and Claeson (2020:605) add that child well-being is under threat from emerging and persistent challenges such as climate change, violence and armed conflict, inequalities and unfair commercial practices. Goldhagen et al. (2020:80) concur that violence and armed conflict in Africa is an increasing threat to child well-being. The current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) are vital instruments for states to achieve child well-being (Clark et al., 2020:605).

In conclusion, there appears to be a convergence of Western conceptualisation of child well-being with that of formal institutions such as the African Union. At the same time, it is clear that some practices on the African continent, such as child marriages and female genital mutilation, are still practised and affect the well-being of children, especially the girl child.

4.5.3 The concept of equality

The concept of equality could be viewed as both a descriptive and normative concept that can be measured either through quantity or quality (Capaldi, 2001:1). Equality could be understood through the notion that in some respects all human beings are equal, but that there is a need to treat people in a way which may be identical or different (Capaldi, 2001:2). In addition, equality is a set of natural laws equal to human rights tenets especially the notions of human dignity, equality, and inalienable rights (Andritoi, 2007:384).

The quest for equality could be traced to the ancient world such as ancient Athenian democracy which was characterised by hierarchical and stratified societies where women, slaves, and aliens occupied lower rungs; hence they were excluded from the mainstream citizenship (Capaldi, 2001:2). In Athenian democracy, freedom was granted to a city or

community and not to an individual; in turn, the individual was supposed to work to maintain their city and community's freedom as opposed to them pushing to be free on their own (Capaldi, 2001:2). Ancient philosophers such as Plato understood a just society through its harmony where the division of labour was correlated to individual differences and abilities, whereas Aristotle understood equality as the same treatment of similar persons, indicating that revolutions erupt when those treated unequally rise to demand equality (Capaldi, 2001:3).

Some of the founding advocates of equality include the United States founding fathers and the French philosophers, in particular J.J. Rousseau, who through his *Theory of the Social Contract* reiterated the notions that all human beings are born naturally good, free and equal in dignity and rights, yet everywhere they were in chains (Andritoi, 2007:384). Dumouchel ([sa]:2) identifies three types of equality. The first of these types refer to the formal equality of opportunity which refers to formal and legal barriers such as laws and policies limiting access to opportunities. The second type, material equality, refers to a process where deep-rooted prejudices and discrimination can limit the access of certain groups of people to resources despite the availability of formal systems to end the unequal treatment. Equality of opportunities, which is the third type of equality, interrogates the extent to which there is level ground for everyone to access opportunities within a 'careers open to talent' policy of a given society.

In more recent times, the concept of equality revolves around the social, political, and economic domains and these are also domains used by practitioners and academics to measure well-being. Equality in the Polish Constitution of 1997, for example, is understood as the prohibition of discrimination on political, social or economic life of the people (Zajadlo, 2017:3). Marxist theorists and critics advance that the concept of equality is closely linked to the concept of well-being (Pereira, 2013:47).

The European Convention on Human Rights (European Court of Human Rights, 1994) refers to concepts of equality as that all persons are equal before the law (Protocol No. 12), the prohibition of discrimination on any grounds, for example, sex, race, colour or language (Article 1), and the equality of right between spouses (Article 5). Similarly, the American Convention on Human Rights (Organization of American States, 1969) proclaims the prohibition of any discrimination on grounds of aspects such as race, colour or birth (Article 1) and specifies that all persons are equal before the law (Article 24), including equal rights for children born in or out of wedlock (Article 17). The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Organization of African Unity, 1986) similarly state that "every individual shall be equal before the law" (Article 3) and that all people shall be equal and enjoy the same respect (Article 19). The

themes of equality and non-discrimination are thus evident in all the mentioned conventions, whether in Western or non-Western contexts.

In Africa, the concept of equality is generally associated with notions of gender parity and gender inequalities, especially the unequal treatment of women and girls (Olatunji, 2013:3). Of note, is that specific reference to the prohibition of discrimination against women, as well as to the protection of rights of women and children is mentioned in Article 18 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Organization of African Unity, 1986). As such, pressure has increased in the 20th and the 21st century to address inequalities on the African continent. The label of inequality associated with African societies is increasingly coming under scrutiny from both Afro-critics and Afro-apologists. Afro-critics demonise indigenous cultural practices as harmful to women and children, while Afro-optimists defend indigenous practices as beneficial to women (Olatunji, 2013:3). Optimists are supported by recent research findings in Indonesia and Zambia that the cultural practice of paying bride price was beneficial to girls as families were sending their girls to school in anticipation for getting better bride price returns (Ashraf, Bau, Nunn & Voena, 2020:591).

There is increased literature repudiating the notions that mistreatment of women and children in Africa is part of the tradition, customs and beliefs of the African people, arguing that the basis of inequalities are sex, ethnic origin, economic status, and political ideology, among other factors (Olatunji, 2013:2). On the contrary, Maluleke (2012:1) maintains that harmful cultural practices such as forced marriages (*ukutwala*), virginity testing, widows' rituals, and female genital mutilation, among other practices, are sources of inequalities. The mentioned author alludes that the world has made significant progress in promoting gender parity as testified by world conferences such as the 1995 Beijing conference and the 2005 New York summit, however, in Africa women are still marginalised and face an array of challenges, including endemic poverty, domestic violence and multiple forms of discrimination (Olatunji, 2013:3). Ombati and Ombati (2012:116) concur that women and girls face challenges such as poverty, harmful cultural practices and traditions, political instability and violence, which drives inequalities. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is another recurrent theme in gender equality literature and studies exploring the concept of equality in Africa. FGM is said to be resulting in death, disability, miscarriage, stillbirth, shock, haemorrhage, sexual dysfunction, and post-traumatic stress disorder, hence, it is a violation of women and human rights (Khosla, Banerjee, Chou & Fried, 2017:2-3).

Gender inequality in politics is seen as rife, with very few countries such as South Africa, Nigeria and Liberia having made strides in achieving gender inclusivity in their politics (Olatunji, 2013:5). However, Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012:11) are still critical of South

Africa, arguing that its political leaders such as Jacob Zuma and Julius Malema exhibit male chauvinism and toxic hegemonic African masculinities. It is argued that unruly elements in African societies have disguised their cruelty against women as tradition and norms; a view that is being vehemently challenged by most African scholars. To eradicate inequality, two major approaches have been put forward, namely the psychological approach and the economic empowerment model, whilst others suggests that the most effective approach to address gender inequality is to confront the forces which enable masculinity to thrive (Olatunji, 2013:3).

Property rights and land ownership in sub-Saharan Africa is a strong recurring theme when looking at gender inequalities in the region. As an example, in Cameroon, women constitute 52% of the entire population yet they own a paltry 2% of Cameroonian land (Cameroon Gender Equality Network, 2011). Ironically, women are the ones who work the land in their numbers, but in terms of property rights they continue to be side-lined based on sex (Doss, Kovarik, Amber, Agness & van den Bold, 2013:v). This situation has resulted in some postulating that the meaning of marriage based on culture is the major regulator of women's access to property rights and land ownership in Africa (Scalise, 2013:53). Customary marriage views women as assets and property of their husbands which then undermine women's property rights (Pemunta, 2017:69). This situation is made worse by the fact that marriage among traditional Africans is an alliance between two families as opposed to it being a contract between two individuals, as is the case in Eurocentric practice (Pemunta, 2017:69).

In Ghana, like many African countries, gender inequalities in customary land ownership is attributed to patrilineal inheritance system which dictates that property rights are devolved from the father to son or father to brothers which then undermines wives and daughters' property rights (Kuusaana, Kidido & Halidu, 2013:64). However, the matrilineal system of inheritance which is also practiced in Africa dictates that inheritance is through the mother's lineage hence this system does enhance women's access to property rights although men still have control over this system since the inheritance is passed on to one's sister's son in most instances (Kuusaana et al., 2013:64). This is an indicator that gender inequality is deep-rooted in cultural and traditional practices which could not be uprooted overnight.

There is a persisting conflict between customary law and modern human rights law, with the former being blamed for perpetuating most of the inequalities faced by women in Africa (Fombad, 2014:475-476). The blame of customary laws as the major cause of inequalities is normally advanced by Afro-critics, something which is challenged by Afro-optimists as discussed earlier. Jayachandran (2015:75) is of the view that gender inequalities are precipitated by cultural factors. Firstly, patrilocality is a practice whereby a married couple lives

near or within the husbands' parental or family homestead. This practice leads to families preferring to invest in a boy child who does not leave the family, as opposed to the girl child who will eventually financially and physically cease to belong to her birth family. Secondly, based on cultural views that sons are a form of social security in old age, the boy child is seen as a saviour of their parents in their old age, hence the skewed investment in the education of boys over that of girls. Thirdly, the dowry and lobola system perpetuates the views that women are assets and an estate of their husbands who pay for them. Fourthly, the patrilineality system is a practice whereby names are passed to the next generations through male descendants; hence the girl child's status is lowered. The practice of arranged marriage in some parts of Africa and some parts of Asia was found to be still prevalent (Anukriti & Dasgupta, 2017:3). In Morocco, for example, arranged marriages and forced marriages continue to undermine the rights of women and girls, hence fuelling gender inequalities (Bravo, Martinez & Ruiz, 2014:564, 567).

Sub-Saharan Africa also suffers from inequalities in the health sector related to urban versus rural inequalities and inequalities between the poor versus the middle- and upper-class. As such, child mortality rates are higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and also higher among the poor than among the middle and upper class (Quentin, Abosede Aka, Akweongo ... Te Bonle, 2014:1). Furthermore, Sub-Saharan Africa portrays higher child mortality rates when compared to Northern Africa (Quentin et al., 2014:2). Despite remarkable economic growth experienced in Sub-Saharan Africa, child poverty and child malnutrition, among other inequalities, have persisted and Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria, among the progressing countries, are registering high inequalities in malnutrition (Garcia, 2012:9).

The concept of equality and liberty are closely linked to well-being, as already noted. Marxist theorists conceive well-being as a life free from the exploitative system of capitalism which results in social inequalities. Marxist theory provides a broad framework upon which inequality could be understood as it views inequality in terms of economic, political, and social dimensions (Pereira, 2013:48). This view captures what normally transpires in African societies where women and girls are not only excluded from political positions but are also side-lined when it comes to wealth accumulation and inheritance. Women also have a lesser voice on issues such as marriage and various rituals practiced in their communities. To this effect, the state seems to lack capacity to end inequality as it is a conduit through which inequality is perpetuated (Pereira, 2013:48). Thus, understanding inequality demands a thorough holistic reflection on a range of issues and dimensions not only limited to politics, economics and social issues.

4.5.4 Childrearing as a social construct

Children are exposed to specific influences in the context or specific environment in which their development occurs. These influences are not universal but are mostly related to the specific cultural context (Louw et al., 2014:13-14). Super and Harkness (1986 in Robinson, 2007:139) refer to the cultural context in which children are socialised as the developmental niche. Super and Harkness (1995 in Robinson, 2007:139-140) describe three components of the developmental niche which relate to the influence of the environment on parenting and the socialisation of children:

- the physical and social setting which determine the living arrangements, for example growing up in a nuclear family, found in many Western contexts, or an extended family, as found in many African countries,
- the cultural customs and childrearing practices, for example, an emphasis on dependence or independence training, and
- the psychological characteristics of the parents, for example the parents' cultural belief systems and their developmental expectations for the child.

Traditionally, American and European child-rearing practices, attitudes, norms and values have been touted as yardsticks of best practice in child development and parenting. As a result, child-rearing practices in minority and indigenous cultures have been erroneously viewed as inferior, inadequate, and a major source of risk (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:100-102; Robinson, 2007:139; Tait, Henry & Loewen Walker, 2013:41). Thus, minority cultures are viewed as inferior to the dominant culture; a perception that is seen as a disservice to both scientific enquiry and the various minority ethnic groups who receive services based on Eurocentric practices and culture (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:100-102). The variances in culture can thus lead to those who are outsiders to African culture to view it as inferior, ignoring that it is a principle of differences in worldview.

As an example, many non-Western cultures are associated with collectivism which promotes a conception that the interests of the family and community at large are paramount and those of an individual subordinate to the goals and interests of the group. African ethnic groups are “generally considered to be collectivist in nature, (and) emphasizes traditional values and considers the broader family unit as well as the community as important” (Van Zyl, Dankaert & Guse, 2018:699). On the contrary, the Eurocentric worldview supports individualism, hence the interests of an individual are paramount and those of a group play a subordinate role (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:102-103). Bornstein (2013:262) points out that interrelatedness and autonomy are relevant to all cultures, however, the values and goals of

a specific culture will determine how parents will promote them. Robinson (2007:116) asserts that collectivism has a significant influence on how people raise their children.

Greenfield (1994 in Robinson, 2007:144) indicates that cultural norms for the socialisation of children are based on so-called developmental scripts; a concept that Bornstein (2013:259) refers to as “cultural scripts” for parenting. Socialisation practices in collectivist cultures focus on developing a conception of the self as embedded within the larger social group (adopting a “we” identity), whereas in individualist cultures the focus is on promoting conceptions of the self as an autonomous and discrete being, thus adopting an “I” identity (Robinson, 2007:139, 144). Misunderstanding of this aspect could lead to assumptions that some ethnic cultures are oppressive to the child and their child-rearing practices a source of risk.

Child-rearing practices depend on the desired competencies that individuals are expected to master within their culture. Robert Levine (Levine & Norman, 2001 in Quinn & Mageo, 2013:21) refers to the “cultural model of virtue” as the beliefs shared by a specific group on how to raise children to achieve the expected competencies of their culture. Different cultures have specific beliefs and practices in terms of parenting, which become enacted in caregiving practices (Bornstein, 2013:260). Parents aim to inculcate cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and social competencies to their children based on a reflection on their past childhood experiences and strike a balance on what they desire their children to become (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:107-108). However, Levine (1977 in García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:108) identified the following as common or universal parenting goals relevant to all contexts:

- the physical survival of the child,
- the development of a capacity for economic self-support when the child reaches maturity, and
- the development of the child’s behavioural capacity for integrating cultural values such as morality.

Bornstein (2013:260) agrees that certain parenting tasks are common across cultures, including nurturing and protecting their children as well as helping children to meet universal development tasks. However, the desired outcomes in terms of physical, social, educational, and economic outcomes will depend on the specific culture, as described in the cultural model of virtue.

Baumrind (1971) identified three different parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting and, over time, a fourth parenting style was added by Maccoby and Martin (1983), namely uninvolved parenting (Bornstein, 2013:273; Louw & Louw, 2014a:207; Robinson, 2007:140). In authoritative parenting, a parent sets and enforces clear standards

but independence and autonomy are encouraged, whilst in authoritarian parenting there is the enforcement of obedience while independence and individuality are being discouraged (Robinson, 2007:140). Permissive parenting places fewer demands on the child and a greater focus on the self-regulation of the child. Uninvolved parents are immersed in their own business and sometimes indifferent to the child (Robinson, 2007:140). Research findings from different studies show that there are significant differences in strategies to discipline children between European and non-Western cultures, with higher levels of control in child-rearing in collectivist societies and stronger reliance on physical punishment as a discipline strategy in non-Western and African parents (Robinson, 2007:141-142, 148). This situation poses a dilemma as specific behaviours that one cultural group may regard as a discipline, maybe viewed as abusive by other groups (Bornstein, 2013:262; Korbin, 1987 in Robinson, 2007:163).

Social workers, therefore, need to know acceptable and unacceptable behaviours within the service user's culture before making any conclusions on the matter (Robinson, 2007:162). Conceptions of discipline and punishment are of the most controversial aspects concerning Black families; however, child neglect or causing any significant harm to the child physically, sexually or emotionally is not condoned in any culture but is seen as abuse (Chand, 2000 in Robinson, 2007:162, 164). Thus, there is a need for a social worker to have a thorough knowledge of the child-rearing practices of the ethnic group they are dealing with so that they can make a distinction between appropriate child-rearing practices and harmful practices (Robinson, 2007:164).

The extended family plays an important role in collectivist cultures (Robinson, 2007:145). African parenting practices entail a sound support system to the mother for pre-natal and ante-natal care using midwives, sometimes referred to as traditional birth attendants (Truter, 2007:58). The midwife was normally an elderly woman who has expertise in the birth ritual to practice rituals such as the rituals involved in bathing of the mother and the disposal of the placentas, advice on postpartum and umbilical cord care, providing support for initial breastfeeding, advice on marriage, contraception and fertility as well as to act as a 'traditional surgeon' in some cultures to perform circumcision of the child at birth as part of African cultural initiation (Truter, 2007:58). Social workers therefore need to be aware of the values and practices related to extended family systems when they do family assessments in collectivist societies (Robinson, 2007:161).

Collectivist social norms place a strong focus on the rank and authority of family members. In most cultures, it was found that although mothers are the primary caregivers, childcare relies on multiple caregiving, including care by siblings, adult family members and non-familial adults

(Bornstein, 2013:259). Fathers are usually the key authority figures in the family, and as such, child-rearing is largely viewed as a women's domain whilst men are viewed as family providers (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:26-28; Robinson, 2007:116). The birth of a child in an African culture is a major life milestone that ratifies the contract between husband and wife (Berg, 2001:34). The woman gains status once they have given birth and a child is regarded as a helper to the family and providers for old age. The boy child is elevated to a higher status compared to a girl child because the son has a role of ensuring continuity of their father's lineage. The birth is followed by some naming ritual or ceremony and the name given to a child has got a meaning and purpose (Berg, 2001:34).

Collectivist cultures, in their focus on keeping group cohesion and social harmony, manifest in certain behavioural expectations for children. These cultures value conformity and obedience of children, thus respect for and obeying their parents are seen as important social values and children are not allowed to disgrace the family (Robinson, 2007:116). The verbal assertiveness and direct interaction of children with adults that are valued in Western cultures are therefore foreign to children from collectivist cultures (Robinson, 2007:116-118). This aspect could lead to children from collectivist cultures not discussing personal matters and family problems with persons outside of the family (Robinson, 2007:121). Furthermore, children in many African cultures are not allowed to make direct eye contact with an adult as a sign of showing respect (Bornstein, 2013:262; Robinson, 2007:124).

In terms of child health, prescriptions in some cultures involve "folk remedies". As some of these practices leave burns or other marks, they might be classified as harmful in other cultural contexts. Similarly, female circumcision is viewed as abusive practices, although it is regarded as a social norm in some cultures (Bornstein, 2013:261).

In conclusion, Bornstein (2013:258-259) states the following about the influence of culture in parenting and childrearing:

"[c]ulture helps to construct parents and parenting ... [and] pervasively influences when and how parents care for children, the extent to which parents permit the freedom to explore, how nurturing or restrictive parents are, which behaviours parents emphasize, and so forth.

The author highlights that parents generally care for their children under indigenous cultural beliefs and behaviour patterns, and that comparisons of cross-cultural studies show that culture informs almost all aspects of parenting (Bornstein, 2013:259).

The most important observation made so far by most researchers studying parenting, is that most families are competent in raising children and that most children develop into competent members of their society (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:109). A lack of knowledge of non-

Western patterns of childrearing is, however, often lead to pathologising Black families, which could relate to the over-representation of Black families in child protection systems (Dominelli, 1992, 1997 in Robinson, 2007:160). Ethnocentric views on socialisation are not generalisable to other cultures and do not take human diversity into account (Robinson, 2007:138-139). Segal (1999 in Robinson, 2007:163) warn that social workers should guard against ethnocentrism, but at the same time guard against extreme relativism in which practices that are physically, emotionally and socially damaging, are justified as being cultural practices.

4.5.5 Child protection as a social construct

Child protection and its most associated terms such as child abuse, child neglect and child maltreatment are tied to the politics related to the construction of childhood. Hence, the debate of what constitutes maltreatment is a process of searching for meaning and the work of constructing reality by local people. Child welfare policies and practices are therefore discourses showing how people attach meaning to concepts (Reisig & Miller, 2009:21). Parton, Thorpe and Wattam (1997 in Conley, 2010:32) propose that, rather than being an objective reality, child maltreatment is a culturally defined social construction based on the values and norms that society holds about children, child development and parenting. In agreement, North (2018:3) posits that child abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, is a social construct. Thus, child protection could be understood better when viewed from a social constructionist perspective (D'cruz, 2004:100). In this sense, Bornstein (2013:261) proposes that one must consider what is normative in a particular society.

However, social workers equipped with statutory power are at the centre of constructing what child abuse is and they use their statutory power to protect children from what they view as harm, risk and neglect (North, 2018:3). Child protection is viewed by some as the advancement of certain political and ideological agendas, especially the agenda of the most powerful elites, to shape how families and women should behave concerning their children (May, 1998 cited in Reisig & Miller, 2009:26). These authors believe that the meaning of maltreatment as understood today is what those in positions of power, such as professionals, impose on others as maltreatment, ignoring other less powerful views and constructions from those who are the weaker ones in society. By and large, the meaning of maltreatment thus represents dominant views and is exclusionary; therefore, circumstances such as parental stress and poverty are given no room in shaping and constructing what constitutes maltreatment, child risk and harm (Reisig & Miller, 2009:18, 20).

D'cruz (2004:103-105), from a medical perspective, observes that social constructionists criticise the following main arguments of contemporary child protection policy and practice:

- child protection is a discourse that relates to certain 'rules' and practices to the exclusion others,
- it reflects the dominant political ideology and agenda related to the 'normal' family and adopts a narrow view of parenting and family life in defining child maltreatment, and
- protection is understood and achieved through the centrality given to the child's body as material for evidence.

In addition, the ethnographic literature available indicates variations in the goals of childcare (Maitra, 2005:259). Child protection is based on an identifiable language and associated meanings prescribing certain practices as appropriate and desirable, whilst excluding and punishing certain other practices as undesirable and harmful to the child. What is considered as 'normal' family life is then presented to the citizens through powerful mediums such as the media and social policies on family life and parental conduct (D'cruz, 2004:104). Hence, discourses on topics such as an abnormal versus normal family in child protection language could lead to a report of alleged child maltreatment (D'cruz, 2004:103). As a result of the regulation and policing of families through state laws, policies, and apparatus such as family courts, problems of family life and parenting may be indiscriminately viewed as maltreatment (Reisig & Miller, 2009:18).

Child neglect is understood in a close understanding of the underpinning constructions of childhood that generally view childhood as a state of vulnerability. Such constructions of childhood view children as needing care and protection and being dependent on adults; the suspension of responsibility by promoting play, rest and schooling; requiring close guidance, supervision and control from parents; and childhood being a life stage distinct from adulthood (James, Jenks & Prout, 2007:16-17, Jenks, 1996:123). Some argue that the CRC, historically and contemporary, has been a conduit through which Western conceptions and notions of childhood and child maltreatment are transmitted to Sub-Saharan Africa (Laird, 2016:306). This situation is seen to ultimately undermine the distinct socio-economic and cultural context which characterises Sub-Sahara by creating a false impression that child rights, childhood and child maltreatment can be universally and uniformly applied.

Hence, social workers in Africa continue to find it difficult to apply child protection laws, theories and models that have Western notions of maltreatment as its genesis (Laird, 2016:306-308). This challenge is given impetus by the reliance on Western theories, models and literature by Schools of Social Work in Sub-Saharan Africa, which are modelled along with British and American conceptualisations (Kreitzer, 2012:11; Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2011:137). Thus, constructions of child protection and its associated concepts such as neglect, abuse and maltreatment are largely foreign to Sub-Saharan contexts. In a Eurocentric

worldview, the responsibility of children's care and protection is thrust unto parents and immediate family members (the nuclear family) and the role of the broader society in children's care and protection is diminished as society is mistrusted and the vulnerability of the child used for selfish funding gains (Ansell, 2016:169). This Western notion of childhood and maltreatment thrives in Europe and the United States of America due to its compatibility with the Eurocentric philosophy of individualism which is powered by neo-liberalism and capitalism as opposed to the Afrocentric worldview of collectivism (Ansell, 2010:792).

The legacy of colonialism continues to be real in child protection policy and practice in Africa. This could be summed up by the Malawian case of its 2010 parliamentary debate on the Child Care, Protection and Justice Bill where one of the members of parliament is reported to have retorted that "Malawi is located to the east of Central Africa and not to the east of Europe ... if parents are punished for asking their children to feed goats, assist them on tobacco work ..." (Laird, 2016:304). These comments attributed to a Malawian member of parliament are a testimony that Sub-Saharan Africa has its conception and construction of what constitutes child abuse, which is contrary to the Western views on child abuse.

The CRC has been accused of leading to the globalisation of a Western construction of childhood meant to mirror the British and the United States' constructions of child, childhood and child maltreatment, which are absorbed by child protection social workers through their non-decolonised education (Kreitzer, 2012:11; Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2011:137). Zastrow (2013:373), in a similar vein, states that social work ethics and values embrace diversity, including ethnocentric diversity, yet due to their socialisation (social work education and training), they struggle to become culturally competent. The author advises that social workers ought to respect areas of diversity such as age, gender, class, colour, culture, ethnicity and disability (Zastrow, 2013:373).

Child neglect has been observed as a major challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa as compared to other forms of abuse such as physical and sexual abuse (African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse-Uganda [ANPPCAN-Uganda, 2012]; Kanyi, 2012:1). This revelation may at face value indicate that Sub-Saharan Africa is negligent to her children, which might not be true since the yardstick used to measure and qualify maltreatment is based on a Eurocentric script as indicated in the Malawian case, which revealed how neglect is viewed differently in Africa. Another important observation is that in some instances no distinction is made between parental poverty and parental neglect (ANPPCAN-Uganda, 2012:34). This situation results in some cases wrongly labelled as child neglect when the parent and the family are victims of a broader socio-economic and cultural fabric. Conley

(2010:39) therefore warns that Western models of child protection are ineffective in addressing problems related to poverty and deprivation that are prevalent in many developing countries.

Child maltreatment as a social construct is closely tied to the social constructions of childhood as a differentiated sub-group of human beings to adults who are 'full-beings'. According to Ariès (1962:230), this differentiation was buttressed by the advent of compulsory schooling for children, the advancement in technology, and increased emphasis on capitalism and individualism. Whereas in earlier centuries children were viewed as capable beings who can meaningfully take responsibility in childcare and participate in productive household activities, reasoning during the 19th century going into the 20th century reduced children into irrational, delicate, dependent and vulnerable beings who deserve welfare, care, protection and strict parental control and guidance (James et al., 2007:39-40; Wells, 2009:27). Consequently, household tasks as seen in the Malawian parliamentary debate that was mentioned earlier come under scrutiny, and the labour market becomes a preserve of adults, with children then restricted to schools and families in a bid to protect them from harmful and hazardous work (Laird, 2016:306). Whilst in the global North household tasks such as herding goats and assisting parents in the fields are flagged as child labour, hence a sign of maltreatment, Africans view such tasks as a normal part of raising children and as some form of apprenticeship and socialisation beneficial to the child (Nhenga, 2010:7). Parent-child relations mediate what then becomes regarded as normal childcare and what is castigated as child neglect and child maltreatment by Eurocentric views of parenting which are institutionalised in CRC.

Multilateral development agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) powered by international laws such as the CRC and its optional protocols are the main vectors through which Western notions of childhood and child maltreatment are passed to Sub-Sahara in terms of best practices of child protection (Ansell, 2010:792; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016:458-459). Countries from the global North, especially the United States, are the biggest financiers of the operations of UNICEF; hence Hlavac, (2013:2) expressed the view that they have a monopoly of influence over the policies and programs of UNICEF. According to Hlavac (2013:2), UNICEF is a conduit of US foreign policy implementation in other countries. This situation means that Sub-Saharan Africa is susceptible to simply adopt Western notions of childhood into their legislation and policies for children without a critical analysis, given that the majority of these countries' child protection systems lack resources and thus rely on UNICEF for funding and guidance. Whilst Africa has adopted the ACRWC in 1990 as its regional convention on children, it appears that the African convention has little influence on African countries' child welfare policy and practice as compared to the CRC which continues to shape and influence the child protection policy and practice terrain in the global South

(Laird, 2016:308). The ACRWC as an attempt to capture an African construction and notions of childhood and child maltreatment has made provisions for child responsibilities to reciprocate the parental responsibility to provide care to them (Laird, 2016:307). To the contrary, the CRC promotes Western notions of childhood and child rights that view a child as a sovereign individual with entitlements, placing substantial responsibility on the parents and the family with no adequate reciprocation from the child, as is the case with the ACRWC. In addition, child neglect and maltreatment are construed in a Western worldview as family dysfunctionality and parental pathology (Conley, 2010:31).

However, Midgley (2017:64) raises the point as to “whether traditional values, beliefs, and practices are always benevolent and invariably enhance social wellbeing.” The author indicates that a strict culture of conformity and traditional ceremonies and practices such as arranged marriages do not support free choice and freedom of expression. In this regard, it is noted that the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) in Article 21 specifically proclaims children’s right to protection against harmful social and cultural practices, including those that affect the welfare, dignity, development, and normal growth of the child. Customs and practices that put the child’s life or health at risk and discrimination against children based on sex or another status as well as child marriages are highlighted. An encouraging development is that child marriage is on a decline (UNICEF, 2015c).

In conclusion, social constructions based on cultural beliefs and values have been found to determine the beliefs and practices related to child protection in a specific society. This proposition is supported by the social constructivist theory (*cf.* Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71) and also by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (*cf.* Louw et al., 2014:29-30) which highlights the wide-ranging influence of culture on aspects such as child-rearing practices (microsystem), the wider child-rearing environment (mesosystem) and services for the protection of children (exosystem). Although the influence of culture, as indicated by these theories, should be acknowledged, Donnelly (2006 in Sewpaul, 2016a:36) advocates that cultural relativism cannot justify any infringements on human rights. Sewpaul (2016b:698) accentuates the task of the social work profession in this regard as follows:

Social work is directed at promoting social justice, respecting human dignity, enhancing human well-being and strengthening universal human rights while balancing these against various forms of diversities.

These guidelines are relevant to the well-being and protection of children and the role of child protection systems and services. However, child protection systems in sub-Saharan Africa are confronted with various challenges.

4.6 CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The child protection system in Sub-Saharan Africa faces an array of issues; some of them related to inadequate capacity of child protection role players, harmful social norms and practices, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems (Child Protection Joint-Inter Agency, 2013). Child protection efforts that are based on a systems approach, recognises that children face complex problems which will require a multi-disciplinary response (Save the Children, 2013:2). A multi-pronged approach is needed to address children's multiple needs, vulnerabilities and violations of differing severity and duration against children (Save the Children, 2013:2). A systemic approach will avoid fragmented and single-issue responses, but will adopt a holistic, multi-pronged and comprehensive approach that will support sustainable interventions.

The way in which child protection systems are structured and operate differs from country to country within Africa (Wessels, 2015:8). In Sub-Saharan Africa, including Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) are key actors within the child protection system of their country (Ministry of Gender & Child Development, 2012:21). Across the board in Southern Africa, there is an increasing use of structured community-based child protection committees playing a primary role in identifying problems such as violence against children. Efforts to strengthen child protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa deliberately centre on the child and the family and on community and kinship involvement; traditional authorities and traditional mediation methods; local culture, traditions, knowledge (IKS), attitudes and practices of the local people; and patterns of socialisation and child-rearing practices, including parenting practices (Lucas & Jongman, 2017:1; Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:245).

States in Sub-Saharan Africa have made significant strides to ensure that the best interests of the child are achieved through coordinating, engaging and building capacity of a wide range of actors within a child-centred approach. Despite the challenge of scarce resources for the development of robust child protection systems, there are functional community-based structures such as child protection committees (CPCs) in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa such as in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa (Save the Children, 2013:8).

In South Africa, a developmental approach to welfare services focuses on local child safety models intended to promote children's safety in their families, households and communities (Patel, 2015:218). In Botswana, the Children's Act of 2009 makes provision for the Village Child Committees as a community-based structure to prevent and respond to child abuse

(Taolo & Kgomotso, 2017:1). The Republic of Tanzania ratified the CRC in 1991 and since then has put in place a child protection system that is made up of laws, policies, and mechanisms that include formal and non-formal responses to and prevention of child abuse (UNICEF, 2015c:2). The policies and laws applicable to child protection include the Law of the Child Act 2009, Child Development Policy, National Costed Plan of Action for Most Vulnerable Children (NPA VAC) for Tanzania, and the Anti-Trafficking Persons Act 2005, among many more policies and legislation (UNICEF, 2015c:9). In Zambia, the child protection system also largely consists of laws, policies, and structures of service delivery headed by the Department of Social Welfare (Ministry of Gender & Child Development, 2012:4). However, the delivery of child protection services is fragmented across government line ministries and other non-state actors such as the Ministry of Gender and Child Development, the Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, as well as non-government organisations and faith-based organisations (Ministry of Gender & Child Development, 2012:21).

The above strategies seem to be inspired by the ecological systems perspective, with recommendations focusing on different levels of the environment, such as strengthening families and communities as well as policies and structures to respond to child protection cases within the local and diverse contexts in which the child protection system is operating. The following statement by UNICEF (2010b:19) provides insight into the fit of the social protection system within local contexts:

... it is important to point out the placement of the child protection system within an economic, social, political, and cultural context that shapes not only the normative context but also the relationship of the child protection system to the broader system of social protection. In essence, child protection systems do not exist in isolation. Nor are child protection systems the only system working to influence the well-being of children.

Furthermore, UNICEF (2010b:22) proposes that a systems approach to child protection will enable child protection systems to adopt a service continuum that can be matched with the diverse protection needs of children from diverse circumstances. Families and communities are viewed as central to the care and protection of children and existing mechanisms that protect children in communities must be understood, supported and expanded in efforts to protect children (UNHCR, 2012:15).

Whilst there are many actors within the child protection system, the role of national governments cannot be understated (Ministry of Gender & Child Development, 2012:21). At the international and regional level, governments have a sole mandate to ratify international and regional legal instruments such as the CRC and the ACRWC and to domesticate these into legal instruments and policies (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:257). In addition, the state has a role

in the regulation of child protection services and setting standards for the child protection system and training, for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of services, and for the deployment of resources and staff to support the child protection system, as is the case in Namibia (Theron, 2016:49).

The 2017 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report posits that investing in child protection has a ripple effect in terms of benefits to the state, given that the realisation of children's right to protection also leads to the realisation of national development and poverty reduction agendas (United Nations, 2017:57). Social ills such as abuse, neglect and violence are life-threatening, hence the pressing need to invest in child protection. Experiencing one or more protection risks has negative consequences over the entire life cycle, including delayed neural development, low educational achievement, and being at risk of HIV. On the other hand, if children are protected, it normally results in academic progression, retention in schools, the likelihood of a lower prevalence of HIV, improved physical growth, reduced mortality, and increased human capital for a better society (Save the Children, 2013:31).

The Child Protection Joint-Inter Agency Statement (Save the Children, 2013:5) proposes various strategies to strengthen the child protection system in Sub-Saharan Africa. These strategies mainly gravitate around the following:

- Spirited efforts in the articulation and understanding of the child protection systems (CPS),
- Harmonisation of child protection policies, legislation and regulations,
- Establishing a clearly defined mandate and accountability for the child protection system (CPS),
- Allocation of resources towards the operationalisation of the child protection system,
- Identifying child protection issues,
- Strengthening the range of care and protection initiatives,
- Employing initiatives for increasing the capacity of the social welfare workforce,
- Recognising and bolstering the work of community-based organisations (CBOs), and
- Improving and supporting evidence and an information base for the child protection system.

In the face of the challenges faced by the child protection systems of various countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, social workers should seek out natural resources that are found in ecological systems (Hepworth et al., 2017:431). In addition, social workers have to understand local systems and focus on family support services as opposed to the removal of children, placement of children in residential care and punishing parents as being negligent without a thorough understanding of the local context (Laird, 2016:303-304; Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:245). Conley (2010:49) further advises that social workers must move away from a crisis-

oriented and conventional child protection approach, and adopt a preventive, empowerment and strengths-based approach to child protection.

The social work profession has a contextual focus, hence social workers are encouraged to harness the local histories, traditions, values and identities to develop locally relevant social work education, research and practice which cherishes social justice and human rights emulating Nelson Mandela's ethical-political leadership legacy (Sewpaul, 2016b:697). Bornstein (2013:261) advises that professionals need to learn more about culture and parenting with the possibility of identifying common "best practices" in promoting positive parenting.

4.7 CHILD PROTECTION IN COUNTRIES RELEVANT TO THE VATSONGA

This section contains a brief overview of child protection measures in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe as the countries with the highest population of Xitsonga-speaking people. The three countries, all countries in Southern Africa, have ratified the CRC (OHCHR, 1989), thereby indicating their commitment to upholding child rights, including children's rights to protection, as indicated in Table 4.1 below. Table 4.1 also contains information on some of the other countries in Southern Africa. In addition, Table 4.1 contains information on the rankings of the three countries according to the KidsRights Index Report 2020, which shows an annual global ranking according to the adherence of countries worldwide to children's rights (KidsRights Foundation, 2020:2). The KidsRights Index determines the ranking of countries in terms of five main domains, consisting of a total of 20 indicators. The five main domains of the index are: the right to life, the right to health, the right to education, the right to protection, and an enabling environment for child rights (KidsRights Foundation, 2020:9).

Table 4.1: CRC Ratification and Child Rights Ranking

Country	KidsRights Index Rank	Date of Ratifying the CRC
Mozambique	160	26 April 1994
South Africa	98	16 June 1995
Zimbabwe	138	11 September 1990
Angola	153	5 December 1990
Democratic Republic of Congo	176	27 September 1990
Botswana	82	14 March 1995
Malawi	139	2 January 1991
Mauritius	51	26 July 1990
Swaziland	123	7 September 1995
Namibia	106	30 September 1990
Zambia	144	6 December 1991
Tanzania	145	10 June 1991
Lesotho	155	10 March 1992

(Sources: United Nations Human Rights; KidsRights Index, 2020)

The KidsRights ranking shown in Table 4.1 shows that South Africa shows the highest ranking of the three countries with the highest Xitsonga-speaking population, followed by Zimbabwe and then Mozambique. The rankings reflect the countries' position out of a total of 173 countries worldwide (KidsRights Foundation, 2020:11). Furthermore, all the countries that form part of the South African Development Community (SADC, 2012) except for the Democratic Republic of Congo ratified the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) to indicate their commitment to uphold child rights in Africa (Foundation for Human Rights, 2019). The three Southern African countries in which most of the Xitsonga-speaking people live, namely Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, thus ratified both the CRC and the ACRWC.

4.7.1 Child protection in the Republic of Mozambique

Mozambique is a country in sub-Saharan Africa sharing borders with Zimbabwe and South Africa and is a member state of the South African Development Community (SADC, 2019). Mandlate (2012:25) estimates that Mozambique's population as of 2012 stood at 23.5 million

with half that population being children. Whilst the country's economy is growing fast and indicating that it will continue to rise in the coming years, the country is not spared from the burden of HIV and AIDS, general poverty and disease. These challenges have resulted in about 5 000 children living on the streets, 8 000 children infected with the HIV, and high levels of child marriages (Mandlate, 2012:28). Of interest, is that the political will of Mozambique to uphold child rights is evident in the country's ratification of the CRC on 26 May 1994 and also its ratification of the ACWRC (UNICEF, 2015d:1-2). This commitment indicates the intention of the government of Mozambique to fully realise child rights.

According to UNICEF (2015d:1-2), before the peace deal between the ruling Frelimo and the opposition, Renamo, Mozambique was ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world. The pre-peace era was characterised by a high infant mortality rate which then dropped significantly after the peace deal (UNICEF, 2015d:1-2). The peace agreements created a conducive environment for both economic growth and child protection. As such, the Gross Domestic Product rose from 1.5% to 6.8% in the period 2000-2008, and legislation concerning children were also put in place during the same period (Mandlate, 2012:26). The legislation and policies related to child protection include the Promotion and Protection of Children's Right law, Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking law, and the Family Law (Mozambique, 2009:5). These are central laws in the prevention and protection of children against violence and maltreatment. Post-war Mozambique has seen the implementation of a range of strategies related to child protection; among them the expanded programme of vaccination for children, establishment of the children's parliament, distribution of vitamin A and ferrous salt supplements, and the enactment of the Social Welfare Policy of 1998, amongst others (UNICEF, 2015d:2).

In 2004, Mozambique adopted a new constitution, the Constitution of Mozambique of 2004, which makes provisions for the protection of child rights. Article 15 of the Constitution provides for special protection for orphans and other dependents of those who died during the national liberation struggle. In addition, the constitution grants citizenship to children of parents who are stateless or of unknown origin. Article 47 of the Mozambican Constitution of 2004 is entirely devoted to children's rights and states that:

- i.Children shall have the right to protection and care required for their well-being
- ii.Children may express their opinion freely on issues that relate to them, according to their age and maturity
- iii.All acts carried out by public entities or private institutions in respect of children shall take into account, primarily, the paramount interests of the child.

Article 121 makes further provisions for childhood and child rights by stating four such provisions:

- i. All children have the right to protection from the family, from society and the state
- ii. Children, in particular orphans and disabled and abandoned children, shall be protected by the family, by society and by the state against all forms of discrimination, ill-treatment and the abusive use of authority within the family and in other institutions
- iii. Children shall not be discriminated against on the grounds of their birth, nor shall they be subjected to ill-treatment
- iv. Child labour shall be prohibited.

As a supreme law, the Constitution of Mozambique makes adequate provisions for basic child rights protection and care. What is clear is that for the rights enshrined in the Constitution to be enforceable, there has to be supporting legislation to enforce these rights. According to UNICEF (2015d:1-2), Mozambique has operationalised both its Constitution and the international instruments such as the UNCRC and the ACRWC through its Children's Act of 2008 and Family Law that deals with issues of parental responsibility. These legal instruments have been translated into tangible goods and services to children through the adoption of a National Action Plan for Children, the establishment of the National Child Council in 2009, and the setting up of the Multi-sectorial Plan for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (UNICEF, 2015:1-2). However, besides all these spirited efforts, Mozambique is still ranked very low in terms of children's rights, being number 160 out of 173 countries on the KidsRights Index (KidsRights Foundation, 2020:2). With Mozambique's business language being Portuguese (Patel, Chambo & Tembe, [sa]:3, 5), the researcher found it difficult to find English publications on Mozambique's legislation and protocols. Given the country's low ranking for children's rights, indigenous knowledge systems could play a part in enhancing child protection in the country.

On the state of child protection in Mozambique, UNICEF (2017:2) indicates that a constrained fiscal space in recent years has greatly affected the provision of child-related services as there was a significant reduction in investment in basic social services. In addition, the child protection issues in Mozambique include acute malnutrition, a growing child population in urban areas, and child migration (UNICEF, 2017:5-7). A total of 48% of girls are married before the age of 18 whilst 14% of girls are married before the age of 15 (Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility, 2019:3). Mamad and Foubert (2018:1, 3) estimate child marriage to be at 62.5% and places Mozambique as the world's seventh-highest ranked country in terms of the early marriage prevalence rate. Early marriages are driven by acute gender inequalities and traditional gender norms which then lead to girls dropping out of school (Global Child

Protection Area of Responsibility, 2019:5; Mamad & Foubert, 2018:3). The capacity of the Mozambican authorities to respond remains minimal as poverty continues to contribute to violence, exploitation and abuse of children (Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility, 2019:5).

4.7.2 Child protection in the Republic of South Africa

The Republic of South Africa is a member state of the Southern African Development Community (SADC, 2019) with a population of about 58 million people (Statistics South Africa, 2020:v). The country has 11 official languages, with Xitsonga being one of them (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Section 6). In 2020, the country is ranked number 98 out of 173 countries on the Kids Rights Index (KidsRights Foundation, 2020:11). The supreme law of the country is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) and it is operationalised through Acts of parliament. In line with the Constitution, the South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 defines a child as any person under the age of 18. South African children are mainly protected through this Act as it guides the provision of child protection services in the country (Sibanda, 2013:11). The Act defines child abuse as harm or ill-treatment intentionally inflicted on a child, which includes injury, sexual abuse, bullying by other children, labour or behaviour which causes psychological and emotional stress on the child (Children's Act 38 of 2005, Article 1). The principles of the best interests of the child and child participation are stipulated in the Act, in Article 9 and Article 10 respectively. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 (RSA, 2007) deals specifically with sexual offences against children.

The South African Bill of Rights within the Constitution provides for children's rights in Section 28 (Gwandure & Mayekiso, 2011:234). The best interests of the child are enshrined in the South African Constitution of 1996 as a guiding principle paramount in all matters concerning the child (Section 28). Section 28 spells out the following rights as entitlements to children:

- The right to name and nationality from birth,
- The right to family or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when the child is removed from the family,
- The right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care and social services,
- The right to be protected from all forms of maltreatment, neglect or degradation, and from armed conflict, and
- The right to be protected from labour practices that place their well-being at risk.

Section 28, sub-section 3, defines the child as a person under the age of 18 years, which is in line with the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACWRC (African Union, 1990) which South Africa

ratified in 1995 and 2000 respectively. In addition, Section 28 stipulates the rights of children in conflict with the law.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as the main child protection law in the country, is hinged on the certain objectives (Article 2), of which the following are highlighted for the context of this study:

- To promote family preservation and the strengthening of families,
- To promote the rights of children to family or parental care, to social services and protection from maltreatment with recognition of the best interests of the child being paramount in all matters concerning the child,
- To develop and strengthen community structures that can aid in the provision of care and protection for children,
- To protect children from harm, discrimination and exploitation, and
- To promote the development, protection and well-being of children, including those with special needs and children in need of care and protection.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005, Article 12, is of significance and of interest to this study. The article focuses on child rights concerning social, cultural, and religious practices, and gives effect to children's right not to be subjected to harmful social, cultural and religious practices that affect their well-being. In addition, it prohibits harmful cultural practices such as child marriages, female genital mutilation, virginity testing of children under the age of 16, and circumcision of male children under the age of 16. In a bid to strike a balance, the Act allows circumcision of boys under the age of 16 for acceptable religious purposes. Overall, this article is clear in terms of protecting children from harmful cultural practices. On the other hand, the Act (Article 70) makes provision for positive cultural practices such as family and community conferences to mediate and resolve issues at the community level if this does not include child sexual abuse cases.

An overview of research and debates on child protection issues in South Africa point to a wealth of literature that conceptualises child protection services from different perspectives. Jacobs (2013:1) looks at the welfare of children and young persons in South Africa through a cultural lens and argue that "in the case of South Africa, the post-apartheid project is to recover the pre-colonial and pre-apartheid cultural traditions and practices and to promote indigenous knowledge systems." Lombard and Kleijn (2006:214) argue that child protection services in South Africa are part of the broader developmental social welfare service delivery system. The Department of Social Development is the custodian of the Children's Act and the Act can be viewed as a social policy (Sibanda, 2013:2, 11). Some authors are critical of the Act. September and Dinbabo (2008:113) posit that the adoption of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 has brought instability to child protection service delivery, which is reiterated by Sibanda

(2013:2) who highlight “serious shortcomings in the new legislation and challenges faced by Social Workers in adapting to it.”

4.7.3 Child protection in the Republic of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a land-locked republic found in Southern Africa. It shares borders with South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia and Namibia. According to the KidsRights Foundation (2020:11) Zimbabwe is ranked 138 out of 173 countries on the KidsRights Index. Besides the country being ranked low, it seems that great strides have been made towards ensuring that children’s rights are realised in Zimbabwe through an array of laws, policies and programmes.

The new Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment (No 20) of 2013, makes provision for child rights and the state is clear on its commitment to protect and care for the children. In Section [6.3i] respect for women, the elderly, youths and children’s rights is stated as one of the Constitution’s founding values and principles. In particular, Section 19 of Amendment (No 20) of 2013 is devoted to children in which the state commits to the following: “The state must adopt policies and measures to ensure that in matters relating to children the best interests of the children concerned are paramount” (The Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment No, 20 of 2013:20). The Constitution guarantees children’s rights, including the rights to a family, care, shelter, food, health, education, citizenship and social services, among other rights. However, this commitment is compromised by the subsequent sub-section 2 which then states that these rights will be implemented within the limits of resources available. This condition takes away the state’s full responsibility to ensure that children’s rights are protected as the state cannot be sued over its failure to meet the children’s constitutional rights, arguing that it was due to resource constraints.

Zimbabwe as a member of the United Nations, Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) has assented to these bodies’ protocols and instruments which impact on children. In September 1990, Zimbabwe ratified the CRC, whilst the ACRWC was ratified in 1995 (Gwirai & Shumba, 2011:195; Mahuntse, 2013:2). This political will means that child rights in Zimbabwe are fully protected from a legal perspective; however, the challenge is on converting political will into tangible action and programmes which protect children from deprivation.

The main challenge confronting Zimbabwe is the HIV and AIDS burden, which has resulted in an estimated 1.6 million orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) by 2011 (UNICEF, 2011:8). As a result, children in Zimbabwe are caught up in an array of burdens which include but are not limited to the following: the national burden of sickness and disease, malnutrition and food poverty, spiralling levels of poverty, the collapse of education and social protection systems, illiteracy and child labour.

In order to combat these and a litany of other challenges and difficult circumstances children find themselves in, Zimbabwe prides itself in having put up a sound legal and social protection system (Powel et al., 2004:2). The main law through which children are protected is the Children's Act [Chapter 5:06] that provides guidelines for identifying children in need of care and specifies the roles played by social workers, the police and other stakeholders in protecting these children. Of interest, is that the Children's Act [Chapter 5:06] of Zimbabwe, in Article 2, defines a child as "a person under the age of sixteen years", which is contrary to the definitions by the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) in which a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years.

In addition to the above Children's Act, the Maintenance Act [Chapter 5:09], Guardianship of Minors Act [Chapter 5:08], Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:07], among other laws, operationalise the constitutional rights of children and those enshrined in the CRC and the ACRWC (Muchenje, 2014:1). At the policy level, the National Orphan Care Policy of 1999 provides the general objectives and guidelines on service delivery targeting orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The policy recognises the role of traditional leaders and multiple stakeholders in child protection and also provides for a six-tier system that prioritises childcare within the family of origin, the extended family and the community. As such, the placement of children in temporary shelter is the option of last resort in Zimbabwe. In traditional African societies in Zimbabwe, orphaned children are looked after by members of the extended family.

Kurevakwesu and Chizasa (2020:91) argue that the six-tier system adopted by the government of Zimbabwe is inspired by the philosophy of *ubuntu* which cherishes the role of the family, the extended family and the community in childcare. Mukushi, Mabvurira, Makhubele and Matlakala (2019a:1-2) posit that the Zimbabwe Statistics Agency data showed that over one million children were orphaned by the year 2012. As a result of HIV and AIDS, and the increased number of orphans, the extended family's capacity to care for the orphans in the face of increased orphans and widows is weakening (Zagheni, 2011:761). Mhaka-Mutepha, Mpfu and Cummings (2015:465) observe that although grandparents as a source of orphan care face challenges, they continue to be resilient through spirituality and material support from either the state or remittances from relatives.

The actual delivery of services to children in Zimbabwe is done in line with the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVC) which has been drafted in phases. The first phase was implemented from 2005 to 2010 and the second phase ended in 2015. The resources to fund the NAP for OVC were mobilised through the Programme of Support (PoS) led by UNICEF and between 2006 and 2010 a total of \$86 million (United States

currency) was mobilised and spent towards child protection programmes (UNICEF, 2010a:15).

What could be confusing for an outsider would be why the country is still ranked very low in respect of child rights with all its progressive constitution, international and national legal instruments. The answer lies somewhere within the macro socio-economic conditions of the country. To this end, UNICEF (2010a:7) observed that the fragile political and economic outlook of the country has thrown children into a deeper crisis. The socio-economic crisis has crippled the capacity of social service providers to fully cater for children as the Department of Social Welfare (divided into the Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services and the Department of Social Welfare) suffers from human and material resource shortages to deliver its mandate (Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, 2010:3). This means that the sound laws and social protection policies are being rendered redundant due to the poor economic performance of the state. Hence, looking for alternative forms of care such as kinship care guided by indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) may help in providing safety nets to those children who are exposed to vulnerabilities.

Zimbabwe's child protection system was inherited from Britain, from which the entire social welfare system was adopted (Lachman & Poblete, 2002:259). Zimbabwe continues to face an array of challenges, key among them being the lack of human and material resources to support the child protection system and poverty that results in challenges in terms of schooling, with many children left without school fees, uniforms and stationery. To curtail some of these challenges development partners, churches and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) formed part of the role players in the Zimbabwean child protection system (Lachman & Poblete, 2002:599). Studies show that Zimbabwe is among the hardest-hit countries with high numbers of orphans and vulnerable children and a weakening kinship care system due to deaths of adult relatives who are important players in the kinship care system (Zagheni, 2011:761, 765).

In considering child protection interventions, Mafumbate and Magano (2016:42) cite Enriquez (1981), Mehryar (1984) and Sinha (1986) who state that research findings derived from a Western context may be irrelevant or inadequate for understanding the worldview of people in non-Western countries. Mkabela (2015:286) argues that most Western theories on human behaviour are culturally bound and that replication of the Western child protection paradigm in non-Western countries may cause neglect of important local cultural factors that may have a substantial influence on the development and manifestation of human behaviour in that particular culture. Note is taken that, whereas cultural beliefs and practices can put children at risk, international social work in child protection hinged on the CRC, which has

internationalised children's issues and their rights, has a risk of undermining indigenous child protection practices embedded in communities (O'Leary et al., 2018:2). To this end, UNICEF (2010b:26) states the following:

The literature suggests that each child protection system has to have certain core functions, capacities, and structures to go along with processes and service continua that ultimately define what a specific community does to protect its children. How a community chooses to define those structures, capacities, functions, and continua will be as unique as the normative framework in which it operates. ... the particular contribution of the systems approach to child protection is how it accommodates diverse perspectives and creativity within a rigorous analytical framework that favours accountability.

Child protection workers should thus be culturally competent in order to "facilitate constructive dialogue around respect for human dignity and human rights, the 'do not harm' principles, self-determination and social justice" (UNICEF, 2019:26).

The challenges experienced in the field of child protection in Southern Africa and the need to find resources in the natural environment, as described in this chapter, underlie the rationale for this study that aimed to explore the potential role of IKS in child protection, based on Tsonga IKS.

4.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of child protection, child welfare as a field in social work, and the changes in the approach to child welfare services as a result of the emergence of a developmental approach to social work. An overview of the state of child protection in sub-Saharan and Southern Africa was provided, followed by a discussion of the influence of social constructions in sub-Saharan Africa could affect views on childhood, child well-being, child-rearing practices, and child protection. The chapter was concluded by a discussion of child protection systems in sub-Saharan Africa, and an overview of child protection in three countries where the Vatsonga people mostly live. The study was based on the IKS of the Vatsonga people as a case study. IKS will be discussed in the next chapter. The chapter will also include a brief overview of the Vatsonga people.

CHAPTER 5

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

For centuries, two dominant knowledge systems were prevalent in Africa; the Western knowledge system (modern knowledge) and the indigenous knowledge system (IKS), which is marginalised by the former. The marginalisation of the African indigenous knowledge systems has resulted in negative consequences, one of which is undermining the potential contribution of African IKS in addressing practical development issues in Africa (Teffo, 2013:188-189). Various theories were generated over the years as African academics and politicians, amongst others, tried to understand *reasons* for the erosion of IKS and ways of curbing the erosion (Mapara, 2009:140). These theories help to understand the factors leading to the demise of African traditions, cultures and knowledge systems (Nyota & Mapara, 2008:185). This study aimed to explore aspects of the IKS of the Vatsonga people that could potentially be used in child protection, given the challenges experienced by the child protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The focus of this chapter is on indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). Given that IKS is embedded in culture, the topic will be introduced with a detailed discussion on the link between IKS and culture, with specific attention to the influence of culture on the African worldview. Furthermore, consideration will be given to the practice of social work, as a profession with its roots in Western contexts, within the African context. Culturally responsive practice is a much-debated topic in social work. Against this background, IKS will be discussed in detail, including different definitions, sources, and the manifestation and characteristics of IKS. Furthermore, the discussion will focus on African IKS in relation to social work and child protection. As the study was based on the IKS of the Vatsonga people, the chapter will be concluded with a brief overview of literature on the Tsonga history and culture will be given.

5.2 IKS AND CULTURE

Different terms, such as 'indigenous knowledge' (IK), 'local knowledge' (LK), 'traditional knowledge', and 'indigenous knowledge systems' (IKS) are used interchangeably to refer to the indigenous knowledge of a specific group. *Indigenous knowledge* is defined by Njoko (in Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:227) as the "knowledge that is available in a country, area or region, its history, its culture, its memory, its geography, and its linguistic heritage." *Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)* refer to complex knowledge systems that are developed by indigenous communities and preserved throughout history (United Nations, 2005:10). IKS thus encompasses the combination of systems of a specific group that are embedded in the history

and culture of a people, such as their social, economic, educational, legal, technological, philosophical and governance systems (Bitzer & Menkvel, 2004:227). Against this background, the strong connection of IKS to local socio-cultural contexts becomes clear. In this respect, Meko (2018:19) emphasises that “IKS cannot be understood outside the cultural domains.”

5.2.1 Conceptualising culture

Culture is a complex social construct that refers to a particular system of meaning that is shared by a group of people and learned and transmitted from one generation to the next (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:97). Kreitzer (2019:42) shares the view that defining culture is more complex than what one can imagine. García Coll and Magnusson (2000:97) propose that a discussion of culture requires clarification of two concepts that are closely interwoven with the construct, namely ethnicity and race. Ethnicity refers to a group’s affiliation to a specific nationality, culture, or language, whereas race refers to physical characteristics such as skin colour (García Coll & Magnusson, 2000:97-98; Vogel, 2009:181).

Bornstein (2013:259), while mentioning that it is “notoriously difficult” to define culture, views culture as follows:

... distinctive patterns of norms ideas, values, conventions, behaviors, and symbolic representations about life that are commonly held by a collection of people, persist over time, guide and regulate daily living, and constitute valued competencies that are communicated to new members of the group.

Gough and Lynch (2002:8) agree with the idea that culture refers to a set of beliefs, attitudes, values and standards of behaviour which are passed from one generation to another; a view that is also echoed by UNESCO (1982 in Kreitzer, 2019:42) who defines culture as composed of complex and distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features characterising a society. Culture includes modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs (Kreitzer, 2019:42).

Clifford Geertz (1973:89 in McLeod, 2013:287), an influential anthropologist, provides the following definition of culture:

[a] historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in a symbolic form by means of which [people] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes toward life.

Central themes in the definitions of culture point to the symbolic nature thereof, its uniqueness to a specific people, the intergenerational transmission of culture, and its manifestation in the beliefs, values and practices of a group or society. Culture is both learned and shared and

cultural values and beliefs guide people's daily interactions (Rogoff, 1990 in García Coll & Magnusson, 2000:97; Korbin, 2002:637). Values are understood to be "aspects usually abstract in nature, held by an individual or group to be worth and enduring over some time; a belief about the appropriate way to behave, that is, the "should and should not" of an individual and cultural life" (Kanu, 2010 in Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:31).

Culture thus manifests in aspects such as language, worldview, dress, food, styles of communication, behaviour, notions of wellness, healing techniques, family systems and family life, child-rearing patterns, self-identity and attitudes shared by a group (Gough & Lynch, 2002:341; Robinson, 2007:5). Furthermore, a group's customs, skills, arts, values, ideology, religious practices, and behaviour, among other things, make up what is viewed as culture (Sue & Sue, 2008:140). As culture will determine how members of the particular group or society construct their world, people from different cultures will have different views on the nature of their reality (McLeod, 2013:287, 289). Culture as a social construct could be understood as all those things which people have learned to do, believe, value and enjoy over time (Sue & Sue, 2008:140).

Culture is transmitted in a dynamic interaction between people (Stead & Watson, 2006 in Vogel, 2009:181). The intergenerational transmission of culture can be linked to the concept of ethnic socialisation. Socialisation refers to "the process by which the child learns to conform to the moral standards, role expectations and requirements for acceptable behaviour of his or her particular community and culture" (Louw & Louw, 2014b:143). Ethnic socialisation as defined by Phinney and Rotheram (1987:11 in Robinson, 2007:150), refers to "developmental processes by which children acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and come to see themselves and others as members of such groups."

Through the process of enculturation, children and young people learn and adopt the cultural ways and manners of their culture through socialisation (Robinson, 2007:139). This process of transmitting what is deemed as appropriate values within an ethnic group to its children, is done through the interaction of the child and the family members over a period of time (Robinson, 2007:139). Parents (or caregivers) socialise children through employing direct teaching, by acting as role models during their interaction with their children, and by controlling aspects of the environment in which the child lives, such as the home, neighbourhood and peer group (Louw & Louw, 2014b:143). Ethnic socialisation and enculturation can thus be clarified by social constructionism theory in its proposition that knowledge is transmitted through social interaction and influences the perceptions of reality upon which the members of a society will act (Descartes, 2012:52; Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71).

In conclusion, it is noted that child development and parenting do not occur in a vacuum but are influenced by culture. Parents have the tasks of caregiving and enculturating children to prepare them for the physical, psychosocial, and educational demands of their culture. As every culture fosters unique traditions for raising children to adjust to their specific living environment, parenting practices can vary significantly across cultures, despite the common goals of childrearing (Bornstein, 2013:262). To this effect, Robinson (2007:139) highlights that the developmental niche of children, as proposed by Super and Harkness (1986, 1995), is significantly influenced by the cultural context in which the child is socialised. The three components of the developmental niche (the physical and social setting, the cultural customs and practices, and the parent's belief systems, as described in Chapter 5), link to several levels of the environment described in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (*cf.* Louw et al., 2014:29-30) and point to the comprehensive influence of culture on children's development and well-being.

The influence of culture on local contexts means that universal assumptions and generalisations in terms of culture, including views of non-Western conceptualisations of childrearing as 'deficient', do not serve scientific, clinical or explanatory purposes (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:100; Robinson, 2007:7). Labelling African traditional childrearing practices as inferior is some form of cultural imperialism (Dominelli, 1997:95). However, Kreitzer (2019:52) cautions against blindly embracing all cultural practices, arguing that culture can be both positive and negative; hence, social workers as change agents ought to challenge practices that oppose the notions of human rights and the principles of social work.

5.2.2 Acculturation

In Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the concept of the chronosystem sheds light on the continuous changes that occur over time in all levels of a person's environment (Louw et al., 2014:30). With culture being non-static, acculturation is bound to take place (Ife, 2007:79). In modern times, a worldwide occurrence is a change towards increased mobilisation, urbanisation, exposure to similar media content, intercultural contact, globalisation and Westernisation, which together result in the dissolution of traditional cultures (Bornstein, 2013:260; Johnston, 2015:375). The underlying phenomenon of acculturation entails a change in the cultural patterns of one or both groups when people of different cultures are in continuous contact (Berry, 1980 in Morapedi, 2007-2008:47).

The process of acculturation usually involves that a minority group adopts the cultural habits and language patterns of a dominant group, with a resulting integration of foreign cultural characteristics into a society (Morapedi, 2007-2008:47). Acculturation is thus "generally defined as the extent to which an individual has maintained a culture of origin versus adapted

to the new society's culture" (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:99). Specific factors associated with acculturation on the African continent include urbanisation, industrialisation and colonialism (Magezi, 2018:2; Maluleke, 2012:3), with a resulting exposure of African people to other cultures.

Of importance, is that different levels of acculturation exist. As culture is neither monolithic nor static, but dynamic and changes over time, it follows that the change and adaptation to other cultures do not have a uniform impact on all members of the same cultural group (Korbin, 2002:637, 641). In this way, acculturation can lead to multiculturalism, where different groups maintain their culture when interacting with other cultural groups within a society, which results in a demographic context of cultural diversity (Johnston, 2015:375). Acculturation can also result in biculturalism. A growth in numbers of bicultural membership has been observed, whereby members of a given ethnic group adopt elements from another culture due to the influence of education or locality (Sue & Sue, 2008:140). Generally, populations, cultural groups, families and individuals choose which aspects of a new culture they wish to adopt and which aspects of their own culture they wish to maintain, so that different members of one family may vary in their level of acculturation (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:99; Robinson, 2007:164). The variances in acculturation from one individual to another and from one family to another, point to the need for service providers to familiarise themselves with the acculturation levels of individuals and families (Robinson, 2007:165).

Although culture changes over time, certain elements of the culture endure and maintain their relevance. In the African context, it implies that European/Western acculturation has failed to annihilate and dismantle African culture; thus, the Afrocentric worldview, which is informed by African cultures, is still relevant in Sub-Saharan contexts (Thabede, 2008:238). Mkabela (2015:285) observes the following concerning African culture: "Although people from rural communities may live in urban suburbs, they may take their beliefs with them."

5.3 THE AFROCENTRIC WORLDVIEW

The African or Afrocentric worldview is informed by African cultural beliefs, values and practices (Asante, 1987, Barker, 1999 in Thabede, 2008:234) and can thus be seen as the African person's perception of his or her world (Kalu, 1978 in Nwoye, 2017:46). In the literature, the African worldview is also referred to as the Afrocentric worldview, Afrocentrism, African thought, Africentrism or Afrocentricity (*cf.* Chauraya, 2012; Makhubele & Qualinge, 2008; Mupedziswa et al., 2019; Nwoye, 2017; Thabede, 2008).

The term "Afrocentricity" was introduced by Asante (1987) (Gray, 2001 in Thabede, 2008:233). Afrocentricity, as described by Asante (1998:2 in Makhubele et al., 2018:97), "... literally means placing African ideas at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and

behaviour.” Mutisya and Ross (2016:237) view Afrocentrism and the Afrocentric worldview as grounded in the “historical, cultural, and philosophical tradition of the African people.” Afrocentrism refers to the worldview of African people that will determine how they interpret and define their reality. The concept can thus be linked to social constructionism theory that indicates the role of social and cultural contexts in forming people’s knowledge and understanding of their world (Makhubele & Qualinge, 2008:158). Thus, an Afrocentric perspective will “highlight the distinctive contributions of African culture and tradition in the making of human personhood” (Nwoye, 2017:43).

With reference to various studies on African culture, Thabede (2008:238) concludes that despite the dynamic nature of culture, core cultural traits have been maintained over time and despite of colonisation, and some common themes characterise African culture throughout the African continent. Chauraya (2012:252), with reference to scholars such as Gocuka (1999), Ngara (2007) and Higgs (2003), concludes that African cultures share a lasting commonality, namely “Africanhood.” Despite differences among cultures on the African continent, Africanhood shapes the ways that African people think and relate to the world. It can thus be concluded that the African worldview is based on African culture and that African people view phenomena from an African worldview that is distinct from the Eurocentric worldview (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:21). Boakye-Boaten (2010:104) ascribes the enduring nature of African culture to rigorous socialisation techniques which are implemented with the active involvement of all community members. The author, however, acknowledges an element of a “bruised cultural identity and the philosophy of the oppressed” because of the influence of foreign cultures (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:104).

In the context of social work theory and practice, Bent-Goodley, Fairfax and LaNey (2017:1) state that “Afrocentricity utilizes African philosophies, history, and culture as a starting place of interpreting social and psychological phenomena to create relevant approaches of personal, family, and community healing and societal change.” This view echoes the statement by Makhubele et al. (2018:97) that Afrocentrism is about “fundamentally affirming tradition and validating or promoting [African] people’s cultural worldviews in their environment” as opposed to putting African knowledge, thought and experience on the periphery. Owusu-Ansah and Mju (2013:2) concludes that Afrocentricity relates to exploring African reality from the perspective of African people.

There seems to be confusion as to who is an African, as many people have asserted to be Africans (Reve, 1995 in Thabede, 2008:233). In setting the parameters as to who qualifies to be called an African, Thabede (2008:233) in her study in the South African context, refers to ‘African’ as African (Black) people, including people in the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tsonga and

Venda ethnic groups. Boakye-Boaten (2010:108), in a discussion on African cultural values and beliefs in the conceptualisation of childhood, proposes that a description of Africa needs to distinguish between the traditional Africa and the contemporary Africa. In the current study, with its focus on the IKS of Xitsonga-speaking people, the researcher adopted Thabede's view of who is African and Boakye-Boaten's focus on traditional Africa.

The definition of 'worldview' presented by Barker (1999 in Thabede, 2008:234) includes various elements such as peoples' understanding of and relationships with their spirituality, with objects, nature, other people and social institutions. Authors agree that there are central and common elements or themes that characterise the African worldview across Southern Africa and the majority of Africa (O'Brien & Palmer, 2009 in Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:13-14; Mutisya & Ross, 2005:236-237, 239; Nwoye, 2017:38, 46-48; Thabede, 2008:233), which include the following:

- A holistic perspective in which all things in the universe are interrelated,
- A belief in God (*Xikwembu*), a Supreme Being and Creator that sustains, provides and controls all creation,
- A belief in ancestors (*swikwembu*) and a spiritual world that people interact with,
- A belief in traditional healing, in suffering or illness being caused by offending the ancestors or gods, and a belief in witchcraft,
- Holistic relationships, family consciousness, and a communal society,
- A belief in rituals to satisfy gods to resolve social conflicts,
- A belief in and practice of rites of passage in puberty, and
- Adopting the spirit of *ubuntu*.

Social workers must thus appreciate the differences between the African and Western worldview (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:12). Berg (2001:33) proposes that the "traditional African social fabric and psyche" could be said to be formed by two fundamental themes; the concept of *ubuntu* and reverence to the ancestors. African societies are based on a set of values, principles and protocols for acceptable standards of behaviour shared by members of that particular society. The ethical attitude adopted by society towards its members is what constitutes *ubuntu* (Mkabela, 2014:284).

5.3.1 The spirit of *ubuntu*

In the African context, *ubuntu* with its universal meanings and practices associated with humanity and respect is "recognized as a social pillar in all societies" (Hlongwane, Governder, Makhubu, Mankhonza, Kent, Ochiogu, Gumede, Nzima & Edwards, 2018:55). *Ubuntu* is both a philosophy and a concept with its origin being in Africa. It is a philosophy which offers insights

into all indigenous knowledge systems, especially related to the African philosophy of life (Mkabela, 2015 in Hlongwane et al., 2018:53). Although the exact origin of the term is not known, it seems to be entrenched in African culture and there is general consensus on the underlying philosophy of *ubuntu* (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:22).

The word *ubuntu* is associated with humanity and compassion (Berg, 2001:196). *Ubuntu* provides an ethical guide for all people, regardless of ethnicity, class or gender, and includes moral values such as conformity, modesty, empathy and humility that underlie the relationship between individuals and their community (Mkabela, 2014:284). The African proverb *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, meaning that a person is a person through another person, is common to African cultures and places emphasis on the close relationship between the individual and the group (Berg, 2001:33). This proverb is a central African assumption about personhood (Nwoye, 2017:44) and refers to making a person a moral being (Mkabela, 2014:285; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:84).

An individual becomes a moral person and lives a humane way of life through mutual support and caring for one another, and insofar as the person honours communal relationships and values his or her identity and solidarity with other human beings (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Mkabela, 2014:286). Thus, “[a] person who exhibits egoistic tendencies is not viewed as *umuntu* (a person)” (Mkabela, 2014:286). This view of personhood is contrary to the individualistic view held in Western contexts (Nwoye, 2017:49). Within the values underlying *ubuntu*, an individual can only become his or her true self by respecting his or her interrelatedness with others (Mkabela, 2014:285). In this respect, Nwoye (2017:53) refers to the words of Desmond Tutu (2004:25):

A person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human.

Ubuntu therefore promotes a collective worldview and a sense of interdependence, focussing on the holistic development of the person, thus the physical, mental, spiritual and social components of development (Mkabela, 2014:285). In a community context, *ubuntu* promotes principles according to which the community acts as guardian of the individual, and the individual reciprocates by upholding the values and norms of the community (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:30). From this perspective, each person has a moral obligation to enter into community with others so as to become fully human (Mkabela, 2014:285). Thus, the African personality is viewed “as consisting of an interaction between a sense of self, created through social bonds, and a sense of self as a conscious being. Therefore, many selves are created through relationship with others” (Magano, 2018:239). A person’s dignity in the community

under the philosophy of *ubuntu* is determined by his or her capacity to identify with and show solidarity with others (Mkabela, 2014:284).

Mkabela (2014:285) proposes that *ubuntu* can be defined as a “social ethic” that emphasises “the collective spirit; the importance of community, solidarity, caring and sharing.” Moral values such as humility, modesty, conformity, empathy, generosity, hospitality, mutual care and support to others, amongst others, are central to the concept of *ubuntu* (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Mkabela, 2014:284; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:85). Individuals make decisions and choices based on the needs of the community rather than on individual needs and aspirations, which is testimony that African people do not view individuals in isolation, but rather see themselves as integrated parts of a whole (Magano, 2018:239). Eskill-Blokland (2007 in Magano, 2018:239) relates the view of the self to being a social construction; a concept explained through the theory of social constructionism (Moore, 2016:473-474).

The philosophy of *ubuntu* is revered for its unifying power and for creating cooperation among the people of a community (Mkabela, 2014:284). *Ubuntu*, in the sense of the ‘I am because we are’ epitomise “the human, empathic, interpersonal, social and transpersonal encounter” (Edwards, 2010:222). Thus, the meaning of life is attached to the quality of human relations and interaction, which is described as follows by Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013:84): “... in African philosophy, an individual is human if he or she says *I participate, therefore I am.*” It is thus difficult to define a person without defining a community. In the spirit of *ubuntu*, the community is defined as a cluster of people living together and sharing common cultural values (Tutu, 2005 in Magano, 2018:237). *Ubuntu* promotes social coherence in the close monitoring of a person’s actions and whether these actions support the spirit of reciprocal living, and reflects the values and principles that represent one’s humanness and the value of community (Hlongwane et al., 2018:59; Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:31; Magano, 2018:239; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:85).

However, Desai (2015 in Hlongwane et al., 2018:53) doubts the influence of the ideas of *ubuntu* and the implementation thereof in modern-day times in the light of social problems such as poverty, inequality and an increase in social protests. Boakye-Boaten (2010:106) claims a collapse of African culture due to modernisation and globalisation. Other reasons given for the subjugation of African culture, even years after political independence from colonial peoples, relate to the criticism of African culture for lacking aspects such as competition, science, property rights, medicine, consumerism, and work ethics related to the norms of Protestant Christianity (Furgeson, 2012 in Sewpaul, 2016a:31; Sewpaul, 2016a:37). In this regard, Makhubele and Qualinge (2008:157) advocate for interventions to address the

“erosion of social cultural values necessary for the total upbringing and maturity, which could yield accountable and responsible adults in the society.”

In conclusion, Mkabela (2014:283) asserts that the conception of human rights that places the individual at the centre, which is in line with the philosophy of individualism, may be regarded by indigenous communities as contradictory to the philosophy of *ubuntu*. In the indigenous African context, individuals are expected to comply with responsibilities to belong and their individual rights are subordinate to the goals and rights of the wider society (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:22; Nyauwe & Mkabela, 2007). Therefore, the Western notions of human rights pinned on individuals as autonomous entities contradicts the concept of *ubuntu*. Mkabela (2014:285) advocates for a fusion of *ubuntu* ethos into the fabric of human rights; arguing that *ubuntu* does not downplay individual rights but seeks to fuse individual rights into societal goals into “*ubuntu*-laden human rights.” This view supports the fact that African communities are spiritually grounded communities that ensure humanity as an expression of the spirit of *ubuntu* (Edwards, 2010:212).

5.3.2 A holistic worldview and spirituality

The Afrocentric worldview is a holistic, integrated approach to knowledge and life, and is grounded in spirituality and cultural consciousness (Timm, 2007 in Magano, 2018:238; Mutisya & Ross, 2016:237). Human beings are regarded as being part of a holistic social fabric (Sue & Sue, 2008:225). Myers (1993:19 in Edwards, 2010:212) has come to the conclusion that among Africans, “everything is spirit (the vital life force known in extra-sensory fashion as energy, consciousness, god, quarks, solitons, and so on) appearing materially (known through the five senses).” Myers (1993 in Hlongwane et al., 2018:62) identified the holistic worldview of reality, which includes both spiritual and material aspects of life, as a fundamental philosophical assumption of the Afrocentric worldview.

Spirituality is a visible feature of Afrocentric lifestyles. What makes the Afrocentric worldview unique, is its inclusion of the spiritual dimension in the explanation of life; something which is ignored by the Eurocentric worldview (Thabede, 2008:235). The spiritual world, which is seen as underlying and sustaining all phenomena, includes consciousness or God, and an extended Self-concept, which includes ancestors, nature and the community. Thus, the indigenous worldview does not see the spiritual and physical aspects of human interaction as separate, but regard them as part of a whole, including the group, the natural environment and all forms of life (Mkabela, 2014:286). It is believed that destruction of one aspect will undermine the whole.

Africans are spiritual beings and God is always everywhere (Vogel, 2009:176). As stated by Mabvurira and Makhubele (2018b:77): “For most traditional African communities, religion is

life and life is religion. Almost every event in life is explained within the purview of religion.” Confirming this notion, Thabede (2008:240) explains that “God is no stranger to African people” and African knowledge of God is conveyed to children by means of stories, songs, proverbs, idioms, myths, and religious ceremonies. In the African worldview, the world that people live in refers to the visible physical world that people create, whereas there is an invisible, spiritual world where the spirits live, including the ancestral spirits, the divinities, clan deities, and unknown evil forces (Nwoye, 2017:47). Social workers who practice in African contexts must understand African spirituality and African concepts of ancestral worship, rituals, avenging spirits and witchcraft (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:21-22).

The **reverence of the ancestors** is based on the African belief system that views the dead as living and that they have a role to play in the life of the surviving family members. Ancestral consciousness underlies “the understanding of Spirit as Source of Self that extends into transpersonal realms” (Edwards, 2010:212). The belief in ancestors is summed up as follows in the work of Berg (2001:33-34):

- Ancestors retain many of their human qualities,
- If taken care of, the ancestors guide and mentor the living on various life matters,
- The ancestors are taken care of by means of rituals, over which the traditional healers normally preside,
- If certain rituals are neglected, it may result in physical or psychological illness, death and misfortune, amongst others, and even exposing the individual or family to witchcraft as a sign that the ancestors has withdrawn their protection.

It is believed that the ancestors communicate their wishes and disdain indirectly through dreams or symbolic communication and, as their disdain may manifest in misfortune and ill health, people avoid annoying the ancestors (Nwoye, 2017:47). Family and communal spirituality and religious worldviews are actualised in family ceremonies, communal rituals, and various sacrifices such as the sacrifices in remembrance of ancestors and God (Edwards, 2010:212-213, 223). Ancestral reverence of significant historical heroes of a clan, tribe or ethnic group as well as reverence of deceased parents and grandparents reflect the spirituality and a belief system linked to health and well-being among the African people. As such, ancestral reverence is viewed as perpetuating “generational relationships that provided protection, health and balancing of individual, family and cultural dynamics” (Edwards, 2010:213). The communal spirituality manifests itself through various family ceremonies (Edwards, 2010:223).

African cultural practices and skills are performed within the context of **rituals and ceremonies** (Magid, 2011:137; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:2). Rituals are performed for

different reasons in indigenous African populations, including rituals to celebrate life stages such as birth, initiation, marriage and death; rituals to pay tribute to the ancestors; and rituals related to illness. In the latter case, rituals are usually related to the association of ill health with the ancestors and are performed to protect and strengthen the health and future well-being of individuals, family members or communities (Edwards, 2010:218; Sodi, 2009:65). The African people's great respect for the dead is expressed in aspects such as the funeral ceremony and the norms related to the time of bereavement (Belsey, 2005:100). Many rituals and sacrificial offerings are to remember their ancestors and to address challenges and crises in life, and to affirm their spirituality (Edwards, 2010:212; Thabede, 2008:239-240).

Initiation ceremonies for boys and girls form an important part of children's socialisation (Nwoye, 2017:54). The rites of passage rituals at the initiation schools, which often entail a period of seclusion, teach young people social and life skills, prepare them for responsible adult life, and serve as social control mechanisms in society (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:111; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:24; Thabede, 2012:242). During initiation, in which narratives play a significant role, children learn indigenous knowledge and the values and norms of their culture and community (Nwoye, 2017:56). Furthermore, the maturity of the child would be determined by the rites and rituals that the child went through (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:111).

5.3.3 Traditional healing and medicine

Africans view diseases and disorders as arising from natural, social or psychological disturbances which are then expressed in the form of physical or mental problems faced by people (Ross, 2010:45). In African communities, illness and disease are rarely accepted as ordinary sickness but in many instances the disease is viewed as a warning or punishment for transgressing against the ancestors (Makgopa & Koma, 2009:156). Illness, death and misfortune are thus assigned to revengeful ancestors or unseen spiritual forces (Nwoye, 2017:47). The African belief system encompasses **indigenous healing practices** with the healers (*tinyanga*) believed to have super-natural powers, wisdom and knowledge of the invisible world (Sue & Sue, 2008:225). The term 'indigenous healing' is used to refer to universal methods of healing that began in Africa and were developed further within and outside Africa (Edwards, 2010:211). Most people who visit traditional healers do so based on the belief that illness is caused by supernatural powers, anger of the ancestors, or witchcraft. In addition, people trust traditional medicine as it has endured the test of time and forms part of their local culture and customs, and they distrust modern medicine to treat psycho-social problems (Truter, 2007:56). The association of illness with beliefs about witchcraft must thus be understood within African communities (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:80).

African traditional medicine involves the use of plant-based medicines in the treatment of physical conditions that include colds, pneumonia, headaches, ulcers, malaria, skin conditions, partial blindness, and burns as well as diseases which are less physically evident, including those associated with witchcraft or contravening secret ancestral taboos (Masango & Nyase, 2015:56). In addition, traditional medicine encompasses spiritual rituals that are associated with supernatural powers, witchcraft and evil, and requires mental and spiritual guidance that are considered by traditional healers as secret and sacred (Masango & Nyasse, 2015:53; Ross, 2010:54). Traditional medicine is thus touted for focusing on physiological, psychological, spiritual and social aspects of health in families, individuals and communities, and the traditional healing process involves identifying the cause of illness, removal of the hostile source, and consultation of a *nyanga* (traditional doctor or herbalist) who have extensive knowledge of herbs, medicinal mixtures of animal origin and natural treatments (Belsey, 2005:100; Ross, 2010:46; Truter, 2007:57). This approach to healing is contrary to Western medicine that only treats the symptoms of an illness in a patient (Masango & Nyasse, 2015:53).

Indigenous healing practices are holistic in nature, as it aims at providing peace, harmony and stability within the family and the community in general, given that religion and spirituality is the basis of reflection of African existence (Mabvurira, 2016:107, 113). In adopting a preventative and a holistic approach to healing, traditional healers try to find a balance between patients and their environment (Makhubele & Nyahunda, 2018:2). In order to ensure peace and harmony to prevail, the indigenous healers use poetic and figurative language to eliminate potential conflict amongst people in the community. Thus, poetic language serves to defuse emotions and feelings that stemmed from the healing process and to avoid direct confrontation (Makgopa & Koma, 2009:156). In addition, the healing involves self-insight, in which the notion of *ubuntu* practically encourages the expression of feelings and the concept of social healing (Edwards, 2010:222; Sodi, 2009:62). The indigenous healers often engage in deep thought, which then validates the method of healing and the central role played by spirituality and the ancestral world (Makgopa & Koma, 2009:156). Divine healing involves empathic understanding and helping the patient to sense the meaning underlying the illness (Gendlin, 1962, 1996 in Edwards, 2010:222-223). In a study on traditional medicine in Zimbabwe, it was found that traditional healing was closely linked to the spiritual domains and played a significant role in enhancing the quality of life of patients (Belsey, 2005:100). Thus, in Southern Africa, indigenous healing is “based on ancestral consciousness, beliefs and practices recognizing the interlinking oneness of Spirit” (Edwards, 2010:212).

Indigenous healing is helpful to the communities in Southern Africa and many continue to rely on this type of healing process (Sodi, 2009:59-60). Masango and Nyasse (2015:60) assert

that “it is difficult if not impossible to document Africa’s traditional medicine that is used to treat cases of witchcraft or tribal taboos.” Still, African traditional healing and traditional medicine, which are based on African culture and beliefs, play a key role in the primary health care system of most developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Truter, 2007:57). It has been found that the largest part of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa rely on health services from traditional healers and herbalists (Truter, 2007:56). The healing and use of traditional medicine are not done by commoners but by people possessing special powers and skills. These specialist diviners include but not limited to *Isangoma samathambo* (bone throwers), *Isangoma sesibuko* (mirror diviners) and *Isangoma sabalozi* (whistling spirit/ancestral diviners) (Edwards, 2010:214-215). It is proposed that the differences between the traditional and modern approaches to healing can pose an ethical dilemma for social workers (Ross, 2010:48; Kreitzer, 2019:43).

5.3.4 A communal worldview

In line with a collectivist worldview, African life is described as “traditionally communal and espouses the values of social solidarity, harmony and cooperation” (Makhubele, 2008:43). Traditional societies were organised to uphold a strict moral lifestyle, a fair division of labour and to protect the reputation and security of the group (Joyce, 2009:11). In traditional African cultures, the spirit of *ubuntu* manifests in the form of collaborative communities where cultural norms promotes mutual support, sharing and participation by members of the community (Magano, 2018:238). *Ubuntu* is thus a collective worldview (Mkabela, 2014:285), as opposed to an individualistic worldview. Many scholars believe that the “individualist-collectivist dimension is the most important attribute that distinguishes one culture from another” (Robinson, 2007:143) and in research about cultural differences, the constructs of collectivism and individualism are amongst the most widely used (Vogt & Laher, 2009:41).

Collectivist societies emphasises the importance of the extended family and the community, while individualist societies place a stronger emphasis on Western individualistic values and on the nuclear family (Van Zyl et al., 2018:699). Individualist societies emphasise personal goals and attitudes, personal independence and individual aspirations, in contrast to collectivist societies where prominence is given to group goals and norms, the interdependence of people, group harmony, and the interest of the group above that of the individual (Louw & Louw, 2014c:353; Van Zyl et al., 2018:699; Vogt & Laher, 2009:41). People will present with the characteristics associated with the worldview of their community; however, although a cultural group may predominantly adopt either a collectivist or individualist perspective, it is likely that elements of both perspectives will be evident in the group (Robinson, 2007:145). It is widely accepted that indigenous African ethnic groups

belong to collectivist societies (Louw et al., 2014:14; Van Zyl et al., 2018:699) as the Afrocentric worldview emphasises the interrelationship between humans, the self as complementary to others, and the key values of cooperation, interdependence and collective responsibility (Chauraya, 2012:254).

In association with a communal worldview, traditional African communities are characterised by internal social structures, including clans, extended families, and religious groups (Lunga, 2015:63). An individual's personhood is linked to the family, clan, and community (Kpanake, 2018:207). The relationships within these social structures are sources of social and/or family capital and are regarded as collective instruments that provide safety nets in communities (Belsey, 2005:91; Lunga, 2015:63). The cornerstone of the philosophy of *ubuntu* is regarded as the sense of belonging to a group, whether the extended family, clan, or community (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:23).

A **clan** refers to "a close-knit group of interrelated families" (Concise Oxford English Dictionary). Clan names reflect aspects such as the history, lineage, origin and significant events of the specific group and dictate the ways in which the clan will practice their culture, rituals and traditional practices. Therefore, clan names are important for instilling a common tribal and cultural identity (Dondolo, 2005:118-120). In traditional societies, membership of the clan provides elements of structure and authority, and individuals are in a subordinate position in relation to the clan (Cobbah, 1987 in Sewpaul, 2016a:34). Research studies in Uganda found that the members of the clan can make important decisions about life situations of families and children, for example about the care of orphaned children (Belsey, 2005:74). Traditionally, the chief is responsible for the well-being of his tribe, both on governmental or administrative and spiritual levels, through processes instilled at cultural and community levels. To promote the security of the community, all strangers who visited traditional communities had to be introduced to headman of the ward and then to the chief as a screening mechanism (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:23-25). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the disintegration of the clan authority is associated with the rise in child abuse and neglect (Fraser & Kilbride, 1980 in Lalor, 2005:9).

Collectivism and *ubuntu* are furthermore seen in the emphasis placed on **the extended family**, rather than the nuclear family, that is common in African societies (Magano, 2018:239; Nwoye, 2017:49). Joyce (2009:11) explains that the entire social structure in traditional communities was based on the extended family, which is still relevant in many rural communities. The extended family within collectivist societies accounts for the emphasis on communal responsibility in the care of children (Robinson, 2007:145). Mupedziswa et al. (2019:22) explain that, at the family level, *ubuntu* implies that all family members would care

for vulnerable family members, while children were socialised to care for younger siblings. It was found that children growing up in this context show more nurturing behaviours than their peers who grow up in individualist societies such as the USA (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2011 in Louw et al., 2014:14).

In the wider **community**, children in collectivist societies are not only raised by their parents, but neighbours, teachers, older siblings, “other mothers” and the whole village are actively involved in their care and upbringing, thereby making supervision of children is a “decentralised process” (Magano, 2018:236; Nwoye, 2017:57). In local neighbourhoods, community members kept an eye on all children and every adult would discipline children in a dignified manner (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25). Despite the involvement of others outside of the family, African children develop a clear self-concept as a person distinct from others (Nwoye, 2017:58). Thus, in the spirit of *ubuntu*, African children grow up to become responsible adults through the contributions of the parents as well as neighbours, teachers, and friends, amongst others (Nwoye, 2017:53).

In traditional African communities, **indigenous social networks** play a primary role in connecting members of a community. Jiyane and Ngulube (2014:127) describe these social networks as platforms in indigenous communities that bring people together in face-to-face interactions to share information, knowledge and skills that are common to the community. Indigenous social networks promote close interaction, engagement, trust, support, friendships and community spirit, and are divided into platforms focusing on social, economic and health-related issues respectively. The platforms manifest in community meetings, traditional weddings and ceremonies, women and girls fetching water at a river or borehole, communal home building or repairs, youth and children’s games, communal lending or donations, and communal health practices (Jiyane & Ngulube, 2014:128, 131-134). Traditional social networks keep members of the community informed about shared matters, for example through announcements or through information on education and training, behaviour, schools and businesses as well as on social issues such as crime, violence, drugs and human trafficking. In addition, the networks strengthen spiritual and cultural practices, language and identity (Jiyane & Ngulube, 2014:135).

Informal social protection networks to support those in need are based on the cultural beliefs, norms and values that traditional communities rely on. These safety networks are organised within a specific group or community and its membership can include families, kinship groups, neighbourhoods, age groups or ethnic groups (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:85). These networks are still relevant in meeting the needs of community members, whether these needs are social, economic or spiritual (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:89).

Shutte (2001:28) states that Africa has its own **justice system** that includes the use of traditional community meetings (*indaba/bandhla*) where important matters affecting the life of the community, inclusive of children's issues, are discussed. Transgressions of community norms are thus dealt with through a communal justice system. All cases brought before the chief would be referred to a council consisting of elders who are men and women who held senior positions in their households. During customary court proceedings, the council would listen to the cases and make decisions guided by the customs and traditions of the culture (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25).

The African worldview does not view physical and spiritual aspects as separate entities in peoples' lives (Mkabela, 2014:286). All people as well as elements of the **natural environment** are interrelated and have a vital life force which controls their destiny. Indigenous people view themselves as part of whole (the group and the environment) to which they belong and contribute to. Interrelatedness means that the human rights of an individual will have a direct influence the welfare of others in a community as well as on the environment (Mkabela, 2014:286). Globally, indigenous communities have a distinct relationship with nature, including land, water, forests and mountains (Maathai, 2009 in Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:253).

African lifestyle revolves around agriculture, artwork and marriages, among other socio-cultural activities. Subsistence farming is a common career among traditional Africans, and they produce food like maize, other crops and keep livestock like cows, goats, sheep or chickens to ensure the well-being of their families (Magano, 2018:241). Other forms of employment include artwork, beadwork, weaving and sculpture (Magano, 2018:241). The community is viewed as the centre of all socio-cultural practices making up the African lifestyle. The concept of well-being does not only refer to personal well-being, but also to enhancing the well-being and health of the community (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29). Thumi and Horsefield (2004 in Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:30) maintain that in the African mindset, the community should be upheld as the community continues its existence, whereas individuals come and go. Therefore, community and communalism are the most celebrated principles in the African context, and harmony in the community is a fundamental value of traditional families (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:30, 32).

In an African context **marriage** is revered as an institution which should be followed by all, and its purpose is viewed as that of procreation. Historically, it was expected of couples to marry within their ethnic group to minimise conflicts which arise due to cultural differences (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:216). Sex was intended for married couples, and polygamy was encouraged to minimise unfaithfulness and to ensure that widows and their children were

being cared for (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:216). Among the Shona ethnic group of Zimbabwe, for example, some men and women used *runyoka* (fidelity charm) to ensure their spouse's fidelity, and transgression would result in dire consequences (Mawere, 2014 in Dewah & Mutula, 2014:216).

5.3.5 The Afrocentric worldview as moral guide

Cristopher, Wendt, Marecek and Goodman (2014 in Nwoye, 2017:49) believe that the African worldview serves as a moral compass for African people. The concept of *ubuntu*, containing values such as respect, dignity and social justice, guide African people in their relationships and interactions with others (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:24) and therefore “provides the moral foundation for behaviour” (Makhubele, 2008:43). The African worldview embraces the concepts of group, togetherness, connectedness and interrelatedness, which involve higher levels of control than in individualistic societies (Robinson, 2007:143). African cultures contain certain taboos, referring to specific rules that prohibit certain actions. Those who do not respect taboos put themselves at risk for negative consequences such as illness, crises and trauma (Edwards, 2010:218; Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010 in Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:81; Thabede, 2008:238).

African children are raised according to the moral virtues of respect for elders, perseverance, patience, obedience and modesty (Nwoye, 2017:48). Respect and obedience to elders are characteristic of collectivist cultures with its strong focus on harmony and social order. The father usually is the authority figure, and the roles and status of the other family members are clearly demarcated (Robinson, 2007:116). The values underlying *ubuntu*, especially the essential aspect of respect, are instilled from childhood (Mkabela, 2015:289). To convey respect, children in Afrocentric cultures are generally not allowed to make eye contact with their elders. In contrast, not making eye contact is in Western contexts interpreted as a lack of interest, not being honest and withholding information (Robinson, 2007:124).

Furthermore, African children, according to traditional culture, are raised to be hardworking and self-disciplined, to be on par with the developmental competencies of their peers, and to avoid annoying the ancestors. The instilment of these values is a way in which the social order is upheld (Nwoye, 2017:51-52). It is thus common practice that children do errands and help to take care of younger siblings (Louw et al., 2014:14). In this sense, Nwoye (2017:56) points to the difference between Afrocentric and Western conceptualisations of childrearing; an aspect that was discussed in Chapter 4. In the Afrocentric perspective, children are expected to assume responsibilities from a young age, for example engaging in chores in the home, which is in contrast to the Western ways of childrearing where “the child is made to believe that s/he is there to be served rather than to serve.” An individualistic approach views a child

as a rights holder entitled to individual rights, which allows for assertiveness to challenge the adult rule, whilst a collectivistic worldview emphasises harmony and the maintenance of social order and proposes that rights of a group precede those of an individual (Robinson, 2007:117). Although the African goals for parenting correlate with the universal parenting goals such as survival, self-support and adhering to cultural values, it is evident that the parenting norms and practices differ from Westerns conceptualisations of childrearing (Bornstein, 2002:5, 260).

5.3.6 African folklore

Knowledge underlying the Afrocentric worldview were usually not documented but was transmitted from one generation to the next through oral tradition. It was the responsibility of the elders to convey knowledge to the younger generations by means of folklore such as proverbs, narrations and oracles, amongst others (Chauke, 2018:1; Magano, 2018:236). Myrick (2012 in Chauke, 2018:5) notes that folklore reflects people's beliefs (such as family traditions), their practices (such as dance, music), their knowledge (such as healing or irrigation practices), their skills (such as art, crafts, and architecture) and their expression (such as stories, songs, and folktales). In traditional Africa, games, totem recitals and music are central to the lifestyles of communities (Bogopa, 2012:245). Children are socialised through African cultural traditions and customs, including storytelling, myths, songs, dance and poetry, which are taught individually or in groups, and contain moral messages to instil values such as patience, modesty, integrity, moderation, courage, perseverance and verbal constraint, amongst others (Nwoye, 2017:54-55). In addition, the Afrocentric approach instils self-knowledge in individuals and clans with totems recitals as a vehicle to achieve this (Magano, 2019:236).

In traditional African communities, **totem recitals** play an important role in instilling identity in children and confirming the collective identity with their clan. A totem is an animal that has symbolic values and virtues and, on that basis, is adopted by the clan to denote the collective identity of the clan (Pfukwa, 2014 in Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:82). A totem can also symbolise certain strengths, for example, having a lion as a totem because lions are strong (Magano, 2018:240). The values and virtues symbolised by the totem or clan name are captured in a totemic poem that is used for communicating with and praising the ancestors during rituals. People who share a totem have a common history and heritage and will mutually support one another if needed (Dondolo, 2005:119; Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:82). Totems can thus be used to discover one's identity and one's cultural roots, as well as to show respect to the ancestors (Morapedi, 2007-2008:48). Magano (2018:239-240) describes how totems can be used to boost children's self-esteem and cultural identity by asking them to explore the history and meaning of their totem. In this way, children can develop a stronger

sense of self and a clear identity, which can be especially valuable for children who experienced loss, who are orphaned, whose parents are separated or remarried, or for children who need to change their behaviour. Among Africans a sense of identity is believed to bring stability in the life of a person (Magano, 2018:240).

Folktales are a form of folklore and highlight common truths and human characteristics that people can identify with (Myrick, 2012 in Chauke, 2018:6). In many indigenous communities, **storytelling** is a method of teaching in which the listener finds meaning by reflecting on the narrative (Dumbrill & Green, 2008:492). Storytelling is used in many traditional African communities, often in the evenings around the fire, to teach children and young people good behaviour (Magano, 2018:239). Storytelling, fables, proverbs, and riddles are methods viewed by Kpanake (2018:201) as “core cultural media” for transmitting the values of *ubuntu* to African children. Oral narration plays a primary role in the upbringing of children, with folktales that contain models of good behaviour, being a popular genre (Olojede, 2014:7). Therefore, the use of myths and story-telling practices “promote the acquisition by the African children of a common idiom by which to live and navigate within the culture and community of which they are part” (Olojede, 2014:7). In this way, children develop a sense of ethnic belonging. Folktales can thus be regarded as a form of intangible cultural heritage (Chauke, 2018:2) and Olojede (2014:3) concludes that the use of storytelling can be a tool for the moral development and the character formation of African children.

Poetry is a long-established oral tradition in African cultures. Poetry is used for the expression of feelings and emotions during ceremonies such as wedding ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, burial ceremonies as well as political gatherings. As a figurative way of expression, poetry is also used in African healing practices (Makgopa & Koma, 2009:147-148). In addition, music, movement and rhythm play an important part in African healing, which occurs in a ceremonial, spiritual and communal context (Edwards, 2010:220).

African children learn about their culture, history, customs, family life and religious practices through their traditional **songs and dances**. Most of the music making in traditional African societies are communal, thereby accentuating the concepts of humanism, cooperation and participation that underlies the spirit of *ubuntu* (Nompula, 2011:92). Folklore songs, for example, can contain messages that can promote hard work (Magano, 2018:240). Nompula (2011:92) describes antiphony, which involves call and response, as one of the most important characteristics of African music as it teaches children cooperation and respect for leadership. In the African context, dance as a form of behaviour, “is not an event in itself, but a connectedness with others and the external world” (Mkabela & Luthuli, 1997 in Edwards, 2010:220). Music and dance enhance the significance and meaning of rituals and through

participating in these, children develop creativity as well as socialisation and cooperation skills (Nompula, 2011:93-94). In addition, the lyrics of the songs contain phrases, idioms and expressions by which children learn the local language (Nompula, 2011:92).

Music and **games** are organised to encourage communal living and recreation, and to enhance physical well-being (Magano, 2018:240; Nompula, 2011:92). As an example, cultural dances and skipping rope games for children strengthen communal ties and promote physical fitness (Magano, 2018:240). Other games contain features such as counting and multiplication, which enhance mathematical but also social skills, and instil kindness and honesty in children (Magano, 2018:238-239). It is observed that, as the case in South Africa, indigenous games face extinction in most countries in Africa (Bogopa, 2012:245). Some of the reasons for this decline are ascribed to urbanisation and the lack of interest on the part of elders to transfer their knowledge and skills to children (Bogopa, 2012:248).

In conclusion, Owusu-Ansah and Mju (2013:2) mention that the African oral tradition is often regarded as simplistic; however, this conception misunderstands the rich complexities that are found in the traditional use of educational activities such as storytelling, folktales, poetry, praise, songs, dance and music. Social constructionism explains that people's social constructions and perceptions are shaped by their interactions with others in their specific contexts (Moore, 2016:473-474), which can be linked to the interactive and communal implementation of folklore in the African context.

This section is concluded with the statement by Gao (1998 in Stears, 2008:133) that culture provides "a contextual lens through which people view and understand their world." This notion asks of social workers to be aware of cultural values, norms and practices within their specific work context.

5.3.7 The Afrocentric worldview and social work

Social work education is mostly based on Western models, and therefore social workers working in Afrocentric contexts, must be mindful of the Afrocentric worldview and values (Sewpaul, 2016a:30). Sewpaul (2016a:33) highlights the following dichotomies between Western and African values:

Table 5.1: Western versus African values

Western values	African values
Liberal	Authoritarian
Expressive	Patriarchal
Egalitarian	Hierarchical
Individualistic	Collective
Pragmatic	Idealistic
Eurocentric worldview	Afrocentric worldview

Considering the differences between Western and indigenous African values as shown in Table 5.1, the argument by Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2008 in Lombard, 2019b:406) that social work should incorporate the values and norms of local cultures to be relevant to local contexts, is noted.

Mupedziswa et al. (2019:29) point to “a natural relationship between *ubuntu* and the profession of social work as practised in Africa.” The authors highlight the similarities in the guiding principles underlying both social work and *ubuntu*. The principles of social justice, respect for the worth, dignity, equality, and integrity of all people are seen in both **social work principles and the spirit of *ubuntu*** (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:4-5). Social work in Afrocentric contexts can, therefore, embrace the principles of *ubuntu*, which support humanity and the collective spirit. Interventions that focus on the success and well-being of the group, rather than an individualistic approach, are thus encouraged (Magano, 2018:239).

In social work interventions in the spirit of *ubuntu*, the concept of community is fundamental. Social workers must, therefore, adopt an empowering, strengths-based, and emancipatory social work approach that focuses on families, groups, and communities rather than individual casework (Sewpaul, 2016a:35; Thabede, 2008:234.). Indigenous approaches point to ecological systems approaches and holistic processes in social work (Walker, 2010 in Lombard, 2019b:399). Gray, Kreitzer and Mupedziswa (2014:110) state that the primary emphasis on collectivist values, as contained in *ubuntu*, has resulted in many authors promoting community development as the “method of choice” for social work in Africa, but that other authors also point to the need for work with individuals in underdeveloped contexts. Social work methods on macro and meso levels fit naturally with the underlying principles of social cohesion and the participation of communities, although direct practice on micro level

can also be implemented (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25, 30). In support, Harrison et al. (2016:269 in Lombard, 2019b:398) highlight the prevalence in the history of social work of a “false dichotomy ... of either working toward social justice or working in micro practice”, arguing that social work is in the unique position to engage in both macro and micro practice. Shava, Zazu, Tidball and O’Donoghue (2009:218) propose that knowledge of local communities can be a resource that can be harnessed to enhance the resilience of communities. A resilient community is perceived to have three key features: (i) the ability to bounce back, thus, to absorb shock and maintain its function), (ii) the ability for self-organisation after experiencing a disturbance, and (iii) the ability to build and grow in its capacity to learn and adapt (Folke et al., 2002, Gunderson & Holling, 2002, Folke, 2006 in Shava et al., 2009:219). Resilience is located within the strengths-based perspectives of social work (Mabvurira, 2016:38). Developmental social work focuses, amongst others, on the use of strengths, client participation, self-determination, empowerment and the enhancement of capacity (Midgley, 2010:13). Patel (2015:127) states the following as one of the aims of developmental social work:

... social work from a social development perspective ... promotes the optimal use of opportunities presented by the wider social environment and tapping the assets, strengths and inner resources within the client groups themselves and the environment. Its concern is less with what people cannot do, but with what they can do.

Community resilience from a strengths perspective aligns with the ecological perspective as it emphasises the importance of people’s environments as the context influencing people’s lives (Mabvurira, 2016:38). Of note, is the link of community resilience to spirituality. Spirituality, as discussed, is an inherent part of the Afrocentric worldview. Spirituality is a source of strength and thus also a source of resilience (Mabvurira, 2016:49).

In the field of child welfare, there needs to be a balance between an individualistic approach and a collectivistic reality as children, in particular, are embedded in their families, significant others, community and cultures (Sue & Sue, 2008:43). In line with the collective spirit, organisations, government agencies and NGOs can, for example, promote the principle of *ubuntu* to enhance orphans’ well-being by providing food, clothes and grants (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:42). The promotion of nurturing social conditions in communities (Hardcastle et al., 2004 in Mupedziswa et al., 2019:30) resonates with the creation of protective environments for children, as proposed in the field of child protection, to prevent and curb child maltreatment in communities (Child Frontiers, 2012:6-7). Schenk et al. (2010:147-148) note that culture is often an overlooked asset in community practice. Community practitioners can

benefit from learning about the strengths and assets of a culture, as well as the aspects a community may regard as barriers to change.

Robinson (2007:111) emphasises the importance of **communication and language** in social work practice with diverse cultures. Language plays three major roles in society, namely being a source of ethnic identity, cementing a sense of belonging to an ethnic group, and serving as a vehicle through which cultural values and beliefs are conveyed from one generation to another (Giles et al., 1977; Robinson, 2007:111). The use of language is a significant element of culture; therefore, language competency is important for social workers who work in diverse cultural contexts (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:14). As a marker of one's distinct ethno-linguistic identity, communication and language include speech as well as non-verbal communication, for example accent, discourse styles, slang, gestures and posture (Giles & Coupland, 1991 in Robinson, 2007:112).

Robinson (2007:133) concludes that the inability to acknowledge the manifestation of culturally based communication patterns may result in social workers interpreting behaviours that are appropriate to a specific culture incorrectly. The different interpretations of children's eye contact between Western and African cultures, as mentioned earlier in this chapter (refer point 5.3.5), serve as an example. The researcher proposes that intercultural communication, therefore, involves more than bilingualism, which is the ability to understand and be understood in two or more languages (Robinson, 2007:108). However, there appears to be a lack of content related to culture in social work curricula in Africa (Kreitzer, 2012:147), a situation also raised in terms of the training of health care professionals (Maitra, 2005:253).

In recent years, there has been an outcry in tertiary institutions for decolonising the **social work curriculum**. From the perspective of education, Magano (2018:237) expresses a similar concern, stating that tertiary institutions must "look deeply into the approach that we use whether they speak to us as Africans." Magano (2018:238) believes that it is important to embrace both Western and African knowledge in tertiary education. In terms of social work training, Kreitzer (2019:43-44) expresses a similar view and recommends that, despite its colonial links, the current social work education in Southern Africa cannot afford to completely reject the theories that are used but that the present and the future should be grounded in a hybrid knowledge base. In a similar vein, Mkabela (2015:286) argues that allowing indigenous knowledge to dominate social work education in Africa "would not eliminate the fundamental predicament of culturocentrism." Makhubele and Qualinge (2008:162) motivate the integration of African knowledge to build on and contextualise existing Western knowledge by highlighting the connection between African and other countries of the world. Therefore, a process is needed to assess what skills, philosophies, and theories are needed, what is available, and

what can be retained within local African contexts. The views expressed by the different authors point out that the development of an Afrocentric approach to social work must be a gradual and sensible process.

The Afrocentric worldview presents an African frame of reference for social workers to understand the history, culture, and worldviews of local African communities (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:5). Thabede (2008:234) proposes that the Afrocentric worldview presents the following guidelines for social work and other helping professions:

- it creates space for the use of African culture-based theories and knowledge in interventions by social workers and persons from related social sciences,
- it acknowledges the important contribution of African culture in the provision of social services to African people,
- the African worldview poses as an alternative perspective in understanding many phenomena, and
- it accepts African knowledge or African cultural knowledge as valid knowledge to address psychosocial problems that can be used alongside Eurocentric perspectives on theory and practice.

Indigenous knowledge consists of the morally sound cultural values and proven norms held by the elders in society and can be regarded as “encyclopaedias” of knowledge (Magano, 2018:236). African indigenous knowledge can thus play a central role in the development of relevant social work practice in indigenous communities in Africa (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:2). These arguments refer to the need to consider indigenous knowledge and IKS in social work practice in Africa.

5.4 THE NATURE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS)

IKS relates to different concepts and manifests in different ways in the lives of indigenous communities. This section will focus on a discussion of the definition and nature of IKS.

5.4.1 Defining IKS

Indigenous knowledge is a body of knowledge of specific communities that developed through their history, inform their traditions and ways of life, and reveals how the people from a specific community understand their cultural beliefs (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:215). *Knowledge* refers to what one knows and understands, and includes related concepts such as instruction, communication, and information gained through observation, experience and inference (Ossai, 2010:1). Knowledge is created through processing, coding and the meanings given to people’s experiences (Dondolo, 2005:114). Sanchez (2001 in Ossai, 2010:1) classifies knowledge as structured or unstructured, and explicit or tacit, whereby structured knowledge

is organised and explicit or clearly expressed, while unstructured knowledge is understood but tacit or not clearly expressed.

Indigenous knowledge consists of local knowledge developed in specific societies. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2017:9) describes local and indigenous knowledge as follows:

Local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality.

This knowledge is tacit, rooted in the practices, rituals, institutions, and relationships of communities, and offer strategies for local communities to solve problems (Ossai, 2010:2). Indigenous knowledge as traditional or local knowledge is thus restricted to certain communities and geographical areas, as opposed to Western knowledge that has become universal through education (Dewes, 1993 in Ossai, 2010:2). Dondolo (2005:116) refers to indigenous knowledge as a local, communal knowledge that are shared by individuals, neighbourhoods, communities and language groups within a specific geographical area. Therefore, local knowledge will differ between ethnic groups, regions and generations.

The term *indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)* refers to the system that contains the indigenous knowledge of a specific group of people and inform local-level decisions in areas such as agriculture, healthcare, education, food preparation and the management of natural resources (Bitzer & Menckveld, 2004:227; Ossai, 2010:2). Matowanyika (1995 in Dewah & Mutula, 2014:217) view indigenous systems as localised systems that “developed over long periods and whose patterns are based upon local knowledge systems and expressed in local languages.” IKS thus develops from local sources and manifests in local practices.

5.4.2 Sources and the manifestation of IKS

Indigenous knowledge originates from the historical beliefs, traditions, observations and experiences of a specific culture (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:215). IKS is developed from people’s experiences within their environment, is transmitted orally from one generation to another, and is collectively owned by society (Ossai, 2010:3). The overall source of IKS is the indigenous people themselves (Ossai, 2010:4). However, the preservation of indigenous knowledge is done by expert knowledge keepers, healers, ceremonialists, and hunters (Kalenga, 2015:3).

Brant-Catesllano (2000 in Kalenga, 2015:3) identifies three processes involved in the development of indigenous knowledge: empirical observation, traditional teachings, and

revelations. Empirical observation refers to observations of real-life situations and settings over time, traditional teachings are knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to the next, and revelations entail knowledge communicated from the spiritual world and ancestors through dreams and visions (Battiste, 2005, Lavallé, 2009 in Kalenga, 2015:3). Kalenga (2015:3) highlights that the nature of these processes in the development of traditional knowledge is often misunderstood by outsiders.

The sources of IKS are holistic and inclusive of all aspects of human life. There are infinite sources of IKS, and the sources for capturing the unique meaning within a particular community seem to be similar among cultures (Mapara, 2009:140; Ossai, 2010:4; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1). Sources of IKS include, but are not limited to, the following: rituals, dances, music, and songs; traditional medicine; traditional governance and traditional legal systems; poetry, folk tales and narratives; proverbs, idioms, sayings and puzzles; commentaries and recitals; agriculture, crops and weather forecasting; and cultural practices, beliefs and value systems. The narratives, poetry, recitals, epics, and folk tales may be historical, instructive, artistic, or personal (Mapara, 2009:140; Ossai, 2010:4; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1).

Local knowledge manifests itself in the different aspects of social life (Dondolo, 2005:116). Ossai (2010:5) explains that indigenous practices are examples of how indigenous knowledge is used to provide strategies for survival and sustainable development. Furthermore, indigenous knowledge changes over time to adapt to changes in the social and natural environments of a group. Indigenous knowledge is thus an intangible heritage through which social, cultural, spiritual, religious, historical and political values add meaning and significance to the practices of communities (Dondolo, 2005:111).

There is a correlation between the sources and the manifestations of IKS. IKS, or local systems of knowledge, is expressed in practices such as the stories, songs, proverbs, folklore, dances and traditional games; cultural values, beliefs, rituals, healing and medicine; and in community laws, local languages, agriculture and the cosmology of a people (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:217; Dondolo, 2005:111; Ossai, 2010:3; Vogel, 2009:176). IKS is thus applicable to all aspects of human life of a group of people. Castiano and Mkabela (2012:v) refer to African IKS as being alive in people's everyday lives, encompassing varied and diverse aspects of life including religion, education, marriage, architecture, art, music and family names. Other examples of African indigenous practices include postpartum rites for maternal and child health care, fishing practices, soil classification systems, herbal medicines, settlement of land disputes, construction of buildings and transfer of knowledge (Ossai, 2010:7). The sources and manifestation of IKS reflect the characteristics thereof.

5.4.3 Characteristics of IKS

In general, authors point out that IKS is holistic, dynamic, and associated with the culture of origin (Dondolo, 2006:114; Ossai, 2010:2-4; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1). Magid (2011:137) identifies three key characteristics of IKS:

- IKS stems from cumulative experience that is passed from one generation to the next,
- it is dynamic and develops continuously, and
- it is socio-economically bound to the local culture and geographical area.

Ossai (2010:3) describes indigenous knowledge as distinct from other knowledge, based on the following characteristics:

- it is location specific and embedded in the cultural traditions of a particular community,
- it is tacit, not systematically documented, and is orally transmitted,
- it is experiential, learned through repetition and rigorously tested through the survival of local communities, but also dynamic and adaptable to change, and
- it informs decisions and strategies related to survival and critical issues of human and animal life and management of the environment.

The assertion that IKS is dynamic and based on innovation and experimentation, as evident in the descriptions of the authors above, is contested by Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013:1) who posit that IKS lacks the openness and flexibility to necessary or constructive change. Whilst the argument of Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013:1) is worth considering, the view of IKS as dynamic is shared by many and enhances an outsider's understanding and conceptualisation of IKS.

5.4.3.1 Oral transmission

Indigenous knowledge is non-formal and generally not documented but is transmitted orally from one generation to the next (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:215). Indigenous knowledge is thus fundamentally tacit knowledge, and much of African indigenous knowledge are unwritten and exists only in oral form (Ossai, 2010:2, 7; Dondolo, 2005:116). Ikoja-Idongo (2009 in Dewah & Matula, 2014:215) describes indigenous knowledge as “tacit knowledge kept in the form of wisdom and practice.” Most indigenous knowledges are not documented but is transferred through oral tradition (Magano, 2018:236).

In this respect, indigenous languages are therefore the main vehicle to access IKS (Dondolo, 2005:116). Elders were expected to transfer their knowledge to the next generation before they pass on; a message captured in the Sepedi (or Northern Sesotho) proverb “*Rutang bana ditaola le seke natšo badimong*” (Bogopa, 2012:245-246). Bogopa (2012:246) refers to

another proverb that highlights the oral tradition of transferring knowledge, saying that when an old man dies, a book is lost. Another widespread African proverb explains that “when a knowledgeable old person dies, a whole library disappears” (Ossai, 2010:7). These idioms serve to ensure that elders teach their children about issues in life so that important knowledge does not vanish when they die.

5.4.3.2 Local and context specific

Mekoa (2018:11) notes that IKS lies at the basis of any country’s knowledge system, and entails the skills, insights and experiences of people are used to maintain or enhance their livelihood. As a local knowledge, IKS will be unique to a specific context and reflect the local people’s cultural traditions, beliefs, values, worldview, and practices (Patel, 2015:138). The scope of IKS is thus localised to a specific culture and geographical area, as evident in their community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals (Ossai, 2010:3). Consequently, IKS is loosely defined as community-based knowledge which is informed by and relate to all domains of life and the environment; are holistic and embedded in customs, cultural practices, rituals and oral stories; and that no single person can know all of it (Magid, 2011:138).

The above descriptions localise and confine IKS to geographical and cultural boundaries of the people producing and using it. However, emerging voices challenge the definitions and conceptualisation of IKS as localised. Briggs (2005:109), for example, states that the term ‘indigenous knowledge’ itself is limiting as it conceptualises IKS as some separate and self-contained folk knowledge. Whilst the warning is worth noting if Briggs’ view of IKS is to be taken at face value, it erases every definition and conceptualisation which makes IKS what it is and what authors have come to understand and know about it. Therefore, for the current study, the definitions that view IKS as local, community-based and embedded in the people’s cultural practices, rituals, and traditions, are adopted. Accordingly, it is appropriate to focus on IKS within the African context.

5.5 AFRICAN IKS

In the African context, indigenous knowledge is regarded as what is African, or over time have been adopted and integrated from other societies (Chavunduka, 1995 in Dondolo, 2005:116). As IKS is embedded in culture, it can be concluded that the elements underlying the Afrocentric worldview, as discussed earlier in the chapter (refer section 5.3), are mirrored in African IKS.

5.5.1 The nature of African IKS

African indigenous systems are localised African systems developed over long periods and whose patterns are based upon local knowledge systems and expressed in local languages

(Dewah & Mutula, 2014:217). In the African context, there is general agreement that IKS is a local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society and has its roots in the traditions of African peoples (Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:227; Castiano & Mkabela, 2012:v; Dondolo, 2005:110). The most significant sources of African indigenous knowledge (AIK) is the African oral tradition that is found in ceremonial language, poetry, slogans, the leadership lists of monarchs that reigned, and narratives of historical, artistic or personal nature (Ossai, 2010:4).

Magid (2011:137) explains that AIK manifests on three practical levels or spheres, which are divided as follows:

- The natural sphere, which includes the ecology, agriculture, soil, medicine, pharmaceuticals and biodiversity,
- The technological and architectural sphere, which includes all crafts, such as building, metallurgy, food processing, textiles and basketry, and
- The socio-cultural sphere, which includes all socio-cultural aspects such as music, art, social welfare, conflict resolution, and governance.

IKS is thus a body of knowledge used by societies in Africa to meet their needs and to solve various local problems (Ossai, 2010:2; Shoko, 2012:642). Kaya and Seleti (2013:35) comment that "AIK is stored in various cultural forms, for example folk stories, songs, folk drama, legends, proverbs, myths, etcetera." However, due to colonialism and the associated introduction of Western culture, local knowledge became marginalised, with some indigenous practices seen as backward and even associated with evil and witchcraft (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:216; Dondolo, 2005:115). IKS thus became ignored or replaced by Western knowledge and practices, which resulted in younger generations placing a lower value on their traditions and adopting new lifestyles and technological advances. As a result, indigenous knowledge has been excluded in the planning and implementation of development projects and programmes in Africa (Ossai, 2010:7, 9).

Despite its marginalisation because of the strong focus on modern scientific knowledge, IKS it remains relevant in many local communities on the African continent (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:215). In agreement, Kaya and Seleti (2013:33) believe that the history of slavery, colonisation, and Apartheid on the African continent has not completely obliterated AIK, saying:

Indigenous institutions of knowledge production ... remain pillars of indigenous African ways of knowing [and the] wealth of knowledge that still exists among the elders and other knowledge holders in African local communities demonstrates the vibrant intellectualism to which African researchers and intellectuals should turn.

In this context, Teffo (2013:188) proposes that there are two dominant knowledge systems in Africa: the Western, modern knowledge system and the indigenous knowledge system. The author argues that, while the indigenous knowledge system is mostly marginalised, it has sustained over time.

5.5.2 The sustainability of African IKS

Ossai (2010:8) argues that the differences between indigenous knowledge and Western scientific knowledge are situated in the following polarities: indigenous knowledge is intuitive, holistic, oral, and spiritual as opposed to Western knowledge that is analytical, literate, didactic and based on scientific inquiry. Patel (2015:128) regards the differences in indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge as being based on variations in subject matter, in contextual origins, and in methods in which knowledge is created.

Whereas one can note the difference between the two forms of knowledge, scholars found that indigenous knowledge is not simply the opposite of Western knowledge (Battiste, 2005 in Kalenga, 2015:2). Ogungbure (2013:14) argues that, although developed within different frameworks, AIK and Western knowledge are not essentially opposite as both are cultural phenomena and cultural ways of knowing. Furthermore, presenting IKS as a dissimilar way of knowing has been criticised as a Western attempt to subjugate AIK continuously and consistently in favour of Western knowledge (Magid, 2011:138). IKS is a direct challenge and response to the myth that Western knowledge is superior as compared to AIK (Mapara, 2009:141). Teffo (2013:190) explains that “knowledge production is never context-free. There are always hidden interests as people conceive of and develop knowledge-based projects.” The statement implies that the uncritical adoption of European knowledge that is exported to Africa is likely to further the Eurocentric agenda rather than the Afrocentric agenda. Kalenga (2015:2-3) believes that indigenous knowledge with its emphasis on the resilience and self-reliance of indigenous people as well as on their heritage, philosophers and educational processes, can complement Eurocentric knowledge and can offer an alternative way of knowing (Kalenga, 2015:2-3).

Research evidence shows that there is no doubt that IKS is relevant to today’s world. Magid (2011:136) proposes that African IKS has claimed its space as a credible source of knowledge which, when applied in the field, can produce tangible results. Earlier, the World Bank (1998:1-3) posited that IKS forms part of the lives of the poor and that they depend on it for decision-making and survival. The World Bank (1998:2) argued that indigenous knowledge is of particular relevance in development related to sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry and ethnic veterinary medicine, the use and management of natural resources, primary health care, preventive medicine, psychosocial care, savings and lending, community development

and poverty alleviation. In recent decades, IKS has come to the attention and gained the respect of international scholars (Mapara, 2009:140) and, consequently, the significance of indigenous knowledge and IKS for sustainable development in Africa and other developing countries is gaining interest (Ossai, 2010:2).

Easong, Nikiema and Essama (2002 in Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:228) highlight three reasons for the application of indigenous knowledge in community development in modern times:

- indigenous knowledge presents the accumulated wisdom of generations who lived and thrived in a specific community or context,
- it offers a perspective that could complement many current developmental strategies that have been unsuccessful in local contexts, and
- it uses locally known methods and involve local people in creating knowledge to support development.

Bitzer and Menkveld (2004:228) conclude that the recognition of the value of IKS should promote the active use and application of indigenous knowledge, rather than only preserving or valuing it. In a similar vein, Castiano and Mkabela (2011:v) note that there is a common perception that AIK relates only to the past. Although indigenous knowledge has its roots in the past, the authors situate IKS in the present as it is still relevant in the lives of many African people (Castiano & Mkabela, 2011:v).

Indigenous knowledge can make a significant contribution to modern knowledge in that it enhances self-determination and self-sufficiency, thereby promoting local development and empowerment (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:215-216; Walker, 2012 in Lombard, 2019b:399). Ossai (2010:20) regards IKS as having much to offer in terms of sustainable development on the African continent as it provides relevant and effective practices, ideas, principles and frameworks “as a foundation for effective endogenous development options for restoring social, economic, and environmental resilience in many parts of Africa and the developing world in general.” Bitzer and Menkveld (2004:229) refer to the work of Atte (in Warren, 1991) who propose the active use of African knowledge of the soil, vegetation, crops, climate and indigenous engineering. The authors (Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:229) cite Atte (in Warren, 1991:29), who states the following:

In the face of dwindling resources available to African countries, and noting that even the richest and most benevolent governments cannot provide in the needs of the people, it has been suggested that indigenous local knowledge ... can become vital tools in planning for rural development.

Lombard (2019b:396), in support of the above notion, proposes that families and community-based organisations should accept greater responsibility for people’s well-being, given the

budgetary pressures experienced by many countries. The characteristics of indigenous knowledge suggest that IKS is inherent to the development process of local communities, especially in poverty-stricken contexts (Ossai, 2010:3-4). In addition, indigenous knowledge has been proven to contain useful strategies for solving problems in communities and for ensuring the survival of people (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:216). As with culture, IKS is not static and changes over time as societies develop and have contact with others outside their context (Mekoa, 2018:12).

In the context of social work, the above suggestions resonate with those of Hepworth et al. (2017:431) who state that the strengths and capacities of local communities should be harnessed in areas where there are limited resources for social welfare services. Patel (2015:138) regards the recognition of IKS and its possible contribution to social development as a “neglected area in developmental social work.”

5.6 AFRICAN IKS, SOCIAL WORK AND CHILD PROTECTION

Due to differences in cultural orientation, the relevance of social work, as a profession that developed in the Western world, to African contexts has been debated over the past decades (Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019:15). There is an increasing argument for IKS to be used in social work and other helping professions to the advantage of indigenous communities. Shokane and Masoga (2018:2) propose that the inclusion of indigenous knowledge as one of the theories underpinning social work, as in the global definition of social work, is an indication of the relevance of IKS to social work. In Africa, a new focus on social work interventions can explore local cultural values and practices that can promote the well-being of individuals, communities and countries (Kreitzer, 2019:49). In this respect, proven indigenous ways to deal with adverse conditions can provide social workers with insights for enhancing the well-being and resilience of African societies (Twesigye et al., 2019:145). Muchiri et al. (2019:224) argue that awareness of indigenous practices can contribute to sustainable development in local communities, which is in line with the reasoning of Patel (2015:128) who advocates for finding ways to integrate indigenous knowledge with existing social work knowledge.

5.6.1 Principles underlying African IKS and social work

The principles underlying *ubuntu* serve as an ethical guide for people and are associated with humanity, compassion, humility, solidarity, and mutual care and support, amongst others (Berg, 2003:196; Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Mkabela, 2014:284-285; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:85;). *Ubuntu* (humanity) is also stated as a specific value underlying developmental social work; however, other values of developmental social work such as social justice, democracy and participation, equality, non-discrimination and reconciliation (Patel, 2015:147-148) equally show a correlation with the principles entailed in *ubuntu* (Mupedziswa

et al., 2019:31). In the words of Mupedziswa et al. (2019:29), “[t]here is potential for a perfect fit between social work and *ubuntu* as the guiding principles of the two are similar.”

The developmental perspective to social welfare is grounded in a rights-based approach (Patel, 2015:82). In following a strengths-based and empowerment approach, developmental social work aims to build on the resources and capacities of local people and communities (Midgley, 2010:14). In local contexts, the strengths-based orientation to practice alludes to mobilising people’s socio-cultural knowledge, values, customs, abilities, hopes and resources in the service of achieving their goals of having sustainable better lives, rather than focusing on people’s limitations and deficiencies (Makhubele & Qualinge, 2008:259). Social work on macro and meso levels fits well with the African principles of cooperation, empowerment, community involvement and the common good (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:30). The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2016) mentions the following characteristics of the daily work of social workers: “Strengthening solidarity between people, Promoting people to caring for others, Engaging people to respect the rights of others, strengthening solidarity within a family, a community and society.” In addition, social work has strong roots in justice, fairness, respect for diversity, and respect for human worth and dignity (Patel, 2015:147-149). These characteristics of the profession support the principles of *ubuntu* and can be harnessed in the protection of children.

There is a push for social workers to recognise and acknowledge the role played by Afrocentric knowledge (IKS) and the cultural values, norms and traditions in social services delivery to African people (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:30; Thabede, 2008:234). It is recognised that, whilst indigenous welfare practices have historically promoted the well-being of humankind, they received little recognition in social work (Patel, 2015:138). Mupedziswa et al. (2019:31) propose that the concept of *ubuntu* “provides considerable opportunities for social work practice in Africa, both in the contexts of its academic and its practical endeavours” as interventions on micro, meso and macro practice can be guided by the philosophy underlying *ubuntu*. Note must be taken that micro practice may not resonate with the principles of *ubuntu* that promote the involvement of families, groups and communities; however, services on an individual level are not excluded (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:30, 34; Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019:6).

5.6.2 Social and economic development

Whilst there is overwhelming evidence in literature that IKS is relevant to social and economic development in African countries, it is disappointing that it is still to be embraced as a source of knowledge that can be used independently or as an alternative or complementary source of knowledge (Magid, 2011:136). Castiano (2005:v) proposes that an important challenge is to utilise IKS to find solutions for the problems that face modern Africa in the global

environment, rather than viewing IKS as “marginal and only suitable for traditional societies” as often perceived. Indigenous knowledge is a central element of the local ecosystem and is important in the lives of the poor (Masoga & Kaya, 2011 in Shokane & Masoga, 2018:3). Yet, IKS has not been used to address practical development issues on the African continent (Teffo, 2013:189).

In African societies, the philosophy of collectivism is cemented through the concept of *ubuntu*, which promotes collaborative communities, mutual support, and active participation of citizens (Magano, 2018:238). The collective worldview underlying *ubuntu* can unify people and promote cooperation within communities (Mkabela, 2014:284), as can be seen in the non-formal social networks. Social networks and social cohesion are important elements in the development of thriving and self-sufficient communities (Patel, 2015:90). Non-formal social support systems can work hand in hand with formal systems to enhance the well-being of the African people who are faced with numerous challenges such as poverty, unemployment, HIV and AIDS, given that the formal system could not address these needs on its own (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:87-88). Indigenous community-based groups as non-formal support systems can thus play a significant role in realising the objectives of social development (Makhubele, 2008:38). Important to the social work profession, is that *ubuntu* is “the driving force behind volunteerism” in African communities (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:27). The strength of volunteerism in the effective implementation of community interventions have been found in countries such as Botswana, South Africa and America (*cf.* Hepworth et al., 2017:434; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:27; Patel, 2015:94-95).

Of note, is that indigenous social networks are still relevant in many rural communities, especially among women and girls, and help to promote *ubuntu* in communities (Jiyani & Ngulube, 2014:127, 137). It is argued that when social networks educate women and girl children particularly, the benefits extend to entire communities (Jiyane & Nugulube, 2014:136-137; Lombard, 2019b:407). Mupedziswa and Ntseane (2013:86) advocate for the integration of the formal system of social protection with non-formal systems by stating: “The reality is that developing countries ... with their limited resources, cannot afford to discard the non-formal system that is still the mainstay of the majority of ordinary people.” In addition, indigenous social networks can be used for “urgent announcements, quick transfer of information and mobilising the community” and, if used timeously and if supported, have the advantage of ensuring the transfer of information, knowledge, skills and awareness related to matters that need to be urgently attended to (Jiyane & Ngulube, 2014:138).

In a study on IKS and disaster management, Lunga (2015:206-207) concludes that IKS demonstrates inherent capacities and adopts a holistic perspective to help communities to

cope with adverse circumstances. Of note, is that the spirit of reciprocity, sharing, respect and empowerment of others seems to support the fair distribution of resources; thereby promoting social justice and economic development (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:23). These characteristics resonate with the principles of developmental social work (*cf.* Midgley, 2010:13; Patel, 2015:127). In African societies, social workers and other helping professions must take heed of the spirit of *ubuntu* and utilise the initiatives and knowledge of the local people in social development endeavours (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:23). In such initiatives, it will be important to engage the community leaders (Kreitzer, 2019:52).

It appears that a new focus on IKS stems, amongst others, from the failure of developmental efforts to achieve their stated goals and a growing disillusionment with the potential contribution of modern Western science in Africa (Magid, 2011:136). As asserted by Nabudere (2006 in Teffo, 2013:189) IKS is constructed by local communities to address practical situations. Different examples of the use of indigenous knowledge in social development include aid associations such as saving schemes, credit enterprises and burial societies, income-generating groups such as 'stockvels' and working groups as well as communal safety nets, home and community-based care, and kinship care as an intervention for child protection (Makhubele, 2008:41; Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:91; Patel, 2015:128).

Social workers must therefore familiarise themselves with the indigenous structures, values and culture to integrate them into developmental interventions (Makhubele, 2008:39). In this way, resource development can be geared towards the needs and concerns of specific groups, communities and populations with sensitivity to the community's cultural values, norms and nuances as well as their social and political structures (Hepworth et al., 2017:431, 433). Juyani and Ngulungu (2014:136) advocate for the preservation and strengthening of indigenous social networks by arguing that "there is no time where indigenous social networks are more relevant than in this modern age" due to aspects such as poverty, unemployment, crime and psychological distress that result in the collapse of families and communities.

The relevance of social and economic development to child protection is highlighted by Mtetwa and Muchacha (2017:130) who, in the context of a developing country like Zimbabwe, state that it is "highly unlikely that the [child protection services] has any chance of success in the face of widespread poverty and scarce resources." It is important to take notice of this statement as poverty puts children at risk for maltreatment (Mulinge, 2010:12). From an ecological perspective that highlights the interrelatedness of different levels in the social environment (Louw et al., 2014:29-30), heed is taken of the statement by Reich (2016 in Lombard, 2019b:399) that services to families, which will include the protection of children, need a holistic perspective in which people and systems are of equal importance.

In conclusion, indigenous knowledge can be harnessed to address practical development issues in Africa (Makhubele, 2008:42; Teffo, 2013:189). In this sense, Patel (2015:138) advocates for the integration of IKS in developmental social work.

5.6.3 Transmission of knowledge

The characteristics and practices inherent to IKS can be an effective way of transferring knowledge in indigenous communities. In discussing IKS from an educational perspective, Magano (2018:236) proposes that in Africa, proverbs, narratives, idioms, values, and belief systems guide communities on child development, teaching and learning. IKS is viewed as a critical element in education in society. Education of children occurs through storytelling, songs, music, games and dancing as forms of indigenous knowledge. Traditional songs and games have been integrated with modern learning in many Southern African countries such as Malawi, Lesotho and South Africa, and have helped children to understand what they are being taught (Manganye, 2011:7-10; Phiri, 2008:3). Therefore, IKS is equally applicable to the socialisation of children and the modern education systems of Southern Africa. Folktales are valuable for educating children on the values and norms of society, to give them insight into critical responsibilities and taboos, to instil a sense of responsibility, to enhance critical thinking skills, comprehension, and pro-social characteristics, and to enhance their cultural identity (Chauke, 2018:8-10). Shutte (2001:106-111) observes that *ubuntu* is the 'first curriculum' whilst the family and society is the first school attended by every child.

It can be concluded that indigenous methods of transmission of knowledge could be used in the child protection sector, for example in transferring relevant knowledge and skills to children and in conducting awareness and educational campaigns in groups, schools and local communities. As discussed in Chapter 4, the CRC (OHCHR, 1989), Article 19, and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), Article 16, emphasise the role of educational measures in protecting children from all forms of maltreatment. As noted by Magano (2018:236), indigenous methods of knowledge transmission can educate families and communities on child development. In addition, methods such as stories, folktales, songs and dance provide age-appropriate methods to teach children about taboos, responsibilities and behaviours (Chauke, 2018:8-10; Manganye, 2011:7-10; Phiri, 2008:3) that can be geared towards enhancing their protection.

The fact that IKS is transmitted orally (World Bank, 1998) is regarded by some as a weakness as the oral and rural nature thereof makes IKS largely invisible in the global context (Ossai, 2010:9). Furthermore, IKS has become under threat due to processes such as rural-urban migration, modernisation, the use of information technology, and the younger generation

increasingly adopting a more modern lifestyle and use modern technology (Chiwanza et al., 2013:20-21; Ossai, 2010:9).

However, Ossai (2010:8-9) believes that the development of modern information and communication technology (ICT), for example video and radio broadcasts and electronic networking, can become “a powerful enabler for the exchange of IK” (Ossai, 2010:8-9). It appears that many African governments as well as donors have recognised the use of mobile phones in the economic development of Africa, and that social workers “have become key users of the mobile phone in their service delivery engagements at the community level” (Ndung’u, 2019:230). Mobile technology can also be applied in the field of child protection in the reporting incidents of child abuse, linking children and families to resources and services, and managing information and data about vulnerable children, as well as in communication between social welfare service providers (Ndung’u, 2019:238, 240).

The researcher argues that the traditional methods of knowledge transmission as well as modern methods as suggested by the above authors can be used in social work interventions. Traditional methods are needed in some contexts, as in many instances social service providers and service users may not be able to have access to mobile phones and other technological devices (Ndung’u, 2019:241). Chauke (2018:10-11) advocates for the continuation of the oral transmission of information to children through folktales. The author points to the following advantages of traditional storytelling: the visual impact by observing the gestures of the narrator, the appealing nature of the voice of a skilful narrator, the accessibility of folktales, and the ability to hear a story in their indigenous language. The author recommends that efforts should be made to adapt storytelling to modern technology (Chauke, 2018:14). Makhubele and Quilinge (2009:206) suggest that “[m]oral storytelling where parents and grandparents sat with young people should be recalled.”

5.6.4 Legal systems and human rights

The findings of a study by Banks (2011:167), who explored the relevance of IKS in modern Southern Sudan and East Timor, provide evidence that IKS can be relevant in modern justice and legal systems; however, it appears that traditional systems have been side-lined in preference of Eurocentric legal frameworks presented as modern legal systems. To this end, Briggs (2005:103) proffers: “It is not a big step, therefore, to imagine that development can only emerge from the application of Western knowledge and that indigenous knowledge has little to offer.”

Traditional justice systems in sub-Saharan Africa are relatively widespread, are based on oral traditions and the cultural practices, rules and traditions of communities, and are regarded in many communities as the primary source for the resolution of disputes (United Nations,

2016:1, 11). Community problems and concerns can be referred to a community council consisting of a group of elders (Makhubele, 2008:42). Traditional courts are formally recognised in some countries, such as in South Africa where they are recognised in the Constitution of the country (United Nations, 2016:17). Mupedziswa et al. (2019:24) propose that “the application of African traditional jurisprudence, leadership, and governance is usually helpful and this is espoused in the values of ubuntu.”

Social work is a human rights profession and human rights in social work has become a dominant theme in discussions of Western and non-Western contexts, with some arguing for universal standards while others arguing that individual cultures must decide on their human rights standards (Ife, 2016:4; Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:80, 86; Sewpaul, 2016a:30). It is recognised that the diverse values that different cultures place on human rights can create conflict for social workers who, on the one hand, have an ethical duty to advocate for human rights and, on the other hand, are required to be sensitive to cultural contexts (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:81). The concept of human rights has normally been met with resistance on the African continent due to its perceived Eurocentric origins that are rooted in Western notions of individualism as opposed to the collectivist notions of the African worldview (Mkabela, 2014:283; Sewpaul, 2016a:33).

In the African worldview, a person is not seen as an isolated individual but is regarded as an integrated part of the whole, which requires an individual to place the common good before individual needs under the concept of *ubuntu* (Magano, 2018:239; Mkabela, 2014:287). Indigenous perspectives on human rights differ from the Eurocentric perspectives with its emphasis on individual rights (Mkabela, 2014:284). In Africa, human rights manifest, amongst others, in the indigenous values of human dignity and integrity, the value that African culture places on children, and the responsibility that society assumes in providing for the survival and security needs of its members (Kaime, 2005:224). African cultures have a strong foundation in indigenous collective values (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:85;). Therefore, collectivist values and a collective sense of responsibility should be a paradigm for human rights, which will require that human rights teaching should integrate indigenous collective values and focus on promoting social stability and harmony (Mkabela, 2014:278-288). Therefore, these aspects and individual rights must be integrated if they are to be compatible with Afrocentric values and in African societies. The author posits that the integration of an Afrocentric view of human rights does not imply that individual human rights are disregarded but “[r]ather, the argument, is that we should deconstruct the Western myth of human rights and permit indigenous communities to re-discover their ideal versions of human rights.” These aspects would be equally relevant to children’s rights.

In terms of children's rights, Kaime (2005:225) asserts that the African expression 'children are the future' conveys the meaning that indigenous groups value children and recognise them as a vulnerable group that needs special protection. Banks (2011:167), who explored the relevance of IKS in modern Southern Sudan and East Timor, argues that children's rights were protected within the indigenous forms of justice and dispute settlements. Traditional justice systems have unique features, including decisions being made by community leaders, public participation by members of the community, and proceedings aimed at reconciliation and harmony (United Nations, 2016:17). Although not often debated, some literature alludes to indigenous practices as being a source of restorative justice that is practiced in Western contexts (Banks, 2011:169). The basic principles underlying restorative justice include the following: respect for the dignity and equality of people; promoting social harmony through the healing of the victim, offender, and community; reparation for and addressing the needs of victims; helping offenders to gain insight and take responsibility of their actions; and educating and promoting the well-being of the community as a whole (Banks, 2011:182-183).

Mupedziswa et al. (2019:32) suggest that the philosophy underlying *ubuntu* can be relevant to child welfare and the legal system in Africa. The authors explain that, according to the traditional African perspective, criminal acts do not only affect the individuals involved, but also affect the family and sometimes the community. In countries such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the United States, family group conferences and family group decisions and the engagement of community leaders are regarded as an empowerment model in child welfare services that allow families to solve disputes and take responsibility for the safety of children (Conley, 2010:45). Walker (2012 in Lombard, 2019b:400) regard family group conferences as a strategy to generate resources within communities to support families. Such strengths-based and family-centred services are intended to keep children within their communities, rather than opting for institutional care (Conley, 2010:46).

As discussed in Chapter 3, countries on the African continent face numerous challenges in meeting children's rights. In Section 3.5 of the chapter, the literature reflected problems in terms of all three groups of rights, namely provision, protection, and participation rights. Indigenous methods could thus inform social workers of various strategies in which children's rights can be upheld. The principles underlying *ubuntu*, as discussed above, can serve as a springboard on interventions on children's rights. Of interest is that child participation seems to be largely overlooked on the African continent (*cf.* Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108; Collins, 2017:15; Gal, 2017:63), which is not in support of the principles of *ubuntu*. In this regard, Mupedziswa et al. (2019:31) assert that the reasoning that children should be seen but not heard is flawed "as it falls short of the provisions of *ubuntu*."

5.6.5 African IKS and child protection

Gough and Lynch (2002:341) succinctly describe the link between culture and child protection as follows:

Culture is perhaps the most basic issue for child abuse and child protection. It is the context in which children live and is also something to which they contribute. It is the backdrop against which all circumstances and events affecting children occur. It provides the basis for both our definitions of abuse and neglect and the responses we have developed to protect children and to prevent abusive acts from occurring and recurring.

As IKS covers aspects such as cultural values, beliefs and practices as well as the political, religious, education, agriculture, health, entertainment and natural resources management spheres (Castiano & Mkabela, 2012:v; Dewah & Mutula, 2014:217; Dondolo, 2005:111; Ossai, 2010:3; Vogel, 2009:176), practices which may guarantee or harm child rights are embedded in these manifestations of IKS.

Atwool (2006:324) explains that IKS in pre-colonial New Zealand created a powerful child protection system based on extended family structures and kinship care. The system dictated that children were not the property of their parents but that they belonged to the *whanau* (community). Shutte (2001:29, 54) brings the argument closer to home by stating that, guided by the notion of *ubuntu*, human beings are interdependent; therefore, every child is the responsibility of every adult in the village. *Ubuntu* implies that the influence of the extended family goes beyond the nucleus of biological parents and children. Africa thus seemed to have had intact informal child protection systems in pre-colonial times, but these systems have become non-existent (Mushunje, 2006:16).

Before colonisation, Africa had social systems that supported vulnerable members of society (Kreitzer, 2019:40). Traditional African societies had no formal social services as the extended family would support its members on economic, psychological and financial levels (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25). The entire village took on a caregiving role towards children, and neighbours would support all vulnerable children in line with African traditions. In this way, communal support would be provided in cases where children presented with behavioural problems and it was rare to find so-called children at risk (Magano, 2018:236). Institutional care of children is not culturally accepted in African communities because of the emphasis placed on families, family lineage and ancestral spirits (Mukushi et al., 2019a:5). Traditionally, children who were not cared for in the family were thus a rare phenomenon (Luwangula, Twikirize, Twesigye & Kitimbo, 2019:136).

The fostering of orphaned and vulnerable children by members of the extended family is common in Africa (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:88). Hlongwane et al. (2018:60) note that,

in the spirit of *ubuntu*, orphans were taken care of or adopted by family members, neighbours, and sometimes strangers, without monetary compensation. Based on the belief that orphans will not be able to survive on their own, children were taken into foster care by aunts, uncles, grandparents and others, and were provided for in terms of shelter, food, clothing, education, psychosocial support and health care, amongst others (Hlongwane et al., 2018:60; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:26). The saying “it takes the whole village to raise the child” implies that children belong to and respect every adult in the community, not only their biological parents (Hlongwane et al., 2018:64).

Child welfare services place a focus on developing the capacity of families to create an environment in which children are protected and their needs met (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:280). As the extended family traditionally fulfils a critical role in the care of vulnerable children (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25, 31), the involvement of members of the extended family can be a valuable supportive network in child protection interventions. Moreover, IKS contains valuable information on proper child-rearing practices appropriate to the local culture. Magano (2018:236) refers to the norms, values, belief systems, narrations and proverbs in IKS as “encyclopaedias that guide parents in child-rearing patterns and the lessons that ought to be taught in communities. They are morally sound and have deep African values that were proven to be working.” Of importance in the context of this study, is the implication that the African belief system determines that every child must be taught specific lessons, without any exclusion, and the whole village takes on the role of the parent in teaching all children in the community.

However, traditional childcare practices in Africa are faced with challenges. These challenges include the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS, the increase in the number of orphans in the care of extended families, the older age of caregivers in the extended family, the extent of poverty, and the substantial financial burden of care on the caregivers (Luwangula et al., 2019:136; Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:39-40). In a study on the care of orphans in Zimbabwe, elderly caregivers wished to revive the traditional African values of *ubuntu* and regarded caring of orphans as their responsibility; however, they did not get sufficient assistance from their relatives and, due to modernisation, were hesitant to ask their own children for help (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:41). Lombard (2019b:400-401) advocates that social assistance to families can play a significant role in addressing poverty in developing countries and in enhancing social inclusion.

Another factor that was found to hamper caregiving by members of the extended family, is the effect of cultural changes on family ties. There is consensus that a lack of social support puts families at risk and increases the chances of child maltreatment (Conley, 2010:44). As a result

of Westernisation, greater emphasis is placed on the nuclear family system, which negatively affects the prevalence of communal care practices (Mufumbate & Meahabo, 2016:42; Mupedizwa et al., 2019:27). However, the extended family remains one of the ecological resources found within many cultures and could provide an extensive informal support network for individuals and families (Hepworth et al., 2017:240). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the extended family is regarded as the most effective support system for families who experience a crisis (Foster, 2007 in Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:88). In the field of child welfare, families were found to prefer informal rather than formal support; therefore, it is suggested that child welfare agencies share the responsibility for child protection with families and communities (Conley, 2010:45).

UNICEF (2010b:27) advises that child protection services should incorporate local and indigenous knowledge into international best practice models for services to be relevant to as well as accepted by local communities, stating the following:

Cultural competence and the incorporation of local knowledge are part of the effort to contextualize educational and training curricula to build locally relevant, locally owned, and a sustainable social service workforce. Contextualization must consider the prevalent social issues that arise from the historical, political, religious, cultural, and environmental realities of the country or region.

In this respect, it is worth taking note of the experiences of child protection interventions in rural Zimbabwe as described by Mtetwa and Muchacha (2017:127-128). The authors note that, whereas traditional communities believe that the child belongs to the community and the traditional legal institutions involve a communal retribution process, the formal child protection system is seen as interfering with families' personal affairs and taking away the community's control over matters that affect them. Therefore, workers in the field of child protection are often resented by the members of the community. In another example related to child labour, the authors mention that the definition of work in traditional African culture can conflict with modern perceptions of child labour and children's rights (Mtetwa & Muchaha, 2017:129).

These examples emphasise the need for social workers to have knowledge of local knowledge systems. In this regard, a note can be taken of the statement by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2016) about the role of social workers in social protection, which may be equally applicable to the role of social workers in child protection in indigenous contexts:

All too often however top-down social protection systems and governmental policies overlook family and community. They inadvertently replace these organic systems of care with programmes that over time, strip people of the intergenerational knowledge and wisdom that has supported their wellbeing for so long.

Mtsetwa and Muchacha (2017:130) caution that the use of Western models for child protection may alienate local communities, to the detriment of service delivery to vulnerable children. In agreement, Wessels (2015:8) calls for the inclusion of existing community-based initiatives in child protection policy as the only way to contextualise child protection intervention to local cultures and systems. These arguments are valid, bearing in mind a country like South Africa where laws were amended to consider the role that IKS and culture of a given people play in protecting children. As an example, provision is made in South Africa in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, Article 71, to refer certain children's court matters for mediation to appropriate lay forums, which may include a traditional authority. However, in the same article, the Act also stipulates that lay forums may not be held in matters involving alleged child abuse or child sexual abuse.

Consideration of an Afrocentric worldview moves away from the use of Eurocentric perspectives and notions in analysing problems faced by Africans and could enable child protection social workers to adopt a multi-cultural perspective that will reflect the worldview of the service users (Sewpaul, 2016a:35; Thabede, 2008:234). Midgley (2017:65 in Lombard, 2019b:403), however, advises that "while different views on traditionalism should be respected, this should not preclude a frank discussion of its merits and limitations."

5.6.6 Consideration of harmful aspects of African IKS

Whilst IKS serves to empower local communities to take charge of their development, there is a danger of over-idealising the role that IKS plays in the development process. Briggs (2005:107) explains it as follows: "Because of its attractiveness as an alternative, indigenous development, there exists a real danger of over-valorising and over-romanticizing indigenous knowledge in practice." UNICEF (2017:1) asserts that in many contexts cultural beliefs and practices exist that can harm children. It is noted that not all traditional cultural practices in the pre-colonial era were beneficial to all people, as evidenced by some harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (Kreitzer, 2019:40). To this end, Kaime (2005:227) notes that the implementation of the CRC and ACRWC is threatened when cultural practices are in conflict with standards of children's rights.

Some of the harmful cultural practices in Africa involve women and children, as seen in female genital mutilation, child brides, daughters given to priests to pacify the ancestors, and the killing of the disabled (Kreitzer, 2019:41). In some instances, care giving by the members of the extended family becomes environments in which orphans are exposed to abuse and violence (Luwangula et al., 2019:136). In addition, IKS influences societies' attitudes towards people with disabilities (Miles, 2006 in Mukushi, Makhubele & Mabvurira, 2019b:103). In Africa, the majority of people see disability as a result of witchcraft, avenging spirits,

punishment from God, or promiscuity by one or both parents (Haihambo & Lightfoot, 2010, Mupedziswa, 2005, in Mukushi et al., 2019b:103-104). These beliefs violate the rights of children with disabilities and contribute to discrimination against them (Mukushi et al., 2019b:104-105).

The socialisation of children under the African worldview emphasises that children should be respectful to their elders and the norms of the family and should protect the good name of the family and the clan (Nwoye, 2017:50; Ramphabana, Rapholo & Makhubele, 2019:175). Such cultural values may lead to secrecy and add to the global concern of the non-disclosure of child sexual abuse, thereby preventing child victims from getting legal and therapeutic support (Nwoye, 2017:50; Ramphabana et al., 2019:174). Ramphabana et al. (2019:183) warn that some African values, including a patriarchal system, taboos around sexual abuse, and upholding the family status and harmony in the family, could contribute to the non-disclosure of child sexual abuse. Although African cultures have legitimate goals for the protection and the promotion of children's rights, the implementation of these rights according to universal norms is thus obstructed by certain cultural practices and values (Kaime, 2005:223).

Gough and Lynch (2002:341-343) highlight that there are variations within and between cultures on what should be the norm in terms of practices that are considered as harmful or abusive; a situation that can have a substantial impact on practice. Such differences pose a challenge in terms of culturally appropriate ways of implementing children's rights while "at the same time ensuring that harmful practices are not protected under the guise of cultural propriety" (Kaime, 2005:223). Although the stipulations of the CRC and the ACRWC are supreme over any cultural practices, customs and traditions that are guaranteed in them, their effectiveness is hindered by cultural practices and norms which persist over time (Kaime, 2005:227-228). Kaime (2005:222) notes the role of cultural legitimacy - "the quality of conforming to the accepted principles or rules and standards of a particular culture" - in validating the norms, rules and values of a specific culture based on the assumption that it will benefit the members of the culture. Thus, note is taken of the suggestion by Kreitzer (2019:46-47) that changing negative cultural practices will require support at a social policy level rather than focusing on a grassroots level only and, although uncomfortable, it is an ethical obligation for social workers to challenge such practices.

It is, therefore, necessary that social workers critically look at cultural traditions and practices to determine whether they are in support or contraction of human rights (Kreitzer, 2019:52). Mupedziswa et al. (2019:33) caution that the principles underlying *ubuntu* can result in people becoming overly compliant and submissive, thereby losing a critical stance towards matters that affect them. In this respect, subordination to communal structures can result in human

rights abuses (Sewpaul, 2016a:34). Because of cultural legitimacy and differences in perceptions of which practices are considered harmful, change that is suggested from outside a particular culture is likely to be met with resistance (Gough & Lynch, 2002:342; Kaime, 2005:233). In addition, interventions by those outside the culture, may result in complex and sensitive situations if there is an imbalance in power between the parties and where associations with racial discrimination against a minority group is present (Gough & Lynch, 2002:342). Abney (1996 in Gough & Lynch, 2002:342) thus suggests the use of the terms 'culturally competent services' rather than 'culturally sensitive services' and 'equality of services' rather than 'same services' for all contexts.

In relation to the conceptual differences discussed above, social constructionism proposes that people's realities and perspectives are created in their interactions and relationships within their social and cultural contexts (Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71). Ecological theories ascribe possible resistances to change to processes such as feedback and homeostasis. People or systems evaluate their situation based on information (feedback) that they receive (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61), and systems are inclined to remain constant (homeostasis), thereby maintaining situations that can be regarded as negative by those outside of the system (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:10; Mbedzi, 2019:94). In terms of children's right to protection, these processes call for a look at suggestions for raising awareness of human rights and challenging harmful cultural practices towards children.

5.6.7 Children's rights and harmful cultural practices

Culture and IKS are non-static and adapt over time to evolving needs and situations (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:85). This characteristic suggests that cultures are "inherently responsive to new ideas and ways of doing things suggested by internal influences and demanded by internal needs" (Kaime, 2005:233), which then also applies to children's rights and their right to protection. Furthermore, the principles underlying *ubuntu* that provide an ethical framework for the behaviour and attitudes of members of a culture, also provide a framework to formulate a discourse around human rights (Mkabela, 2014:287).

Social work advocate for human rights on behalf of those who are vulnerable and unable to advocate for themselves (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:86). However, the methods of interventions must be acceptable to the members of a specific culture and must not negate the integrity of the culture (Kaime, 2005:234). Social workers, therefore, need to understand that cultural practices hold specific meaning for the people who practice them and fulfil a function in people's lives (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:86). It is thus essential that social workers must understand and take into account the underlying beliefs and practices of the African culture and IKS in local communities related to aspects such as the belief in God, the

respect for ancestors, the belief in traditional healing and witchcraft, and the practice of polygamy (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:21-22; Shokane & Masoga, 2018:13).

Mkabela (2014:288-289) provides the following guidelines for human rights education that will support a collectivist paradigm whilst upholding the principle of respect that is essential to *ubuntu*:

- Recognising the collective context, including the family, community or country in which the person lives, and maintaining the harmony and stability of the whole,
- Accepting the interrelatedness of human rights and responsibilities and the importance of promoting individual rights as well as the harmony of the collective system,
- Strengthening the collective value system and African indigenous values and ideals to promote individual rights within the collective context,
- Appreciating and harnessing the importance of individuals, their families and communities as well as their values as a point of departure,
- Valuing spirituality and the interconnectedness of all elements of life,
- Maintaining stability and harmony within the group, and
- Showing respect for elders and other bearers of knowledge as sources of information for human rights education to gain acceptance in the whole community.

In terms of addressing child rights issues in African societies, Kaime (2005:234) warns against an elitist and top-down approach that evaluates a community without understanding the social context. Such an approach is likely to be rejected by the community and stand in the way of a conducive discourse about children's rights. The author makes the following suggestions for engaging traditional communities in the discourse on children's rights (Kaime, 2005:235-237):

- Firstly, the local cultural values and underlying meaning must be clearly understood before starting a process of change,
- The specific society or community must perceive the proposed changes as relevant to their needs,
- The village elders must be consulted in the process as needed,
- International norms on child rights must be followed and appropriately presented with the recognition that they may challenge the legitimacy of traditional practices that are harmful to children,
- Solutions must be found from within the community, rather than copying outside standards,
- Change cannot be achieved by legislation without a local discourse on the evaluation, reformulation and replacement of values and practices, and

- The manner of discourse must be in such a way that it does not lead to resistance, is not culturally offensive, and does not harm African cultural integrity.

Social work is growing and increasingly recognised in Africa as a profession that can promote change (Kreitzer, 2019:54). Makhubele (2011:162) urges social workers who work with indigenous communities to show respect for their cultural diversity and identity. The author argues that a respectful attitude is especially important in situations where indigenous communities and their cultural beliefs, values, customs and practices were the object of degradation and marginalisation. In terms of child protection within an African cultural context, Mtetwa and Muchacha (2017:126) advise social workers to utilise the knowledge and experiences of the particular community in which they deliver services if they want interventions to be sustainable. When working within a particular community, social workers must therefore “learn from, value and appreciate the unique blend of knowledge and tradition of culture and harmony with current trends” (Makhubele, 2011:162).

5.7 CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Social work has been associated with colonialist, racist, patronising and unjust systems and characterised by limited literature and academic teaching on indigenous social work practice (Dumbrill & Green, 2008:500; Green & Baldry, 2008:389-390). This situation appears to be the case with social work practice and theory in Southern Africa, where the profession has been based on imported theories from Europe (Green & Baldry, 2008:391; Mwanza, 2011:4). It is recognised that social work as a profession can deal with the huge problems of human development on the African continent and enhance the living conditions and restore the human dignity of the people (Mwanza, 2011:11). However, past experiences showed that social workers experienced limitations in delivering culturally appropriate services on the continent and would continue to experience challenges to contribute to sustainable social development in Africa unless the local context is taken into account (Twikerize & Spitzer, 2019:1-2).

In the past, social work education overlooked the importance of IKS and indigenous problem-solving approaches (Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019:2). Teaching in schools of social work is mostly based on literature from countries from the developed world such as Europe and the United States of America, which asks of social work education to focus on knowledge that is appropriate to the needs of the African people (Mwanza, 2011:12). The inclusion of IKS in social work education is necessary to rid social work from the hegemony of the Eurocentric world over the indigenous people (Dumbrill & Green, 2008:499). In this respect, Kreitzer (2019:40) regards “culturally appropriate social work education and practice as an ethical issue that continues to challenge social workers in light of colonisation, westernisation, and globalisation which, in turn, impact the way our clients are treated.” In agreement, Gray et al.

(2014:109) regard the indigenisation of social work, which involves a focus on local matters of concern and finding solutions that are culturally relevant to the African context, as an ethical obligation.

Academy is in a position of power to bring IKS to social work by moving beyond a mere critique of European dominance to including and exploring IKS in the academic curriculum in a respectful manner (Dumbrill & Green, 2008:499). Twikerize and Spitzer (2019:2) allude that the development of cultural competence should start with research and education. Cross et al. (1989:1 in Shokane & Masoga, 2018:13) define cultural competence as follows:

cultural competence is defined as a system of care that acknowledges and incorporates the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs.

There is a growing consensus that a social development perspective in education for African social work is the most appropriate approach for social and economic development on the continent (Kreitzer, 2019:47-48). Social work education and practice must therefore include indigenous and culture-specific strategies for enhancing support, resilience building and problem-solving (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:245). Dumbrill and Green (2008:500) suggest that the content and standards of teaching should be determined in collaboration with indigenous experts. This process should be a movement of constructing social work knowledge “to develop culturally appropriate, ethical - indigenized – social work education and practice in Africa” (Gray et al., 2014:112).

A new era of social work on the African continent that is inclusive through the synthetisation of indigenous and Western knowledge is thus proposed (Lombard, 2019b:407; Mwansa, 2011:12; Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:249). Indigenisation of social work training must ensure that knowledge, principles, theories and practice models are relevant to indigenous and Western contexts to ensure the global competitiveness of social work graduates (Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019:7). Culturally responsive practice in Africa implies that social workers will provide services that African service users can relate to and feel comfortable with, and that will address social issues that relate to the specific socio-cultural context (Kreitzer, 2019:44). Social workers must thus have knowledge and understanding of aspects such as the traditions, rituals, taboos, music, dance, art, idioms and folklore of a given socio-cultural context (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:246). In addition to teaching materials, consideration must also be given to aspects such as policies relevant to social work in Africa, an African code of ethics, and appropriate fieldwork placements for integration of culturally relevant knowledge with practice (Gray, Agllias, Mupedziswa & Mugumbate, 2017:624; Gray et al., 2014:112-113).

Spitzer and Twikirize (2019:252) conclude that indigenous knowledge and approaches are in support of the four pillars of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development; summarised as follows (Jones & Truell, 2010 in Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:252):

- The promotion of social and economic equality,
- Promoting the dignity and worth of people,
- The promotion of community and environmental sustainability, and
- Strengthening the recognition of the importance of human relations.

5.7.1 An ecological perspective to cultural competence

The social work profession has a strong focus on person-environment interaction and view persons in the context of their environment (Hepworth et al., 2017:318; Larkin, 2006:2). From an ecological perspective, as described in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Louw et al., 2014:29-30), social work practice and education should take culture as well as IKS into account. To this end, Mupedziswa et al. (2019:30) suggest the adoption of an ecological approach to social work in Africa as it relates to the concept of *ubuntu* that explains the worldview of the African people.

With regards to children, Mupedziswa et al. (2019:29) relate the well-known Nigerian proverb "It takes a whole village to raise a child" to ecological theory. The microsystem plays a central role in children's lives and development (Louw et al., 2014:29). In the African context, the spirit of *ubuntu* implies that that many role players in different microsystems, as well as the connection between them (the mesosystem), play a significant role in the lives of African children in collectively taking responsibility for children as well as teaching them shared values such as dignity and respect (Magano, 2018:238). Communities can thus create nurturing social conditions, including aspects such as protection, security, emotions, social relationships and economic well-being (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:30). In child protection services, the wider social system can thus play a significant role in creating protective environments for children (Child Frontiers, 2012:3).

Moreover, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory underscores the role of partnerships and interconnection in the promotion and development of any system (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:30), which correlates with indigenous approaches that emphasise community organising as an important element in promoting sustainability (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:251-252). The emphasis of the ecological systems theory on the inter-connectedness of systems thus resonates well with collectivism as echoed by the African culture's philosophy of *ubuntu* (Fava & Fava, 2011:272; Shaffer, 2006:29). In addition, an ecological perspective for social work in

African contexts must include a focus on environmental factors, given the importance that indigenous communities attach to the natural environment (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:253).

An ecological perspective encourages the use of micro, meso, and macro practice to address social problems (Twesigye et al., 2019:155-156). Mulinge (2010:16) emphasises the importance of a multi-pronged approach to address challenges that affect children's rights on the African continent, which includes interventions that will also address socio-economic and political issues. A holistic, ecological approach to services is also relevant to child protection, given the nexus between children's rights to protection, provision and participation (Memzur, 2008:25). Collins (2017:18) emphasises that it is not possible to uphold children's rights to protection without also addressing their provision and participation rights.

The child's environment is a critical source of influence on the development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). Culture, as part of the macrosystem, has an indirect but significant influence on all ecological levels children's environment, including the microsystem (the child's immediate environment), the mesosystem (the interactions between various microsystems) and exosystem (the judicial, health and welfare systems and formal and informal support systems, amongst others) (Louw et al., 2014:29). Culture thus exists at various layers of the ecological systems and is inherent to the local ecosystem (Greene, 2008:251; Shokane & Masoga, 2018:4). Given its substantial influence on the child's developmental niche, it is important to consider IKS in child protection in traditional African contexts.

5.7.2 Social constructionism and cultural competence

Indigenous knowledge is socially constructed and manifests in the memories, practices and expressions of communities (Dondolo, 2005:116). Social constructionism proposes that reality is uniquely experienced, interpreted and created by individuals in relationships within groups or social systems (Hall, 2005:2; Schenk, 2019:73). Proponents of social constructionism support the notion that the production of knowledge can be traced back to unique communities who collectively agree on rules for how the world can be explained (Iversen et al., 2005:5). Given that IKS is understood to be the knowledge that is available in a specific culture or community and is embedded in the people's history, culture and memory (Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:227), IKS can be explained and understood from a social constructionist perspective.

Social constructionism provides insight into the influence of socio-cultural contexts on people's construction of knowledge and their understanding of the world (Makhubele & Qualinge, 2008:158). In the African context, rural IKS is seen as social constructs created by local communities to serve practical ends (Nabudere, 2006 in Teffo, 2013:189). In this respect, social workers should recognise the local knowledge of people as an important tool for developing social work interventions to solve local problems (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:2).

However, social work theory and models of practice are often constructed outside the communities that social workers serve (Mwanza, 2011, Ntusi, 1995, Olaleye, 2013 in Shokane & Masoga, 2018:2), which asks for the integration of indigenous knowledge and social work for social work practice to be effective (Lombard, 2019b:406; Mtetwa & Muchacha, 2017:126; Shokane & Masoga, 2018:4).

In addition, social constructionism proposes that people are actively involved in constructing knowledge and, when encountering new experiences, they have to merge them with their existing knowledge and understanding. Based on the tenets of social constructionism, the most optimal learning in this event will take place in a dynamic interaction between role players, such as social workers, parents, children and significant others (Makhubele & Qualinge, 2008:158-159). Social constructionism can, therefore, provide social workers with an understanding of how service users will interpret their experiences in their unique cultural context, but also alert social workers to the processes involved in the introduction of new knowledge and experiences in indigenous communities.

In this respect, social workers can take heed of Ogungbure's (2013) discussion of the association of knowledge with power. The author relates the knowledge-power conceptualisation to the tension between African and Western theories of knowledge (Ogungbure, 2013:13). With the current debates on indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge in social work, consideration of different constructions of knowledge and understanding of perceptions of power relations between the two is important. Social work advocates of mainstreaming of IKS in social work practice advance that social work practice should show respect to the cultural heritage of the local people (Laitinen & Vayrynen, 2016:583-584; Makhubele, 2011:162; Thabede, 2008:233-234). Moreover, Kaime's (2005:234) caution against top-down, elitist approaches to interventions in indigenous contexts must be emphasised.

In conclusion, social constructionism is not foreign to social work. Cultural competence and tolerance to cultural diversity is in line with the social work profession's value of social justice (Laitinen & Vayrynen, 2016:583-584). With the focus of this study on Tsonga IKS, the chapter will be concluded with an overview of the Vatsonga people of Southern Africa.

5.8 THE VATSONGA PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Vatsonga are one of the ethnic groups of Southern Africa branching from the Bantu people (Levine, 2005:210; South African History Online, 2016). In 2017 the population numbers of the Xitsonga-speaking people of Southern Africa were estimated at six and a half million people living in four countries, namely South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Swaziland (Joshua Project, 2017). In 2020, the population numbers of the Vatsonga people in the

mentioned four countries in Southern Africa are estimated at seven million people, with most of the Xitsonga-speaking people living in southern region of Mozambique, followed by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Swaziland (Joshua Project, 2020).

5.8.1 History of the Vatsonga people

The history of the Vatsonga people is complex and unclear given that the ethnic group is made up of several tribes, which pose a challenge of establishing their origin (Maluleke, 2018:2). Joyce (2009:10) defines a tribe as “a closed society with its own history and lore, its dynamic internally fuelled, its territorial and, more importantly, its cultural integrity stoutly defended against intruders” and explains that in the southern African regions, these groups mixed and formed alliances. Furthermore, limited records capture the history of the Vatsonga besides a few Portuguese and Dutch documents (Joyce, 2010:86; Levine, 2005:210; South African History Online, 2016). Debates on the origin of the Vatsonga people indicate that they originally migrated from Central and Eastern Africa and settled mainly in Mozambique and some parts of South Africa (Mathebula et al., 2007:1-2). The literature shows that the Vatsonga people were formed by two main groups; the Tsonga or Rhonga, meaning people of the East, and the Shangani, meaning the subjects or followers of Soshangane (Malaza, 2012:7).

Contemporary research and Portuguese records show that the Vatsonga people are made up of the following ethnic groups (Malaza, 2012:7-10; Manganye, 2011:7; Mathebula et al., 2007:1-2):

- the Hlengwe people inhabiting Mozambique and South Eastern Zimbabwe,
- Hlanganu people found in Swaziland,
- the Dzonga/Vatsonga found in South Africa and Mozambique,
- N’walungu people mainly found in Mozambique and South Africa’s Limpopo province,
- Vatshwa people mainly found in Mozambique’s Nyembane area, and
- the Vatsonga people dotted all over Southern Africa.

Historical accounts suggest that the Vatsonga people were already living in areas in Mozambique and the Kruger National Park in South Africa by 697 A.D. (Erasmus, 1995 in Maluleke, 2018:1). Others confirm that the Vatsonga people in Mozambique were already in existence around 1544 but there is little documented history to back the claim (Kriel & Hartman, 1991:16).

In more recent historical accounts, it is indicated that the Vatsonga communities lived in the eastern coastlands of Southern Africa, stretching from St Lucia Bay in northern KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa up to the Save River in Mozambique, covering other areas in South Africa such

Mpumalanga and the Kruger National Park as well as areas in Swaziland and South-Eastern Zimbabwe (Joyce, 2009:84; Mathebula et al., 2007:1). The 1816 invasion of the eastern coastlands area by Shaka Zulu, leader of the Zulu kingdom, and his people forced the Vatsonga to flee inland. The Vatsonga became caught up in the rivalry of the Nguni military leader, Shoshangane, against Shaka Zulu. Shoshangane formed his empire, naming his followers the Shangaan, which led to the formation of the Shangaan-Tsonga group. This group spread further towards Mozambique, Zimbabwe and the eastern parts of the current Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces of South Africa (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:66-68; Joyce, 2010:85-86; Maluleke, 2018:8). At the same time period, the *Mfecane*, a period of pervasive privation, extreme climates and famine in the south eastern parts of South Africa during the second decade of the 19th century, led to the displacement of many of the Nguni tribes (Garstang, Coleman & Therrell, 2014:1).

Confusion between the use of the terms 'Tsonga' and 'Shangani' has led to an identity crisis among some Xitsonga-speaking people, as evident in debates that centre on whether the Vatsonga people are synonymous to the Shangani or not since the terms are often used interchangeably (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68; Maluleke, 2018:5; Mathebula et al., 2007:1-2). As mentioned, it is debated that originally the Vatsonga people migrated from Central and Eastern Africa and settled mainly in Mozambique and some parts of South Africa. The term Shangani only came into the picture in the 1820-1860's when, due to civil wars the Shangani tribe was born as a sub-group of the Vatsonga. Whilst there is clear evidence that the Vatsonga people are a distinct ethnic group and the Shangani an offshoot of the Ndwandwe with Zulu strains, it has become accepted to the group that various ethnic sub-groups whose dialects reflect the language Xitsonga be identified as the Vatsonga (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68; Mathebula et al., 2007:1-2).

In 1858 a war broke out resulting in another migration of the Vatsonga people led by Chief Umzila into the Soutpansberg area under Joao Albasini, a Portuguese hunter-trader. Chief Mhlaba led the Nkuna clan and is revered as one of the Tsonga great leaders (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68). The Vatsonga people are an amalgamation of the Zulu and Tsonga culture; thus, the term Shangani or Changana is regarded as derogatory as it reminds the Tsonga of their subjugation by chief Soshangane and of the integration of the Tsonga ethnic group and Soshangane's Zulu people (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68; Kriel & Hartman, 1991:16; Maluleke, 2018:5). In South Africa the Vatsonga people are found in Limpopo province dotted in towns that include Giyani, Malamulele, Lulekani, Nkowankowa, Dwarsloop, Thulamahashe, Mkhuhlu, Mhala, Ritavi and Waterval (Maluleke, 2018:8).

The Vatsonga groups who live in South-Eastern Africa developed their customs and traditions and a particular way of life (Maluleke, 2018:3-4, 6). The language of Xitsonga is standardised and unified, but consists of different tribal dialects (Maluleke, 2018:2).

5.8.2 Tsonga traditions and practices

The Vatsonga people consist of a group of clans with a specific cultural identity (Maluleke, 2018:3). They traditionally lived in small groups or **chiefdoms**, each with its tribal boundaries and chief or the traditional leader (Joyce, 2010:84; Maluleke, 2018:3). Traditionally, a group of families lived in a small cluster or village under the authority of a specific chief (Joyce, 2010:87). The Vatsonga people are polygamous, whereby a Vatsonga man is allowed to marry several wives (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68). Marriages between blood relations were prohibited, and Vatsonga men had special relationships with their in-laws (Joyce, 2010:87).

In a cultural account of the Vatsonga people, Manganye (2011:9) explains that the indigenous Vatsonga people lived in **homesteads** called *muti* made up of round mud huts with conical thatched roofs. The homestead provided residence to a man, his wife/wives, children and married sons with their wives. Each wife lived in her homestead and the house of the senior wife was at the centre, flanked by those of the junior wives (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68; Joyce, 2010:86). The division of tasks in the family were divided according to gender (Joyce, 2010:87). As an example, girls would fetch water in *khuwanais*, the Tsonga water jar, normally carried by girls balanced on their heads (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68). The homestead included a cooking place (*xitsumba*), a grain hut (*xitlati*), and a chicken coop (*xihahlu*). Chickens were protected from scavengers as they were housed in a hen house (*Xihahlu*) (Manganye, 2011:9).

The Vatsonga were **agriculturalists** who cultivated sorghum, maize, rapoko, cucumbers and watermelons, amongst others. They also kept livestock, including goats, cattle, sheep, poultry, and pigs (Malaza, 2012:7-10; Manganye, 2011:9). In addition to farming, herding cattle and fishing, the Vatsonga people in Mozambique were one of the first black traders of Southern Africa as they traded with the Portuguese merchants and the Arabs. The Vatsonga people also kept cattle and to signify the importance of cattle, the kraal was at the centre of the homestead (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68; Maluleke, 2018:6).

The Xitsonga-speaking people believe in **society as a unit**, including the living and the dead. They believe in a **Supreme Being** and Creator, called *Tilo*. They worship *Tilo* through their **ancestors**, believing that a dead person's spirit is venerated as a deity, and believe in diviners, called *tin'anga*. Furthermore, they believe that the spirits of the ancestors are ever present and had to be served, rather than worshipped (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:64; Joyce, 2010:88). Therefore, burial rituals are important in terms of the passage of the deceased

person into the spiritual world, and cleansing ceremonies that are performed over the following months (Joyce, 2010:89). The Vatsonga people's belief in their dead is also witnessed by the *tingoma* ritual, a three-day ceremony to facilitate communication between the living and the ancestral spirits (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:64). Symbolism and rituals form an important part of the Tsonga culture. Khosa (2009:78-87) describes rituals related to death, male and female initiation, ancestral worship, marriage, graduation of traditional healers, and the ordinance of chiefs.

Personal health is viewed in a holistic and spiritual manner. Whereas Western people believe in the body, mind and soul, the Vatsonga believe in the physical being (*mmiri*), the wind and breath (*moya*) that indicates life and death, and the individual's shadow and reflection (*ndzuti*) which is seen as a personal marker of the individual (Joyce, 2010:88). Sickness and health are associated with evil spirits, for which they must consult the ancestors through the traditional healer (Joyce, 2010:89). Traditional healing includes the use of herbs and plants (Maluleke, 2018:11).

The Vatsonga people have traditional **food, drinks, and herbs**. Their food consists mainly of maize meals, vegetables and meat prepared according to traditional methods, and traditional drinks are brewed from the fruits of the marula, mpimpi and palm trees, amongst others (Maluleke, 2018:11-12). The Vatsonga were innovative people and made their salt from the soil and plants (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:64).

Traditional Tsonga **clothing** is usually worn at significant events, traditional ceremonies and social outings; however, older women wear traditional clothing in their everyday lives (Maluleke, 2018:11). Their clothing is characterised by bright colours, which gives the Vatsonga women's clothes a unique character. In everyday life, the Vatsonga men wear modern casual wear, but they wear traditional shirts (*swigejo*) in different forms and colours for traditional occasions. In the event of traditional performances or special occasions, they will wear the traditional animal hides (Maluleke, 2018:12). Traditional dress and ornamentation serve as distinctive symbols of ethnicity (Mare, 1993 in Madalane, 2014:46). The Vatsonga people have a custom of tattoos which developed during the slave trade, when women used it to evade trade. This practice later evolved into a technique of making Vatsonga women more attractive (Kriel & Hartman, 1991:16). Women's faces were adorned with tatoos or with marks on their cheeks, forehead and chin (Joyce, 2010:89).

Tsonga **folktales** hold rich and unique information about cultural, linguistic and historical values, and provide insight into the worldview of the Vatsonga people (Chauke, 2018:1). Storytelling, especially by older women, as well as music and dance were prominent cultural activities in the Tsonga villages (Joyce, 2010:87). In the Tsonga culture the grandmothers

were usually the orators and played a significant role in transmitting knowledge to the younger generations. Animals such as lions, baboons, rabbits and hyenas are often used in the stories to teach children about different aspects of human life, and depict certain human virtues such as bravery (lion) or trickery (rabbit) (Chauke, 2018:6, 8).

Tsonga **music** has a distinct sound and includes the use of African drums, the xylophone (*timbila*), windpipes, strings, a small thumb piano (*kalimba*) and horns (*timhahamhala*) (Maluleke, 2018:12). As language is a central marker of ethnic identity, the lyrics in Tsonga music is an important way of confirming the Tsonga ethnic identity and Tsonga ethnic pride (Madalane, 2014:40, 52). Dance forms a prominent part of the Tsonga culture, with traditional dances for both men and women (Maluleke, 2018:12). During musical performances, the traditional skirt worn by Vatsonga women (*xibelani*) is important for symbolising the ethnic identity of the Vatsonga (Madalane, 2014:46).

Maluleke (2018:3-4, 6) explains that the unique customs, traditions and way of life of the Xitsonga-speaking people have been sustained over time, despite the Vatsonga consisting of various independent clans. Joyce (2009:11) confirms this notion by stating that in many ethnic groups their cultural traditions are still relevant in rural areas, but also among those members of the culture who adopted a more modern lifestyle.

In the context of the current study, the unique beliefs and practices in the Tsonga culture and IKS, would influence the environment of Xitsonga-speaking children. It is critical to understand that IKS by its nature is part of the environment with which the Xitsonga-speaking child interacts from birth through methods such as poetry, traditional stories, rites of passage and ceremonies, which all help in socialising children and shaping their development. Furthermore, Tsonga IKS will inform the worldview of individuals, families, groups and communities, and will influence their perceptions of their reality, amongst others their views of children, child-rearing and child protection issues. To this end, Hepworth et al. (2017:318) argue that people should not be viewed in isolation of their environment as many characteristics in their environment can affect the capacity of individuals and/or groups to attain their goals and to survive and thrive. This chapter contains a discussion of aspects that are important in African people's cultural realities, which differ from those living in Western contexts (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:19). Social workers must thus be sensitive to the African worldview when dealing with African service users (Thabede, 2008:234). Bogopa (2012:249) posits that interventions that do not take the local culture and values of a society into account are not likely to be sustainable.

In conclusion, the description of the Vatsonga people show that their cultural beliefs and practices correlate with many of the aspects described in the earlier sections on culture, the Afrocentric worldview, IKS and African IKS.

5.9 SUMMARY

The main focus of the chapter was on the conceptualisation of culture and indigenous knowledge, with specific reference to the central characteristics of the African culture, the African worldview, and its relation to African indigenous knowledge and IKS. The literature review highlights that social workers need to understand the local socio-cultural contexts for effective and sustainable social work interventions. Within the African context, social workers need to understand the African culture and the Afrocentric worldview that will determine how service users will perceive and understand their situations and problems. The integration of IKS of the African peoples into social work education and practice is of importance in a context where social work education and practice models are historically based on Western knowledge and practice models. In the social work profession, the need to integrate African IKS with Western social work education and practice is increasingly voiced.

Against this background, the researcher aimed to collect data on Tsonga IKS that could be relevant to child protection and inform an awareness programme for social workers on the topic. The research methodology that was employed in the study will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review for the study revealed that children in Southern Africa are exposed to many adverse experiences that affect their rights, including their protection rights, and that significant numbers of children are exposed to maltreatment (Falb et al., 2017:278-279; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28, 32; UNICEF, 2017:17). The limited resources and professional services in many African countries pose challenges to the protection of children (Davis et al., 2012:13, 31; Nhedzi & Makofane, 2015:356; World Bank, 2005:23). To this effect, it appears that Africa had effective child protection systems in pre-colonial times but that these systems have since become nearly extinct (Mushunje, 2006:16).

The researcher proposed that IKS, a credible source of knowledge in traditional African societies, could be explored as a natural ecological resource that could be utilised to strengthen child protection efforts in Southern Africa, as advised by Hepworth et al. (2017:431). The study was thus undertaken to explore the possible contribution of IKS to child protection and to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection. The study focused on Tsonga IKS. The focus on the Tsonga IKS was motivated by the fact that the researcher is fluent in Xitsonga, which allowed him to conduct the data collection interviews in the language of the participants who were the expert knowledge keepers of the Tsonga IKS in rural areas. This factor minimised language barriers and contributed to the collection of rich data. This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology undertaken to accomplish the goal of the study and answer the research question.

6.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

The following objectives were stated for the study:

- To theoretically conceptualise IKS with specific reference to children's right to protection.
- To explore and describe Tsonga IKS that could be relevant to children's right to protection from a bio-ecological and social constructionist perspective.
- To identify elements in Tsonga IKS that could enhance or hamper children's right to protection.

- To develop and pilot test an awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection.
- Based on the research findings, to suggest practice guidelines for relevant role players in the child protection field on the use of IKS in child protection.

6.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study was based on a constructivist research paradigm as the individual participants in the research were active role players in the formulation of the research problem (De Vos et al., 2011:7-8; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:56). Knowledge bearers who were thus experts on Tsonga IKS were involved in conceptualising the values, beliefs and practices underlying Tsonga IKS, how these could contribute to the protection of children, challenges experienced in this respect as well as possible interventions to address these challenges. Throughout the entire research process, the researcher engaged in dialogue with the participants to explore their IKS and determine it could inform child protection strategies in their local contexts. The study was based on a qualitative research approach, which is seen by Makofane and Shirindi (2018:31) as a research approach “from a constructivist perspective that allows participants to construct the meaning of a particular phenomenon under study. This is significant as it accentuates individual experiences as opposed to striving for generalisation of the findings.”

A qualitative research approach was relevant to the study as the approach is useful when investigating an under-researched group or phenomenon of which little is known (Henn et al., 2008:171). In addition, qualitative research seeks to gain an understanding of complex phenomena, obtained by means of a considerable amount of verbal data collected from the research participants (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:64-65). By following a qualitative research approach, the researcher was enabled to understand a complex phenomenon, namely the concept of child protection and elements in the Tsonga IKS that could enhance child protection strategies, as presented from the perspectives of the research participants. In their study on African spirituality, Mabvurira and Makhubele (2018a:16-17) posit that underlying beliefs, values and reasoning may not be measurable through quantitative research methods. Qualitative research was thus an applicable research approach to explore and document the participants’ accounts of meanings, perceptions and experiences related to the subject under investigation (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:65).

The source of IKS is the indigenous people themselves, who transfer their indigenous knowledge by means of narratives, poetry, recitals, idioms, rituals, music and songs, amongst others (Ossai, 2010:4). African cultures have a long history of collectivist societies that rely on oral tradition to preserve and transfer their history from one generation to another; hence,

collectivist-oriented research methodologies such as qualitative approaches are compatible with the African worldview (Kreitzer, 2019:44). Bless et al. (2013:58) concur that qualitative research is applicable to studies where “language provides a far more sensitive and meaningful way of recording human experience.” In addition, qualitative approaches are best suited for exploring individuals’ understanding of their beliefs, cultures and human experiences (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017:44).

6.4 TYPE OF RESEARCH

The research was undertaken to understand the contribution of Tsonga IKS to child protection. Based on the research results, the researcher proffered practical guidelines that are contained in an awareness programme for social workers working in the field of child protection. Applied research was thus a relevant type of research as the study was meant to put forward practical solutions to a problem faced in a specific context (Bless et al., 2013:59).

The study furthermore had an exploratory and descriptive purpose. The researcher could not locate information on the contribution that Tsonga IKS could make towards child protection strategies. Exploratory research was appropriate to the study that focused on a phenomenon on which there was limited knowledge, whereas descriptive research was relevant as the researcher would provide an in-depth description of a phenomenon (Babbie, 2013:91; Bless et al., 2013:60-61; Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95-96).

In addition, the research fell under intervention research as a sub-type of applied research (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:475). Intervention research is focused on creating interventions or programmes to address specific problems through purposive strategies for change (Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:459; Fraser et al., 2009:9). Rothman and Thomas (1994) conceptualised intervention research as a model consisting of six phases (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:475-485; Fraser et al., 2009:29). The first four of these phases, as outlined by De Vos and Strydom (2011a:476-485) and Fraser et al. (2009:29-32), were followed in the implementation of the study. The fifth stage of intervention stage which focuses on the advanced programme development and the sixth stage which focuses on programme dissemination were not considered part of this study (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:485-487; Fraser et al., 2009: 32-33).

Phase one: Problem analysis and project planning

Gaining an understanding of the dimensions of the problem is the first step in the planning of an intervention or “developing a problem theory” (Fraser et al., 2009:49). The researcher identified the social problem that was the focus of this study (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:477) as the challenges experienced in the field of child protection in Southern Africa. Literature that was consulted by the researcher highlighted the lack of information on the research topic

(Fraser et al., 2009:29-30; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:462-463). The researcher ascertained that, although indigenous African societies seemed to have effective child protection strategies in earlier times, there was a lack of information on the role of indigenous knowledge in child protection, while cultural practices could be a mediating or risk factor in the protection of children. The researcher furthermore contacted key informants to determine the feasibility of the study and to obtain their collaboration (Fraser et al., 2009:30-31). In the process, the researcher discussed and confirmed the need for the research, identified targets for intervention, and refined the goal and objectives for the study (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:478-479; Frazer & Galinsky, 2010:463). The researcher obtained permission from the relevant local authorities to conduct the study in regions occupied by the Vatsonga people in Zimbabwe and Mozambique; however, did not manage to obtain permission from the relevant local authorities in South Africa.

Phase two: Information gathering and synthesis

The researcher conducted an extensive literature review on the research topic, which included information on, amongst others, children's rights and their right to protection, child protection services, and culture and IKS, with a focus on African cultures and worldviews (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:480-481; Fraser et al., 2009:30). The review of the literature did not yield information on existing interventions that focus on the contribution of IKS to child protection.

In this phase the researcher also conducted an empirical study, in which information on the research topic was obtained by means of individual interviews with participants who had an intimate knowledge of the Tsonga culture. The participants included traditional leaders, headmen and elders of the Vatsonga people, as well as social workers who provided child protection services in Xitsonga-speaking communities in the two districts in Zimbabwe and Mozambique where the study was conducted. The empirical study, together with the literature study, formed the basis for the development of the intervention programme that would be developed with consideration of the specific socio-cultural context (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:481; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:463).

Fraser et al. (2009:39) describe this step in the intervention research process as the development of programme theory. Programme theory entails that the researcher used the review of the literature and information obtained from experts, practitioners and others who have knowledge of the research problem to create a conceptual framework for the intervention.

Phase three: Design

In this phase, the intervention planned for the study was designed. The researcher used information from the literature and from the interviews conducted in the first phase of data collection, to develop the first draft or prototype of an awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection (Fraser et al., 2009:30-31). During this stage, the researcher determined the procedures involved in delivering the programme (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:483). The programme was structured according to different content sections as well as activities that could reinforce the content (Frazer & Galinsky, 2010:463). The procedures for obtaining feedback from the social workers, who were the participants to whom the programme was presented, were also determined. Obtaining feedback forms a critical part of the pilot testing of a programme (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:482).

Phase four: Early development and pilot testing

In the fourth stage, which was the last stage in the intervention research process relevant to this study, the researcher presented the prototype of the awareness programme to a sample of social workers who worked in the field of child protection in the wider Harare area in Zimbabwe (Fraser et al., 2009:31). The programme was intended to enhance the participants' knowledge of elements in culture and IKS that could present risk as well as protective factors in child protection, with the Tsonga culture as a case study. The knowledge obtained from the empirical study in phase two of the intervention research process provided valuable insights that would not have been obtained through a literature study alone (Fraser et al., 2009:57). The programme was presented in a group format.

The pilot test focused on the implementation of the programme in real-world settings, rather than on the programme outcomes (Fraser et al., 2009:31; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:464). The pilot study was presented to two groups of social workers, who provided feedback on the programme. Based on feedback from the participants, the researcher was able to consider changes for the refinement of the programme (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:483; Fraser et al., 2009:32).

Within the scope of the study, the last two phases of the intervention research process were not implemented. The fifth phase focuses on the advanced development of the programme, whereas the sixth phase is about disseminating the programme (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:485-487; Fraser et al., 2009:32-33).

6.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design offered the researcher a plan of action, linking the philosophical assumptions to specific methods, and informed the sampling, data gathering and data analysis

(Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:72). The research design was informed by the nature of the problem to be investigated, the research questions, and the conceptual framework for the study (Henn et al., 2008:19; Punch, 2005:142). The research was based on a constructivist research paradigm, which emphasises that meaning is created subjectively, and as such, a case study design was appropriate for the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:82). This aspect was of importance in the context of the study as the researcher was interested in the meaning assigned to the protection of children, as guided by the Tsonga culture and IKS. Furthermore, a case study design was followed as the research was based on a qualitative research approach (Maree, 2016:36).

A case study design involves an in-depth exploration of a social phenomenon and is intended to provide a detailed and holistic understanding of a case; which can be an organisation, community, social group, family or an individual (Babbie, 2013:338; Engel & Schutt, 2013:275). The design involves exploration and description of the case based on detailed data collection from a person or number of people to “obtain an intimate familiarity with their social worlds and to look for patterns in the research participants’ lives, words and actions in the context of the case of a whole” (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320-321). Against this background, the case study design was appropriate for the research study as the researcher aimed to gain insight into the social world of the Tsonga people, as influenced by their culture and IKS. In particular, the instrumental case study was a relevant research design to enable the researcher to gain insight into a complex issue, namely child protection, by exploring the context and practices of the Tsonga people to facilitate an understanding of the use of IKS in child protection (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321; Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:82-83).

As discussed above, the researcher collected detailed qualitative data in two stages in the study. In the first instance, participants who were familiar with the Tsonga culture and IKS within the two districts in which the study was conducted, were considered as a case. For the second data collection stage, the case involved social workers who worked in the field of child protection. In both instances, a case study design enabled the researcher to obtain rich data on the phenomenon about which there was limited information.

6.6 RESEARCH METHODS

This section contains information on the methods used in undertaking the study. The study population and sampling method and the methods of data collection and data analysis will be discussed.

6.6.1 Study population and sampling

The study populations and samples for the two stages of data collection will be discussed separately. In research within the social sciences, the unit of analysis will typically be individual people (Babbie, 2013:97). Non-probability sampling methods were used to select participants who could provide rich information that would be appropriate for achieving the goal of the study (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:34).

- **Sampling for the first stage of data collection**

In the first stage of data collection, the focus was on obtaining information on Tsonga IKS to determine whether it contained elements that could be relevant to child protection. The target population were people who had knowledge of Tsonga IKS and who lived in rural areas in the Chiredzi district in the Masvingo province of Zimbabwe and the Chokwe district in Gaza province in Mozambique. The two geographical areas were purposively selected due to the high concentration of Xitsonga-speaking people in these areas as compared to other provinces. Written permission to conduct the research was obtained from the following authorities: the Director for Child Welfare and Probation Services of Zimbabwe (see Appendix A), the Secretary of Rural Development, Promotion and Preservation of National Culture and Heritage in Zimbabwe (see Appendix B); and the Embassy of the Republic of Mozambique (see Appendix C). Although South Africa has a large Vatsonga population, the researcher could not obtain permission from the relevant authorities to conduct research in their areas.

Experts (knowledge bearers) on Tsonga IKS as well as social workers who worked in child welfare in Tsonga-speaking communities were most likely to have the knowledge, insight and experience related to the research topic and were thus the target population for the study (Bless et al., 2013:395; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:35). Two study samples, namely IKS experts and social workers respectively, were thus recruited for the first phase of data collection. Participants were selected based on non-probability sampling methods as the researcher wished to collect rich data, however, did not know the population size at the time of sampling (Bless et al., 2013:392; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:391). Firstly, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who were considered representative of the population and who would be able to provide information that would be best suited to the purpose of the study (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). The community leaders in the two districts were approached to identify the first potential participants who would be willing to participate in the research (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:37).

Sample 1 involved local IKS experts based on their affiliation with the Vatsonga people and being knowledge bearers of the Tsonga IKS. *Key informant sampling* was used to select the IKS experts (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:394) based on the following sampling criteria:

- Participants involved traditional leaders, headmen and elders of the Vatsonga population who possessed rich information concerning the culture, traditions and lifestyles of the Vatsonga people,
- Participants were either male or female,
- Participants must have lived in the specific community for at least five years.

Key informants are valuable in community-based research as they are authorities on the topic, can provide relevant information, and refer the researcher to other contacts (McKenna & Main, 2013:116). Snowball sampling was subsequently used, in which one person who complied with the sampling criteria assisted the researcher in locating another similar case (Babbie, 2013:129). The researcher contacted the identified persons who expressed their willingness to be approached for the research and asked for their permission to voluntarily participate in the study. An equal number of participants were recruited from the Chokwe and the Chiredzi districts respectively and this study sample consisted of 40 participants, 20 in each district. The final sample size was sufficient for reaching data saturation (Bless et al., 2013:179).

Sample 2 was selected from social workers who had knowledge of child protection as well as of the local Tsonga context. Based on the judgement of the researcher, *purposive sampling* was used to select participants who complied with certain sampling criteria (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). However, as there was likely to be a limited number of social workers in the two districts where the research was conducted, availability sampling was also applied (Bless et al., 2013:172, 176), meaning that the researcher had to interview all the social workers that were available and who met the following sampling criteria:

- Social workers working with child protection cases,
- Social workers who worked in the Tsonga communities in the Chokwe and Chiredzi districts and hence had accrued knowledge of the traditions, culture and lifestyles which could hinder or promote child protection.

As the number of social workers in the area could not be estimated, a final sample size could not be determined prior to the undertaking of the study. In each district, the researcher contacted a social worker who complied with the sampling criteria with the help of the community leaders, and then used *snowball sampling* to contact other social workers in the respective districts who were willing to voluntarily participate in the study (Babbie, 2013:129).

The total numbers of participants in the sample of social workers were four in the Chokwe district and seven in the Chiredzi district.

- **Sampling for the second stage of data collection**

The data collected in the first stage of data collection informed the development of an awareness programme for social workers on the possible use of IKS in child protection. The purpose of the second data collection stage was to obtain feedback on the prototype of the programme that the researcher developed, from a sample of social workers who were familiar with the field of child protection. The population, to which the research findings would apply (Bless et al., 2013:394), was child protection social workers who were registered at the National Association of Social Workers in Zimbabwe and who lived in the wider Harare area. The National Association of Social Workers in Zimbabwe granted permission to contact social work members (see Appendix D).

Purposive sampling (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392) was used to select 22 social workers based on the following sampling criteria:

- Social workers working in the field of child protection in the greater Harare area,
- Social workers with at least two years' work experience in child protection work,
- Participants who could converse in English,
- Social workers who were able to attend the programme developed by the researcher,
- Participants were male or female.

The researcher is familiar with the social work context in Harare and contacted two social workers who were known to him and who complied with the sampling criteria. Based on snowball sampling, these social workers were then asked to introduce colleagues who complied with the sampling criteria and who would be willing to participate in the study. These social workers were then approached by the researcher and invited to participate in the study (Babbie, 2013:129).

6.6.2 Data collection

In accordance with the research approach of the study, qualitative data collection methods were used. Qualitative data collection predominantly relies on interviewing, of which semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were used in the first and second stages of data collection respectively (Greeff, 2011:342; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:40). Mabvurira and Makhubele (2018a:19) advise that data collection methods must be appropriate for a study in the African context. Interviewing was seen as a relevant data collection method as verbal discourse is common in the African tradition where knowledge is transmitted by means of

narrations, proverbs, stories and folktales (Chauke, 2018:1; Magano, 2018:236; Nwoye, 2017:54-55). All the interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants.

In the **first stage of data collection**, *semi-structured one-to-one interviews* were used to collect detailed information on the Tsonga culture and its relevance to child protection, as informed by the experiences and perceptions of the participants (Greeff, 2011:351). The semi-structured interviews were guided by interview schedules (Greeff, 2011:351-352); for which the researcher developed an interview schedule for the IKS experts (see Appendix E) and an interview schedule for the child protection social workers (see Appendix F). Semi-structured one-on-one interviews are time-consuming, but they provided the researcher with the flexibility to explore different themes that were important to the investigation (Bless et al., 2013:216). The researcher could maintain the line of inquiry as in the interview schedule but could probe and clarify the participants' responses (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:93).

The researcher is fluent in Xitsonga and English and was able to conduct the interviews in either language, as appropriate to the specific interview. All the interviews with the sample of participants who were knowledge bearers of Tsonga IKS were conducted in Xitsonga. The interviews with the sample of social workers were conducted in either Xitsonga or English, depending on the preference of the participants. The researcher was assisted by a research assistant who was competent in conversing in English, Portuguese and in the different dialects of the Xitsonga language to assist in the interviews conducted in the Mozambican research site. The research assistant was properly orientated for this role (Bless et al., 2013:216). For data analysis, the interviews that were conducted in the Xitsonga language were translated into English. The researcher and the research assistant consulted on the translations to ensure that the correct meaning of words and phrases were presented and would not be influenced by the translation (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:38).

In the **second stage of data collection**, *focus group interviews* were used to collect data from the social workers who attended the presentation of the programme that was developed for the study. The programme was presented in a group setting. Afterwards, the participants were invited to participate in focus group interviews to provide their views on the implementation and content of the programme. Focus groups were appropriate to the study as they are effective in exploring different ideas that people have on an aspect, and for pilot-testing materials, plans or policies (Greeff, 2011:362). The focus group interviews were guided by an interview guide (see Appendix G), which contained questions to obtain rich information on the participants' experiences of the programme (Greeff, 2011:369).

Focus groups have the advantage that participants can share their views and insights and were appropriate to the study as many African cultures are familiar with small group

discussions (Bless et al., 2013:217; Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:19). The method also has some disadvantages, as participants may influence one another during focus group interviews, while some participants may feel intimidated in a too-large group (Bless et al., 2013:217; Greeff, 2011:366). Due to the size of the final sample, the researcher decided to divide the participants into two groups. The programme was presented separately to the two groups and data was collected separately for the two groups. Therefore, the size of each focus group was in line with the recommended group size of between five and 12 people (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:96). The programme was presented in English and data were collected in the English language. For this reason, the sampling criteria stipulated that all the participants should be able to converse in English. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants.

6.6.3 Pilot testing

The researcher conducted a pilot study in order to review the data collection instruments and determine whether the questions were clear and appropriate to yield the information that would be relevant to the goal of the study and the research question (Bless et al., 2013:394; Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:41). Pilot testing is advantageous in that it gives the researcher an idea of what the actual research will look like, and whether changes would be needed to an interview schedule or focus group interview guide (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:395).

Using the same sampling criteria as for the main study, the researcher pilot tested the *interview schedule* for the semi-structured interviews in the first stage of data collection with two participants who were experts on Tsonga IKS and two social workers who worked in child protection within Tsonga communities (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:394). It was concluded that the researcher could obtain sufficient and relevant information with the use of the respective interview schedules and no changes were required. The data that were collected during the pilot interviews contained valuable information and were thus included in the final data set.

Greeff (2011:370) indicates that pilot testing the focus group *interview guide* is problematic, as it is difficult to separate the interview from the environment of the focus group. Therefore, the first focus group with the participants will be the “true pilot test.” As suggested by the author, the researcher discussed the interview guide with social work colleagues beforehand and then used the first focus group interview as a pilot study. No changes were made to the interview guide.

6.6.4 Data analysis

In following a qualitative research approach in both stages of data collection in the study, the researcher utilised thematic analysis to analyse data, as espoused by Creswell’s (2009) model

of data analysis. The model stipulates that data analysis is an ongoing process which starts prior to the first interview (Creswell, 2009:184). Furthermore, “[t]he process of data analysis and interpretation can best be represented by a spiral image - a data analysis spiral” (Schurink et al., 2011:403). Data were analysed in line with this iterative process (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:109).

- Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured and focus group interviews as well as field notes. The use of a voice recorder with permission of the participants had the advantage of verbatim recordings and enabled the researcher to communicate, listen and probe the conversation attentively (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:468). During the interviews, the researcher took down sketchy notes to allow him to focus more on the interviews unhindered, while more comprehensive field notes were made after the interviews (Creswell, 2009:184). In this way, the researcher kept abreast with what was happening in the interviews (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:470).
- Qualitative data usually involves a large amount of data and thus requires an organised approach to managing the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:115). After the interviews in the field, the audio recordings were transcribed into verbatim transcriptions that were stored in different files. Interviews that were conducted in XiTsonga were translated into English. As there was a risk of losing the meaning of information during translation, the researcher and research assistant, who were both proficient in XiTsonga and English, collaborated in the translation of the interviews to ensure a communicative translation which would also reflect idiomatic expressions (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:43-44). Data were then read and re-read to get a comprehensive overview of the entire data set, and comments and memos were written in the page margins (Creswell, 2009:184; Schurink et al., 2011:409). This process ensured that the researcher gained a thorough understanding of the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:115).
- Data was then reduced by generating categories, key themes and salient themes that appeared or reappeared in the data (Schurink et al., 2011:410). The process of carefully reading and rereading the transcripts enabled the researcher to find salient themes in the data. Coding of the data involved grouping the data into different units (Babbie, 2013:396; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:116). Colour coding was used to highlight similar categories and patterns observed in the data (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:480). In terms of data from the focus group interviews, the researcher also considered the words, the context, frequency of comments, as well as the extensiveness and specificity of comments (Greeff, 2011:373). This process gave the researcher a picture of the views expressed by the individual participants in the focus groups, but also of the central ideas that came from the group.

The researcher coded the transcripts and requested the research assistant to also analyse the data for categories. Based on inter-coder agreement (Bless et al., 2013:346), the researcher made sure that the information provided by the participants was understood and objectively coded.

- Based on the coding, central concepts were identified and organised into categories and sub-categories that depicted content that showed commonalities (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:119-120). The researcher established categories in the data by using a hierarchical tree diagram to show the main categories, each with different sub-categories that would portray the relationship between different patterns in the data. This process helped the researcher to make sense of and interpret the data (Schurink et al., 2011:416).
- Interpreting the data involved presenting the data in a meaningful and logical structure (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:120). The data were organised into themes and sub-themes that presented the point of view of the participants and were compared with relevant literature to provide a broader context for data interpretation (Schurink et al., 2011:417). The researcher engaged in a process of understanding how the insights gained from the research findings were corroborated by existing literature and how it could present a deeper understanding of the possible contribution of IKS to child protection (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:121).
- Research findings should be made available to the reading public. The research report forms an inherent part of data analysis as the research findings are presented in the text in a logical and meaningful way (Schurink et al., 2011:418-419). As a final step in the data analysis process, the research findings were presented in the research report, in which the researcher also drew conclusions and suggestions based on the findings of the research (Bless et al., 2013:362; Schurink et al., 2011:419).

6.6.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which researchers can enhance the quality of and trust in the qualitative research process and the research findings (Bless et al., 2013:236; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). Measures to enhance the trustworthiness or reliability of qualitative studies focus on the degree to which the interpretation by the researcher reflects the meanings of the participants (Maree, 2016:40). Factors that support the trustworthiness of a study, include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Maree, 2016:40; Schurink et al., 2011:420).

Credibility involves the presentation of the research findings authentically and accurately, without influence or bias of the researcher (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). The researcher made

use of reflexivity, peer debriefing and data triangulation to contribute to the credibility of the study. *Reflexivity* or neutrality was observed throughout the research process and involved that the researcher would be aware that his perceptions could lead to bias that could interfere with the research process (Creswell, 2009:192; Lietz et al., 2006:447-448; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:193). With reflexivity, the researcher took an objective stance throughout the research process to ensure that the voices of the participants were accurately portrayed. In addition, *peer debriefing* through discussions with the research assistant, where the researcher could reflect on the interpretation of the research findings with someone who was familiar with the context of the study, contributed to trustworthiness (Lietz et al., 2006:450).

The researcher further made use of *data triangulation* or *crystallisation* by collecting data from different study samples (Bless et al., 2013:239; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:121). This strategy brought diversity to data collection and interpretation. In studies that follow a constructivist perspective, it is important to consider different perspectives and multiple realities. Therefore, collecting data to present “multiple lines of sight” was an important strategy to obtain a deeper understanding of the topic of research (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:121-122). Triangulation was further supported by the fact that the researcher and the research assistant analysed data independently and conducted a consensus discussion afterwards (Lietz et al., 2006:451).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research findings can be generalised and be meaningful to settings outside the research study (Schurink et al., 2011:420). As this study was based on a qualitative approach and involved relatively small samples based on non-random sampling, the research findings cannot be generalised to other settings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195). To address challenges in terms of transferability, data on IKS and its potential use in child protection were collected from different sources such as traditional leaders, headmen, elders and social workers. Furthermore, data analysis was guided by the theoretical framework of the study, a rich description of the socio-cultural context of the study was provided, and the aspect of credibility were upheld throughout the study (Bless et al., 2013:237; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195; Schurink et al., 2011:420). In the presentation of the research findings, the researcher used numerous direct quotes to provide a rich description of the views presented by the participants, which will allow readers to decide whether the research findings can be transferred to their specific context (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:124).

Dependability of research studies has a close link with reliability and is upheld through the implementation of a logical and well-documented research process to help others to understand how the research was conducted and how interpretations were arrived at (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:124; Schurink et al., 2011:420). The researcher provided a detailed description of the research methodology and, although qualitative studies make provision for

some flexibility, the researcher strictly adhered to the research methodology in conducting the research (Bless et al., 2013:237; Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195). Through an *audit trail*, the researcher kept a written account of the research procedures and any changes that were required during the research, to enhance the auditability of the study (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:196). Furthermore, *peer debriefing* was conducted through discussions with colleagues who were familiar with working in a multi-cultural context, and in a consensus discussion between the researcher and the research assistant. Peer debriefing also enhanced reflexivity and accountability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:196; Rubin & Babbie, 2011:448).

Conformability suggests that other researchers will be able to obtain similar findings when replicating the research process (Bless et al., 2013:237). Lietz and Zayas (2010:197) state that in constructivist studies, in-depth exploration of evidence, including contradictory and diverse perspectives, is useful in enhancing conformability. The researcher engaged in an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of the participants on IKS and on how it could be used in the field of child protection. Furthermore, the researcher provides a *rich description* of these findings, supported by sufficient verbatim quotes (Bless et al., 2013:239). The quotes were selected to provide the reader with an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:125).

6.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers should submit their research proposal for ethical review before they conduct a study (Bless et al., 2013:31). The researcher obtained approval for conducting the research from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria (see Appendix H). The researcher adhered to the ethical research standards of the Faculty, as is required and acceptable for research in the social sciences (Bless et al., 2013:25; Strydom, 2011:113). The following ethical considerations applied to the study:

6.7.1 Avoidance of harm and beneficence

Avoiding physical or emotional harm to research participants is a fundamental ethical rule in social research (Strydom, 2011:115). In this study, minimal harm to the participants was foreseen as the focus of the study was on IKS and child protection and not on the personal experiences or lives of the participants. Despite limited harm being foreseen, the researcher acknowledged that the exploration of IKS and child protection could involve sensitive information for some participants (Strydom, 2011:116). To minimise potential harm to participants, the researcher fully informed them about the study, including the potential impact and risks of their participation, before they committed to participation in the study. In addition, participants were informed that participation is voluntary and that they would have the opportunity to opt out of the study at any given time if they so wished (Rubin & Babbie,

2011:77). This information was shared when recruiting potential participants and was also included in the informed consent letter.

The principle of beneficence applied to this study in that the research study recognised the potential contribution of Tsonga IKS to the well-being of children in the Tsonga culture and possibly other socio-cultural contexts (Bless et al., 2013:29). Mabvurira and Makhubele (2018a:17) accentuate the importance of the research principle of beneficence in Afrocentric contexts, in which knowledge must be liberating and empowering, and contribute to the acknowledgement of African indigenous knowledge.

The researcher made arrangements for follow-up counselling in the case where participants might experience distress due to taking part in the research (Bless et al., 2013:33). For the first stage of data collection with the IKS experts and social workers who worked in the field of child protection, arrangements for follow-up counselling were made in consultation with a social worker in each of the districts of Chokwe and Chiredzi. Social work participants, who experience emotional distress due to their participation in the developed programme and focus group interviews in the second stage of data collection, were to be referred for counselling to a social work colleague of the researcher in Harare. No participants needed to be referred for follow-up counselling.

6.7.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent

The researcher informed the participants of their right to choose whether to participate in the study or not, and that even if they choose to participate, they still had a right to discontinue their participation at any given time without any negative consequences (Bless et al., 2013:32). Voluntary participation was a significant aspect in the context of the study, given the importance that research participants from African indigenous communities should experience a sense of control in the research process (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:17). The researcher did not coerce any participant to participate in the study. Initial permission to obtain information on Tsonga IKS was obtained from the relevant authorities (Strydom, 2011:118). By means of indirect methods of key informant and snowball sampling, potential participants were informed about the research beforehand and could therefore make an informed decision about participation in the study.

The participants were asked to provide their consent to voluntarily participate in the research in the form of a letter of informed consent, indicating that they understood what their participation entailed (Bless et al., 2013:32). The letter of informed consent contained adequate information on the goal of the research, the research procedures, possible advantages and risks involved in participation, the nature of the participant's involvement in

the research, permission to use a voice recorder during data collection interviews, the right to withdraw, and confidentiality (Babbie, 2013:40; Strydom, 2011:117-118).

Three informed consent letters were drafted; one for each of the two samples of participants in the first stage of data collection that focused on Tsonga IKS, namely the IKS experts (see Appendix I) and child protection workers (see Appendix J); and one for the social workers in the Harare district who attended the pilot testing of the developed awareness programme (see Appendix K). The letters of consent were drafted in English as the various dialects among the XiTsonga speaking people presented challenges in translating it to accommodate the different dialects. The researcher and the research assistant verbally translated the information in the letters of informed consent to the participants in the Xitsonga language and could clarify any questions that the participants might have. The researcher is fluent in XiTsonga, and the research assistant could effectively converse in the different Xitsonga dialects. In this way, the researcher was mindful of the participants' preferred language as well as possible variation in the participants' literacy levels (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:33). As the developed awareness programme was presented uniformly in English, the ability to converse in English was one of the sampling criteria for the social work participants involved in the pilot testing of the programme in Harare.

6.7.3 Privacy and confidentiality

During data collection, the researcher upheld the ethical principle of privacy by allowing the participants the right to decide to what extent they wished to reveal their beliefs, attitudes and practices (Strydom, 2011:119). In this way, the researcher portrayed respect for the participants' culture and their cultural norms in terms of discussing certain topics with the researcher (Bless et al., 2013:31). Confidentiality was upheld by the researcher ensuring that the information provided by the participants would be handled confidentially and that the participants would not be identifiable by others, except the researcher and the research assistant (Babbie, 2013:36; Bless et al., 2013:32). The research assistant signed a letter of agreement to uphold confidentiality of information (see Appendix L). In the research report, confidentiality was maintained by assigning codes to the participants so that their identity is protected. All raw data as well as the signed letters of informed consent were securely stored by the researcher during the research process and would be stored at the University of Pretoria in line with the prescribed stipulations (Bless et al., 2013:32). Participants were informed about the measures undertaken to uphold confidentiality by means of the informed consent letters. The participants were further informed that their contributions were to be used for a research report and possible academic publications and conferences, to which the same principles of confidentiality would apply.

6.7.4 Deception of subjects

No form of deception, which could involve offering incorrect information or deliberately withholding information from participants, occurred in the study (Strydom, 2011:119). Misrepresentation or deception is a violation of the ethical principle of informed consent (Babbie, 2013:40). No information was withheld from the participants and no incorrect information was provided to them. The researcher ensured that the participants were fully informed about the study by means of the letter of informed consent. The information in the letter of informed consent was repeated verbally during the recruitment of the participants, either in English or in XiTsonga, as relevant to the individual participants. The researcher ensured that any misunderstanding that unwittingly occurred would be corrected immediately or during debriefing (Strydom, 2011:119).

6.7.5 Compensation

The researcher did not offer any incentives in monetary value to the participants for their participation in the study. However, Strydom (2011:121) deems it reasonable to reimburse participants for costs incurred, such as for transportation. In the Chokwe and Chiredzi districts, the interviews were conducted in the participants' local area and no need for reimbursement for transportation costs was necessary. In following the Tsonga culture, the researcher gave a small token of appreciation to the participants who would have shared their knowledge on the local IKS. It was explained in the informed consent form that there would be no compensation for participation in the study besides a token of appreciation. However, the social workers who participated in the awareness training programme in Harare needed nominal bus fare reimbursement as they were coming from different suburbs to a central venue in the Central Business District (CBD). The aspect was stated in the letter of informed consent for the participants.

6.7.6 Actions and competence of the researcher

Researchers should be competent and adequately skilled to conduct a research study (Strydom, 2011:123). The researcher was competent to undertake the proposed study based on prior research experience gained from both undergraduate and postgraduate studies, in his work experience as a researcher as well as in training in research ethics conducted and certified by the Research Council of Zimbabwe.

The study involved participants drawn from the Vatsonga people. The researcher is fluent in both Xitsonga and English; hence had the necessary communication skills to conduct the data collection interviews (Greeff, 2011:368). In addition, the researcher was assisted by a research

assistant who could converse in the different dialects of the language that the researcher might not be familiar with.

Throughout the study, the researcher was cognisant of the fact that the implementation of the study should be appropriate to the setting in which it took place. Being from the Tsonga culture, the researcher had an appreciation for the participants' views related to their culture and Afrocentric worldview, for example, their spirituality, religion, customs and ways of life (Mabvurira & Makhuble, 2018a:16-18). In addition, the researcher concurs with Mkabela (2005 in Mabvurira & Makhuble, 2018a:20) that the qualitative research methods used in the study were appropriate to the African context in that qualitative studies focus on understanding people's interpretations and their local contexts, similar to Afrocentric methodology.

6.7.7 Publication of findings

The findings of the study were reported in a moral and ethical way in the research report. Efforts were made not to deceive anybody in relation to the findings of the study through ensuring that results were not manipulated or misrepresented. The research report was compiled in an accurate and objective manner (Strydom, 2011:126). The limitations and shortcomings of the study emanating from the research process are objectively reported (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:84) in point 6.8 below. The researcher guarded against plagiarism and proper credit was given to all sources of information (Strydom, 2011:125). The research report would be available at the University of Pretoria and to the Government Departments responsible for child protection in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. As a form of accountability to the participants, the research findings would be shared with the community leaders who assisted the researcher in the recruitment of the research participants in their respective areas. The researcher will provide them with a written summary in an easily understandable format (Bless et al., 2013:25) that they will be able to share with the participants. The research findings may further be published in academic journals and presented at relevant conferences.

6.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Strydom (2011:126) suggests that the researcher should mention any shortcomings in the study in the research report. The study was based on a qualitative research approach. The research participants in the first stage of data collection included Xitsonga-speaking people of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, therefore there was need to make use of an interpreter who could interpret the researcher's questions and prompts into the participants' local dialect of Tsonga, where needed. Although translations might have resulted in the distortions of the research questions where the researcher did not fully understand the local dialect of participants in Mozambique, the interpreter was fully prepared for his task and also assisted the researcher in the transcriptions and translations of the audio recordings of the interviews.

It is generally asserted that the research findings of qualitative studies are difficult to generalise to other populations due to a smaller sample size (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). In this study, a qualitative research was appropriate to the African context as the researcher could explore the participants beliefs, values and reasoning about their culture and IKS that may not have been possible with the use of quantitative methods (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:16-17). The researcher included numerous direct quotes from the interviews with the participants in the research findings to present a rich description of the findings. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that, although many African cultures share the same worldview (Thabede, 2008:238), the research findings on Tonga IKS cannot be generalised to other African cultures without further research that compare the IKS of different African cultures.

It transpired during the implementation of the research that the interviews with the social work participants in the study sample in the first stage of data collection did not yield the amount of information that the researcher expected at the outset of the study. Although they highlighted specific aspects of the Tsonga IKS that caused concern in terms of child protection, it may be that working in Tsonga communities did not amount to gaining an in-depth understanding of the culture and IKS. In addition, it appeared that a limited number of social workers worked in the two rural districts where the research was conducted, resulting in a small sample size.

However, the limitations of the study cannot be mentioned without pointing to some strengths as well. The interpretivist research paradigm and qualitative research approach adopted for the study resonated well with the phenomenon being studied as it allowed the researcher to obtain rich information on the IKS expert participants' beliefs, values and reasoning about their culture and IKS, which was a key focus of the study. In addition, interviewing as a qualitative data collection method were well suited to the study of IKS due to the oral discourse that characterises IKS and teachings in traditional communities (Bogopa, 2012:245-246; Dewah & Matula, 2014:215; Magano, 2018:236; Olojede, 2014:7; Ossai, 2010:2). The use of rich quotes by the participants demonstrates the recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledge, which relates to the research principle of beneficence in Afrocentric research (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:17).

6.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research methodology for the study was described and discussed. The qualitative research approach and the process of intervention research as a sub-type of applied research guided the researcher in the implementation of the study, including sampling, data collection and data analysis. The ethical considerations provided the researcher with guidelines for protecting the participants from harm and respecting their rights as participants

in the study. In implementing the study in line with the research methodology, the researcher could systematically work towards the accomplishment of the goal and objectives of the study.

In the next chapter, the researcher will present the empirical findings of the first phase of data collection. In this phase, data collection focused on the Tsonga culture and IKS and elements thereof that could relate to child protection.

CHAPTER 7

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: TSONGA IKS AND CHILD PROTECTION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The first phase of this study was aimed at exploring Tsonga IKS and aspects thereof that could be relevant to the protection of children. With the goal of the study being to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS, the first phase of the study focused on the following two of the objectives stated for the study:

- To explore and describe Tsonga IKS that could be relevant to children's right to protection from a bio-ecological and social constructionist perspective.
- To identify elements in Tsonga IKS that could enhance or hamper children's right to protection.

For the first phase of the study, data were collected during one-to-one interviews that were conducted with two study samples: experts on Tsonga IKS and social workers working in the field of child protection within Xitsonga-speaking communities in the two districts relevant to the study. The data collection was aimed at the ultimate goal of using these findings in the development of the awareness programme for social workers on the relevance of IKS in child protection, as will be presented in Chapter 8. The empirical data collected and being discussed in this chapter were guided by the following secondary research questions:

- What elements of Tsonga IKS are relevant to children's right to protection?
- What elements of Tsonga IKS could enhance or hamper children's right to protection?
- How could knowledge of IKS be utilised by social workers in the field of child protection?

Both theoretical frameworks of the study, namely the ecological systems theory (*cf.* Christensen, 2010:102; Saraw, 2009:2) and social constructionism (*cf.* Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71) emphasise the importance of culture, cultural norms and beliefs, and how these could influence social constructions and the social niche in which children develop and function. Exploring the Tsonga IKS could thus yield insight into the influence of culture on beliefs, practices, and social constructions that could influence the protection of children.

7.2 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS – FIRST PHASE OF THE STUDY

The information in this chapter is presented in two sections. In Section A, the researcher will provide a brief description of the research sites, followed by a presentation of the biographical profile of the participants. Thereafter, the research findings for the first phase of the study are

presented and discussed in ten main themes, each with relevant sub-themes that include verbatim quotes from the interviews and are discussed in the context of relevant literature.

7.2.1 Research site and research participants

The first phase of the study was conducted in the Mozambique and Zimbabwe districts of Chokwe and Chiredzi respectively. Chokwe is one of the Xitsonga-speaking districts in a Tsonga dominated province in Mozambique, namely Gaza, whilst Chiredzi is a district in the Masvingo province of Zimbabwe where a substantial section of Xitsonga-speaking people lives. The researcher engaged with various community leaders and other gatekeepers to gain entry into the research sites. Hence, there was collaboration between the researcher, the community leaders as gatekeepers and, subsequently, the research participants.

The research sample for the first phase of the study included two distinct groups of participants, namely Tsonga IKS experts and social workers who worked in the field of child protection and were familiar with Tsonga IKS. A total of 40 IKS experts (knowledge bearers) were interviewed, 20 in different villages in Mozambique's Chokwe district and another 20 in different villages in Zimbabwe's Chiredzi district. A total of 11 social workers were interviewed, seven in the Chiredzi district and four in the Chokwe district.

The biographical profiles of the participants, who were recruited through snowball sampling, will be presented in the following two tables. The biographical profile of the sample of IKS knowledge bearers will be presented in Table 7.1 and that of the social workers will be presented in Table 7.2.

Table 7.1: Biographical details of participants (Tsonga IKS experts)

PARTICIPANT (CODE)	SEX	AGE	DISTRICT	COUNTRY
IKS1	Female	45	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS2	Male	53	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS3	Male	53	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS4	Male	77	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS5	Male	45	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS6	Male	79	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS7	Male	82	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS8	Male	65	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS9	Male	53	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS10	Female	60	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS11	Female	85	Chokwe	Mozambique

IKS12	Female	76	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS13	Female	65	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS14	Male	55	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS15	Female	68	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS16	Male	82	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS17	Female	71	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS18	Female	72	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS19	Female	77	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS20	Male	69	Chokwe	Mozambique
IKS21	Female	75	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS22	Male	63	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS23	Male	83	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS24	Female	84	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS25	Male	76	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS26	Female	67	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS27	Female	77	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS28	Female	63	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS29	Male	76	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS30	Male	44	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS31	Female	68	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS32	Male	72	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS33	Male	68	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS34	Male	63	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS35	Male	73	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS36	Male	36	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS37	Male	55	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS38	Female	51	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS39	Male	48	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe
IKS40	Female	85?	Chiredzi	Zimbabwe

The participants in this study were persons who were regarded as being knowledge bearers of the Tsonga IKS. Snowball sampling was utilised to identify possible participants, as the researcher did not know IKS experts in the two districts (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:393). As evident in Table 7.1, 23 of the IKS expert participants were male and 17 were female. During the recruitment of the participants, the pattern was that a male participant would nominate another male to participate, whilst female participants nominated women.

Most of the participants in the sample of IKS experts were in the two age groups 70 to 79 years (12 participants) and 60 to 69 years (11 participants). Six participants were above the age of 80 years, with one female aged 85 years, another female aged 84 years, two males aged 82 years, and one female (IKS40) who estimated that she was 85 years old. The latter participant was not sure of her age; hence her estimation of her age was based on some of the historical events associated with her birth. In addition, her age was established through a comparison with others whom she pointed out as siblings or age mates.

When viewing the total sample, most of the participants (30 participants) were above the age of 60 years, with a large proportion of these (18 participants) being above the age of 70 years. Ten (10) participants were below the age of 60 years. The age distribution could be attributed to the fact that IKS is commonly held by the elders in the community, who transfer their knowledge to the next generation (Bogopa, 2012:245-246; Magano, 2018:236). With IKS being a tacit knowledge that is orally transmitted, a responsibility is placed on the elders in traditional communities to preserve indigenous knowledge and transfer it to the younger generations (Bogopa, 2012:245-246; Dewah & Matula, 2014:215; Magano, 2018:236; Ossai, 2010:5).

The biographical details of the study sample consisting of social workers are presented in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Biographical details of participants (child protection workers)

PARTICIPANT	SEX	AGE	TITLE	COUNTRY
SWK1	Female	42	Social worker	Mozambique
SWK2	Male	45	Social worker	Mozambique
SWK3	Female	46	Social worker	Mozambique
SWK4	Female	36	Social worker	Mozambique
SWK5	Female	28	Social worker	Zimbabwe
SWK6	Male	37	Social worker	Zimbabwe
SWK7	Female	30	Social worker	Zimbabwe
SWK8	Female	42	Social worker	Zimbabwe
SWK9	Male	45	Social worker	Zimbabwe
SWK10	Male	41	Social worker	Zimbabwe
SWK11	Male	53	Social worker	Zimbabwe

All the above participants worked as social workers, however with different titles to denote either seniority or the nature of the tasks associated with their job. To uphold confidentiality,

their job titles are however not provided in Table 7.2. In Mozambique, some of the participants were not qualified social workers but carried out social work duties in a social work setting and position and were recognised as social workers. The enquiries made by the researcher to some of the authorities indicated that the profession is still developing, and the practice of social work is not regulated, hence the employment of non-social workers to act as social workers. In an overview of social work training in Africa, Sewpaul and Lombard (2004:357) state that social work training varies considerably across countries in Africa, with some countries offering degree programmes, others offering training at diploma and certificate levels, and others offering courses related to aspects such as child and domestic abuse. In 2008, Kemppainen (2008:5) described the initiation of a social work degree programme in Mozambique. The literature thus provides information that explains the context of the participants from Mozambique. The participants from Zimbabwe had tertiary qualifications as social workers and had experience in the field of child protection. Formal social work education in Zimbabwe was introduced in 1964 (Kaseke, 2001:101).

7.2.2 The empirical findings of phase one of the study

The research findings obtained from the data collected from the participants in the above study samples are presented as themes and sub-themes in this section. Mabvurira and Makhubele (2018a:19) emphasise the importance of conceptualisation in Afrocentric studies, which requires researchers to “deliberately and consciously study African people from their standpoint.” The researcher, therefore, attempted to obtain rich information on the research topic from the perspectives of the research participants. As it appears that the Eurocentric orientation gives little recognition to African IKS (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:28) and IKS is generally not documented in writing (Ossai, 2010:3), the ten themes with sub-themes are presented with the inclusion of various quotes that give recognition to the information on the Tsonga IKS that were obtained from the participants (refer Table 7.3)

Table 7.3: Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Conceptualising Tsonga IKS	1.1 IKS is embedded in culture 1.2 Values underlying the Tsonga culture 1.3 Cultural beliefs of the Vatsonga people 1.4 Tsonga culture is a source of IKS
2. Manifestation of Tsonga IKS	2.1 Tsonga rituals and ceremonies 2.2 Socio-cultural life 2.3 Family and community life 2.4 Socio-economic life
3. Conceptualising childhood and child well-being	3.1 Childhood not determined by age 3.2 Children are valued in the Tsonga culture 3.3 The concept of child well-being

	<p>3.4 Teaching self-reliance and responsibility</p> <p>3.5 Status of the boy child vs the girl child</p>
4. Child-rearing practices	<p>4.1 Parenting, caregiving and socialisation practices</p> <p>4.2 The extended family and communal care</p> <p>4.3 Ensuring children's optimal growth</p> <p>4.4 Naming of children</p> <p>4.5 Instilling identity in children</p> <p>4.6 Rites of passage for boys and girls</p>
5. Indigenous ways of mentoring and socialising children	<p>5.1 Mentoring embedded in the Tsonga culture</p> <p>5.2 The mentoring system (<i>kulaya</i>)</p> <p>5.3 Poetry and totem recitals</p> <p>5.4 Children's songs, games and dances</p> <p>5.5 Storytelling, myths and legends</p> <p>5.6 Role or fantasy play</p>
6. Dealing with adversity and social problems	<p>6.1 Tsonga IKS provides a justice framework</p> <p>6.2 Family conferences</p> <p>6.3 Reparation for wrongdoing</p> <p>6.4 Interventions in cases of child maltreatment</p>
7. Perceptions related to children's rights	<p>7.1 Children's right to have their basic needs met</p> <p>7.2 Children's right to education</p> <p>7.3 Discipline and the use of corporal punishment</p> <p>7.4 Childhood responsibilities</p>
8. Acculturation and IKS in modern times	<p>8.1 Acculturation and its influence on IKS</p> <p>8.2 Acculturation and socialisation methods</p> <p>8.3 Acculturation and traditional ceremonies</p> <p>8.4 Acculturation and the traditional justice system</p> <p>8.5 Acculturation and traditional health care</p>
9. Relevance of Tsonga IKS to child protection and child well-being	<p>9.1 Communal care as a protective mechanism</p> <p>9.2 The extended family as a safety net for children</p> <p>9.3 Well-being of orphans and vulnerable children</p> <p>9.4 The value placed on Xitsonga-speaking children</p> <p>9.5 Indigenous socialisation practices as protection</p> <p>9.6 Protection provided by mentoring and initiation</p> <p>9.7 Tsonga values promote well-being and protection</p> <p>9.8 IKS offers an alternative justice framework</p>
10. Recommendations for social workers	<p>10.1 Knowledge and recognition of Tsonga culture and IKS</p> <p>10.2 Clarify definitions of childhood</p> <p>10.3 Defining child maltreatment</p> <p>10.4 A clear conceptualisation of children's rights</p> <p>10.5 Collaboration based on harmony and respect</p> <p>10.6 Raising community awareness of modern laws</p> <p>10.7 Utilise the strengths of the culture</p> <p>10.8 Obtain a basic knowledge of local language</p> <p>10.9 Introduce social work to local people</p>

The first theme to be discussed relates to the conceptualisation of Tsonga IKS by presenting the participants' descriptions of their culture. The participants' views on their culture provide a background on aspects that they deem important to the Tsonga culture.

7.2.2.1 Theme 1: Conceptualising Tsonga IKS

The participants described Tsonga IKS as knowledge that is embedded in the Tsonga culture, which incorporates the general cultural values and in the beliefs of the culture. Tsonga IKS manifests in the lifestyle of the Vatsonga people. These aspects are discussed in the sub-themes related to this theme.

- **Sub-theme 1.1: IKS is embedded in culture**

When asked to describe what constituted Tsonga IKS, the participants emphasised that IKS is embedded in their culture and are passed from generation to generation through oral tradition, as evident in the following quotes:

“This is the knowledge that was there before us and was passed to us by our fore-bearers by word of mouth.” (IKS3)

“So IKS is part of cultural preservation that has stood the test of time and it was tied to our local environment, the resources, and the weather among other things.” (IKS26)

“This was through various means but largely through word of mouth; apprenticeship whereby we watched the adults do it and would mimic them starting at kindergarten age.” (IKS29)

The findings validate definitions of IKS found in the existing literature that IKS is embedded in culture and has endured over time (Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:227; Magid, 2011:138). The participants' responses resonate with other elements that are characteristic of IKS, namely it being a tacit knowledge that is transmitted intergenerational through oral tradition, socialisation, and role modelling by the adults (Ossai, 2010:2; World Bank, 1998:2).

One participant highlighted the difficulty in distinguishing clearly between IKS and culture:

“It is many things. The biggest thing in our IKS is our culture, ntumbuluko, which is everything we have. Cultural practices are the mother of IKS; in fact, I do not see the difference between the two.” (IKS15)

In support of the views of Participant IKS15, the participants from both Mozambique and Zimbabwe explained that the Vatsonga people have various practices constituting their culture and these include but are not limited to crop cultivation practices, usage of tools such as hoes, their belief system, medicine, and traditional songs and games. All these practices are then bundled together as *ntumbuluko*, a term widely used by the participants to refer to the encompassing nature of the culture of the Vatsonga people. The participants expressed similar views on the influence of their IKS and culture:

“Just like any people under the sun we have a culture with many cultural practices ... It includes the way we crop, and the types of crops include our harvesting methods and storage for future use.” (IKS30)

“We have our way of growing crops which you might find unique to us, even our hoes which we make and use, are different from other ethnic groups.” (IKS35)

“It [IKS] is constituted by culture, all the cultural practices. ... traditional songs, dances, games, traditional medicine, and the various rituals ...” (IKS4)

“The source of our IKS is in our practices and beliefs. These practices include our agricultural practices, hunting, and our traditional medicine, how we raise our children in a Tsonga way.” (IKS7)

“Our IKS is constituted by many things; this includes our traditions, our culture, all those things are important to us, our moral values as well as our belief system; I think all that is IKS in my opinion.” (IKS10)

The research findings point to the understanding of Tsonga IKS as anchored in a solid cultural base, known as *ntumbuluko*, which is difficult to dismantle given that it is at the core of the very existence of the Vatsonga people and comprises of all the life-sustaining systems such as food, medicine, play, leisure, and humanness. The findings are reflected in the literature indicating that IKS is closely linked to culture, which is an all-encompassing concept that can be observed in the everyday life of its people (Ogungbure, 2013:14; Ossai, 2010:2).

- **Sub-theme 1.2: Values underlying the Tsonga culture**

The participants emphasised that the Tsonga culture was embedded in certain values, which would then be transmitted through IKS. Four prominent cultural values emerged during data analysis: a culture of generosity, respect, relatedness, and integrity.

The Tsonga culture (*ntumbuluko*) was described by the participants as **a culture of generosity**. Generosity is based on an unwritten norm known as *nawu*, which guides how to kindly greet strangers, and relate to strangers and relatives alike in a pleasant manner that shows warmth to the visitor. Xitsonga-speaking children are raised to be generous and responsible adults.

“What makes up Tsonga IKS is the cultural practices and systems, nawu, like greetings salutations. We do not shake hands when we greet you, we just do our salutations; the visitor will shout ‘Ndaweni’ [a salutation to announce one’s presence in the homestead] and then we give the visitor a mat to sit on if they are female or a stool if they are male and then we ask them to introduce themselves. If they are not known to us, we will say to them ‘hokohlwa’ [meaning we might have forgotten who you are]; then they introduce themselves. Whether we have known them or not, we then offer them a meal, and then they can pass to their desired place. Normally, if they are going nearby yet they do not know the place, children are sent to accompany them to ensure that the stranger does not get lost. ... Love and care, I am simply saying they love and care, the ‘ubuntu’ aspect. You do not pass by a Tsonga homestead and go without eating something, no, they would ensure that they prepare a meal for you.” (IKS31)

“It is about instilling values of Tsonga in them [children] and making sure that a generous, honest, and hardworking man is [raised].” (IKS18)

As explained by Participant IKS31, generosity is linked to the concept of *ubuntu*. One of the many ways in which *ubuntu* is practised, is in the African tradition of welcoming strangers and visitors (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Mkabela, 2014:284; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:85). However, in this sense, generosity may present a risk to children as they were the ones normally asked to accompany strangers to show them the way or to take them to their destination under the instruction of the adults. This situation might then expose children to the risk of being abused by malicious strangers.

Furthermore, it was clear from the research findings that the Tsonga culture values respect to one another and respect to other ethnic groups and strangers. The **culture of respect** is based on an established age and relational hierarchy; thus, children are supposed to respect adults, women are supposed to respect men, and junior wives and their children are supposed to show respect to senior wives and their children.

“We also have a value of respect. Vatsonga people are full of respect and you must know that the young respect their seniors. Even in a family the first born was respected but in a polygamous family in Tsonga culture seniority is not based on your age, it is based on whether your mother is the senior wife or the junior one. So, when born to a junior wife you would always respect a child born to the senior wife because they accrue certain status by virtue of their mother who was married first.” (IKS31)

“Respect and integrity; they are trustworthy people, they do not condone lies, they are not dishonest. Love and care, I am simply saying they love and care, and above all respect is central to the ubuntu aspect, you do not pass by a Tsonga homestead and go without eating something, no, they would ensure that they prepare a meal for you.” (IKS13).

The culture of respect brings harmony within the society and is one of the values underlying the concept of *ubuntu* (Makgopa & Koma, 2009:16; Mkabela, 2015:289). Within the African context, the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), in Article 31, places responsibility on children “to work for cohesion in the family, to respect their parents, superiors and elders at all times.” However, literature shows that a demand for responsibility and respect placed on the child has the potential of taking away the agentic rights of the child to participate, be heard, and be also treated with respect (Memzur, 2008:24). Children’s right to be respected is espoused in the CRC, Article 12 (OHCHR, 1989).

The participants shared that the Tsonga culture is also hinged on **a culture of relatedness**, according to which relationships and the status of the relationships are viewed as a strong cultural value. These relationships are built either through marriage and inter-marriage or they are based on family ties. Participants further explained that relationships were also bound by a child, hence the high value and importance given to the child. Various participants shared their opinion, as captured in the examples below:

“Our relationships were so deep that it translated into concrete concern for each other. Relationships in the Vatsonga are built either through marriages and inter-marriages or they are just natural ties such as those of people who share a mother or are cousins, those are blood ties which resulted in a deep sense of love and concern for each other. It was impossible to see someone in my extended family suffering and then just ignore; that was not like that. ... You must appreciate that a child binds people together, through a child a relationship was established so the child is well looked after in Tsonga.” (IKS32)

“And our greeting had also a special significance. It was collective. You did not ask people that how are you; you asked them how they and their entire family were (‘munjani’). So, if your child was sick that is when you can bring it in. Not this type of individualised greeting where you just greet an individual and you are just concerned with their welfare. For us when you greet, you greet the person and ask to know the welfare of their whole family.” (IKS5)

“On unity, they are a united people as the Vatsonga, and they value working together even in their fields they help each other.” (IKS10)

A culture of relatedness is evident in collectivist cultures, as was specifically mentioned by Participant 5, which characterises most ethnic groups in Southern Africa (Mkabela, 2015:287; Mkabela, 2014:288; Thabede, 2008:233). As mentioned by Participant 32, the close relationships among members of a family serve as a form of social capital for vulnerable members of the society. Studies in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe found that the extended care in collectivist societies provide a safety net for orphans (Midgley, 2017:65-66; Mufumbate & Mehabo, 2016:41-42; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:22). Furthermore, the value placed on children is evident in the fact that marriages among the Vatsonga were cemented into durable relationships when there was a child involved. As such, a couple that failed to conceive normally ended up divorcing, or the husband was given another wife if the problem was viewed as that of the woman. If the problem was viewed as that of the man, then the younger brother of the man was asked to secretly become intimate with his brother’s wife with the full blessings of the family elders so that his brother could have the child by him to save his marriage and cement relations (Wefwafwa, 2014:301).

The participants also described the Tsonga culture as **a culture of integrity** that is mainly constituted by the following values: privacy, unity, self-reliance, honesty and trustworthiness. The value placed on integrity is summarised by the following responses from the participants:

“Vatsonga people need their privacy, even settlement wise they like having isolated homesteads. It is only due to land shortages and modern organised settlement that you see us close to each other.” (IKS10)

“Self-reliance, I think it is self-explanatory, they love working very hard to sustain themselves.” (IKS5)

“Integrity, they are trustworthy people, they do not condone lies, they are not dishonest.” (IKS13)

“As Vatsonga people, we are a proud people who encourage hard work and self-reliance; so, everything we do, we do it to the extreme so that we become self-reliant.” (IKS25)

“Our cultures have in place a system for morally grounding our children and help them grow into responsible adults. We have the kulaya system which allows aunties and uncles to give advice and mentor children. They inculcate good behaviour in our children all that is very important for us as a people in this community.” (IKS9)

The value of integrity can also be found in descriptions of *ubuntu*. Literature on *ubuntu* describes distinct aspects such as morality, ethics, and integrity as central to the philosophy of *ubuntu* (Dolamo, 2013:4; Mkabela, 2014:284; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:85). Integrity, as a principle of within the African *ubuntu* philosophy, includes the following characteristics: coherence between a person’s principles, values, beliefs and actions, telling the truth at all times, and doing what is known to be right (Hebbani, 2008, Verrault, Sabourin, Lussier, Normandin & Clarkin, 2013 in Mashingaidze, 2014:473, 476). In the context of *ubuntu*, integrity is a critical aspect of a person’s dignity, and, together, dignity and integrity are determined by the extent to which individuals exercise their human duties (Dolamo, 2013:4).

- **Sub-theme 1.3: Cultural beliefs of the Vatsonga people**

Spirituality and reverence of the ancestors were prominent themes in the research findings. The participants explained that the Vatsonga people have a strong sense of **spirituality** and their unique **spiritual world**. The spiritual world is dominated by the role of the ancestors, traditional healers (*tinyanga*) and spirit mediums, who mediate with the supernatural world on behalf of an ordinary Vatsonga person. Interaction with the spiritual world would often occur after harvesting when communities will have plenty of food and few chores to do, or for celebrations:

“As adults, after harvesting we treated ourselves to various songs and dances which were spiritual. We would have festivals of spirit mediums, we would brew beer then sing until the spirit mediums were in ecstasy; then they would dance whilst we will be singing, it would be ‘malembetsu, mutsenze, mandlozi’ (these refers to different kinds of genre of traditional and spiritual music corresponding to three different categories of ancestral spirits) then we would enjoy, we would eat meat, eat ‘usva’ (thick sorghum porridge) and drink beer.” (IKS37)

“Vatsonga people, we have different spirit mediums and traditional healers. You would see that some of the spirit mediums were just meant to entertain, we would brew beer and then play the drums and sing to induce the spirit to manifest on the person, and then they would dance for hours and people would drink beer and dance too.” (IKS31)

The spirituality described by the participants echoed literature that describes the African worldview as being characterised by a reverence for spirituality. The essence of spirituality is to unify people and view human beings as holistic and integrated parts to a social fabric (Sue & Sue, 2008:225). In addition, the spiritual world of ancestors is seen as a source of energy and a source to sustain life (Hlongwane et al., 2018:62).

The **ancestors are recognised** as having a key role in the Tsonga culture. The participants explained that the ancestors are not only offered sacrifices but also play a central role in their lives. The participants clarified that they do not worship the ancestors and labelled that idea as untrue as they only believe that the ancestors have a role to protect them. The Vatsonga believe in God, and the ancestors are in a position to mediate between the living and God. The Tsonga people do speak and consult their ancestors on various family matters affecting them and rely on their ancestors for general guidance on matters of life.

“Our belief system is another IKS in this area or among the Vatsonga. We believe that the ancestors are a way to God whom we call Xikwembu xa matilo (God of Heavens), so will believe in the might power of heaven (matimba a tilo) and we believe that when an adult dies they become an ancestor and they have a role to protect the living.” (IKS26)

“We also all believe that the dead continue to have a role in our daily lives. They get elevated into ancestors whom we consult from time to time to give us guidance on many issues and protects the family from bad spirits, you find this everywhere where you go among the Vatsonga.” (IKS9)

“Our belief in Xikwembu xa matilo (God of Heaven) and our belief in the role of ancestors in protecting the living that remains the same across the border [i.e., in Mozambique and Zimbabwe].” (IKS29)

It was established that the Vatsonga believe in the God of Heaven (*Xikwembu xa matilo*), as was highlighted by some researchers on the Vatsonga people and their culture (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:64). In addition to their belief in ancestors (*swikwembu*), the Vatsonga people believe in traditional healing and rites of passage (Thabede, 2008:233). Social workers should thus understand that spirituality and a belief in ancestors are part of traditional African life (Edwards, 2010:223; Thabede, 2005 in Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:21; Vogel, 2009:176).

- **Sub-theme 1.4: Tsonga culture is a source of IKS**

It emerged as a central theme in the data that, for the Vatsonga people, their culture is reflected in all aspects of Tsonga life. These aspects included the use of traditional medicine, survival strategies such as fruits gathering (*Ku handza mihandzo*), the food they eat, and dishes peculiar to the Vatsonga, as well as dances and games such as *Xinyambela*. Their culture also becomes apparent in the practice of hunting, their hunting tactics and the hunting weapons used, and the socio-economic life of the Vatsonga people. Some participants also mentioned that the use of the pestle to process grain into fine mealie-meal, the use of grinding stones, and even the way they carry water which includes the unique ability for a Vatsonga woman to balance a pot of water on their head, encompass a lifestyle that forms part of the culture and therefore informs the IKS of the Vatsonga people.

“Tsonga IKS is constituted by what was our economic activities, political system, and belief system. Hunting (kuhlota) is a mainstay of the Tsonga tradition. ... We keep livestock

especially cattle. It is a pride of every Vatsonga man to have cattle, a big herd of cattle that are seen as wealth, hence you have status when you have cattle.” (IKS25)

“Even our art craft like making hats, mats, pots, and many tools of the Vatsonga which we make. Our styles of huts and settlement patterns all that is part of our heritage.” (IKS36)

“Marriage patterns and settlement patterns or arrangement of huts in each homestead are all sources of IKS in this area. Our traditions, cultural practices, maternal care and child-rearing practices ... are all sources of IKS in this community.” (IKS11)

“The Tsonga IKS comprise of cultural practices including male and female initiation rites which they call tikhomba. It also includes their beautiful songs, dishes and their agricultural practice. I had been in Xitsonga-speaking areas for almost a decade now and had enjoyed their traditional songs and dances among other things.” (SWK9)

The research findings show the interrelatedness of IKS and culture, as described in the literature. Culture informs IKS, and IKS is transferred by elders to the next generation. IKS thus ensures the intergenerational transference of culture and cultural practices (Bogopa, 2012:245-246; Dewah & Mutula, 2014:216; Dondolo, 2005:111; Magano, 2018:236; Magid, 2011:138; Vogel, 2009:176). This knowledge informs the practices that can be regarded as the manifestation of IKS in everyday life, as will be discussed in the next theme.

7.2.2.2 Theme 2: Manifestation of Tsonga IKS

The literature reveals that IKS manifests itself in various forms, including beliefs, rituals, values, and the socio-economic and socio-cultural life of a people (Mapara, 2009:140-143; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1). This information was to a large extent corroborated with the views of the participants which confirmed by and large similar notions on how IKS manifests itself. Themes identified in the data show the manifestation of Tsonga IKS in their rituals and ceremonies, their socio-cultural life, family and community life, and their socio-economic life.

- **Sub-theme 2.1: Tsonga rituals and ceremonies**

The participants explained that the Vatsonga people adhere to various cultural rituals and ceremonies. Most of the participants identified the **rites of passage** as a form of their IKS. These rites include puberty rites of passage through the boy and girl initiation ceremonies (*Khomba*); the naming ceremony, meaning that when a child is born to a Vatsonga family, a naming ritual is done; and death rituals which are done to mark the promotion of the departed into the ranks of the ancestors.

“And of course, an awareness programme on IKS especially of the Vatsonga should always touch on our rites of passage, the ‘khomba’ system.” (IKS8)

“Our rites of passage, the most celebrated being the ‘khomba’ process for both girls and boys.” (IKS7)

“Then comes the rite of passage both for the living and for the dead. For the dead, when one dies some rituals were done to mark the promotion of such a person from the living to being an ancestor capable of protecting the family.” (IKS11)

"We also have several rituals which include the naming ceremony, death, burial and post burial rituals, all these rituals form part of our IKS." (IKS28)

As indicated by the participants, Tsonga IKS manifests itself through various rituals related to different rites of passage. In describing the importance of **death and burial rituals**, the participants explained the role of Tsonga IKS and the importance of the deceased as follows:

"Maybe I can also refer you to our ways of handling death, burial, and post burial arrangements as also part of our IKS because we were not taught that by an outsider but through the knowledge and the wisdom of our forefathers, we are doing that." (IKS27)

"The dead in our culture plays a central role in our lives as the living. They continue to be consulted on various issues that affect the family, and we bank on them for protection." (IKS8)

How the passing away of a person is dealt with by Xitsonga-speaking people were described by different participants.

"A Tsonga family has their cemetery and once a person dies, was buried there. Soon after burial, the family of the deceased would go to consult a nyanga (witch doctor) to establish the cause of death. If there was any foul play, the accused would pay the family or risk being haunted by the spirit of the dead. Again, after six months of mourning, a ritual of taking the spirit of the dead from the grave back to the family home was performed. ... The family elders would go to the grave and when they get there they would take the soil on the grave and then would go straight home, and they were not supposed to look back because if they looked back it meant that the spirit of the dead would return to the grave. So, they would go straight to the homestead and they would pray at the tree of worship or place of worship known as 'Gandzelo' and some cloths of different colours especially red, black and white would be dedicated to the dead and then put in a family temple (Tembeleni or ntumba). This was done early in the morning and we would have poured beer or water at the grave and at the place of worship to give a drink to the dead and that would make them happy." (IKS28)

"The way we bury the dead and all the burial and post burial rituals which we do, all these are IKS. When a father of the house dies, after burial their hut's top thatch is removed to signify that the father of the house is dead. That is one of our rituals performed when there is death and burial." (IKS1)

"Then when it comes to death when a family lost a family member after burial, they shaved their heads and put on some reeds as a sign that they were still mourning. This went on for about a month. So, from the burial, every member was supposed to be cleansed using herbs from the Xitlhantlani tree." (IKS5)

"To ensure that they [children] came to terms with the reality that someone was gone, in the morning after burial children were taken to the grave and they were meant to just step on the grave. That way we believe that it will cleanse them so that they are not haunted by the spirit of the dead." (IKS27)

The Vatsonga had specific rituals related to death and burial which were passed on from the forefathers and formed part of their IKS. These include that the people have a special gravesite known as *xilahlelweni* and after burial, a ritual to bring back the spirit of the departed is done to ensure that the spirit of the departed looks after the living in meeting their needs. In addition, Vatsonga people do not accept death as natural; hence they seek the services of a traditional

healer (*Nyanga*) who would cast lots to determine the cause of death. Children are spared from the shock of viewing the dead person and adults spend time explaining the meaning of death to the children.

Other participants explained that when a person dies, the Vatsonga people do not take long to bury the dead; normally, burial was reported to be the next day after death. When burying the dead, the head of the deceased is pointed to the West as a sign that the sun has set over their lives. Participants shared that at a pure Tsonga burial no meals are allowed after burial. The mourners would come later, at most two to three months, to have a ceremony to bring the spirit of the deceased back home, when people could eat and celebrate. This practice was meant to ensure that the community does not pressure the mourning family to mobilise resources for food before, during, and immediately after burial but that they were given ample time to prepare post-burial celebrations some months later. Similar information was shared by participants in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Cultural rituals, including death and burial rituals that were described by the participants, are cited by various authors as part of IKS (Mapara, 2009:140-143; Ossai, 2010:1-5; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1). The research findings corroborate information from the literature that the Vatsonga people believe in the important role of the deceased, hence death, burial and post burial rituals are done (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:64). Thus, the Tsonga communities engage in a three-day ritual after the burial of their beloved ones, known as *tingoma*, which is a ritual to facilitate the communication between the dead and the living (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:64).

The Vatsonga people also practice their IKS through **sacrificial offerings to their ancestors**, called *kuphahla*. Sacrificial offerings are done for various reasons.

“Our sacrifices to the ancestors [ku phahla] and other rituals we do ... all that is the IKS of the Vatsonga.” (IKS14)

“Even ku phahla [sacrificial offering to the ancestors], we do this when we need some rains as a community-led (ritual) by our traditional leaders. We also do this at family level for various reasons, be it dedicating a newly born baby to the ancestors, or dedicating our journey to the ancestors, or announcing the marriage of one of the members of the family to the ancestors. There are many occasions upon which we sacrifice to the ancestors.” (IKS15)

These sacrifices are done because there is a strong relationship between the Vatsonga people, nature, and their departed ones, as indicated by one of the participants:

“Our relationship with the land, the soil in particular; there was a lot of noise some decades ago. There was a lot of resistance when the colonial administration moved us from where we were staying to pave way for the establishment of a national park. The resistance was on the argument that we cannot leave the graves of our forebearers alone and up to this day when it comes to serious sacrifices to the ancestors some families and chiefdoms go

back to their old shrines, they go back to the graves of their ancestors in that park to offer sacrifice. There is a strong relationship between us, the living, and the dead; a strong relationship between us, the living, the dead, and the land.” (IKS24)

The reverence of the ancestors through the offering of sacrifices as observed by the participants is central to the African worldview and the concept of *ubuntu* (Berg, 2001:33). The belief in ancestors and their reverence is a common feature across Southern Africa among many ethnic groups such as the Tsonga (Thabede, 2008:233). In addition, findings from the literature review indicate that the Vatsonga people worshiped *tilo* (heaven) through sacrifice to their ancestors and their dead (Chabalala & Allen, 2004:64). Sacrifice to ancestors and God are offered as a sign of remembrance (Edwards, 2010:212), as aptly captured by the above participants' views.

The rituals and ceremonies involving children, namely the naming ceremony and the initiation ceremonies for boys and girls, will be discussed in more detail in Theme 4, focussing on child-rearing practices.

- **Sub-theme 2.2: Socio-cultural life**

Tsonga IKS manifests in different forms in the socio-cultural life of the people. Most of the participants identified practices such as traditional medicine, Tsonga food and dress, and cultural heritage sites as indicators of Tsonga IKS and their unique culture.

Traditional medicine was found as one form of manifestation of Tsonga IKS. As explained by the participants, the Vatsonga people have various traditional medicines; some of which can be prepared by ordinary people whilst others are prepared by the traditional healers in the community. Traditional medicine is made up of herbs, roots, leaves and the bark of various trees, among other ingredients, and is believed to cure various ailments.

“Another source of IKS is traditional medicine and herbs and the whole belief system in ‘tinyanga’; that belief in the healing powers of the ‘tinyanga’ and what they do becomes a source.” (IKS26)

“The medicine can cure many illnesses because before the advent of clinics that medicine was everything that we had; so, it cured almost everything that you can think of.” (IKS20)

“Remember, modern medication is not more than a hundred years old in this area, so it means a hundred years ago, all we knew was traditional medicine. We lived on it. All curable illnesses could be cured, including headaches, back pains, runny stomachs, among other illnesses.” (IKS28)

“Everything; remember we relied on these medications before the advent of modern medicine. ... Even cancer, stomach pains, other forms of pains, and many ailments.” (IKS29).

The research findings support information by Truter (2007:57), who posits that traditional medicine plays a central role in the primary health care system of most developing countries. Ross (2010:45) found that poor households rely on traditional healing, thus IKS, to solve their

health problems. The reliance on traditional medicine as evidenced by the participants' views, shows that traditional medicine is used for a wide variety of ailments. Traditional healing and the use of traditional medicine are linked to the African worldview on the existence of a vital force that is linked to the ancestors (Edwards, 2010:212). IKS thus forms the basis for local decision making in health care (Ossai, 2010:2).

According to the participants, IKS could also be observed in **Tsonga dress**, especially that of the women.

“Our lifestyles form part of our IKS. If you look at our women, they like their colourful clothes and have a special way of wrapping their cloths around their bodies. Vatsonga women, be it in Zimbabwe, here in Mozambique, Swaziland or South Africa, you can easily identify them by their colourful clothes and the way they diagonally wrap the cloth around their bodies.” (IKS22)

“We also have our dress style, especially the women. Ahh, we are smart as Vatsonga women; we love beads and colourful cloth, we also get some tattoos on the chest even on our cheeks, and that made us beautiful.” (IKS31)

“You see the two of us here [referring to her and the other household member], we have these colourful ‘cheka’ [cloths] which we always wrap around our waist when working or walking to ensure that we are complete women. We also use these ‘chekas’ to carry our babies on our back.” (IKS1)

“A Vatsonga woman was known for her special way of dressing, called ‘xibabela’.” (IKS2)

Most of the participants discussed the Tsonga dress style as part of their IKS, similar to the views captured in the quotes above. There was consensus from the participants interviewed in Mozambique and those interviewed in Zimbabwe on what constitutes typical Tsonga dress and how it is adorned. Several participants were aware that most of the Vatsonga people, especially those in the cities, have adopted either the Portuguese or British style of dressing which is recognised as being professional. The above findings are reflected in literature on the Vatsonga people that describe the specific dress code and tattoos that form part of the Tsonga traditions and serve to confirm their identity (Joyce, 2010:89; Kriel & Hartman, 1991:16; Mare, 1993 in Madalane, 2014:46; Maluleke, 2018:11-12).

The participants furthermore explained that Tsonga IKS was evident in the **preparation of food and drink**.

“Our food, food preparation, food storage, and beer brewing all that form part of our IKS. If you look at how we make porridge out of pumpkins; it is IKS, isn't it?” (IKS22)

“Our food, what we eat and how we prepare our dishes it is almost the same with just minor differences, like here in Mozambique we want thick porridge which is lighter as compared to what I have seen Zimbabwean Vatsonga eat but, haah, it is not a big difference.” (IKS12)

“... the early spring when the marula trees would be shedding off its ripe amarula fruits, women would gather these fruits and shell them into a big mud pot. Then the one brewing the wine would squeeze the juice out of the shell and the wet seed, and separate the seed and the shells. The shells were dried and later could be used to make some soda used to

prepare okra. The seeds were also dried and later they would be pounded to extract some inside of the fruit, which was used to make amarula butter ('dengela'). The extracted juice was let to ferment sometimes for even a day if the temperatures were very high or for three days. This wine was not sold, it is not permitted to sell amarula wine up to this day in this area, it is shared among friends and relatives for free. ... We had also a way of drying our meat, be it game meat or any meat from domesticated animals and birds. The meat was dried through smoking; it would be stripped into thin strips, then sprinkle some salt on it then hang on a line in a kitchen so the smoke that is naturally found in a kitchen mingling with the salt would dry the meat." (IKS6)

Most of the participants in the sample of Tsonga IKS experts considered the preparation of food and drinks as part of their IKS, as is also described by Maluleke (2018:11-12) and Chabalala and Allen (2004:64). In many African countries, the influence of IKS on African lifestyles is evident in their food production, food preparation and the preservation of food (Magano, 2018:241; Ossai, 2010:2).

Some participants identified their **heritage sites and the names of mountains and rivers** as part of Tsonga IKS.

"Our IKS is also made up of our heritage sites in this area. We have a place where the former traditional leaders are buried. Some of those leaders died a century ago. When we go to their gravesite and call upon them to be kind on us for the rains to come, that normally works." (IKS12)

"I was saying what IKS (is), we can talk about when significant things in this area like the rivers and mountains bear Shona names. These rivers, mountains and hills are significant to us and our culture. We bury our dead near these rivers, we sacrifice to our ancestors in these hills and mountains, so if they bear foreign names can the ancestors hear us?" (IKS15)

The above words of some of the participants indicate that heritage sites, mountains, and rivers were recognised as part of Tsonga IKS. The findings buttress discussions in the literature that the Vatsonga people have a strong relationship with nature and that their IKS relies on their interaction with the land and nature in general (Thabede, 2008:234).

Their **culture and language** were viewed by the participants as the vehicles through which IKS is produced and transmitted from one generation to another. The songs, dances, games, poetry, and various stories remain the mode of transmission of Tsonga IKS from the older generation to the younger generation. A disturbing trend for the participants was that these modes of transmission of IKS are suffering a decline due to acculturation (an aspect that will be discussed in Theme 8). Most of the participants emphasised the role of language in the transmission of their culture, as is evident in the following quotes:

"Language is also another big source of IKS because it is through language that we pass on IKS to other people or another generation. ... Culture also plays a big part as a source of IKS. It is very difficult to separate culture and IKS because to us our culture is made up of IKS and belief systems which then form our culture ('ntumbuluko')." (IKS25)

“We also have the language as an integral part of our IKS. It is through language that we pass IKS from one generation to another. It is through language that we communicate the various IKS to each other, so language is important in all this.” (IKS28)

“Obviously, the language is a central part of every culture and the Vatsonga are not an exception. As such, the Xitsonga language is part of their IKS and cultural heritage. Through language expressed in idioms and proverbs the wisdom, history and general lifestyle of the Vatsonga people is transmitted from one generation to another.” (SWK7)

“Language is the medium through which IKS is transmitted from one generation to another. It is an important component of IKS, otherwise, without language, there is no IKS. In language, you find expressions, proverbs, idioms, and sayings which carried the whole culture and value system of the Vatsonga people across Southern Africa.” (IKS11)

The findings on language as both a source of culture and IKS as well as a medium through which IKS is transferred from one generation to another is reflected in the literature that describes the oral nature of IKS (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:215; Dondolo, 2005:116; Magano, 2018:236; Robinson, 2007:111). Culture reinforces and enforces IKS because it provides the norms and values which are meant to ensure that IKS is perpetuated. Language as part of IKS is a source of ethnic identity, cements an ethnic sense of belonging, and is a vehicle through which cultural values and belief systems are conveyed from older generations to the younger generation for posterity (Robinson, 2007:111).

- **Sub-theme 2.3: Family and community life**

The participants explained that the Vatsonga people value the family and a communal lifestyle. The social structure provided by the family and family ties with the extended family as well as settlement patterns in the community were regarded as supportive factors for members of the Tsonga communities.

Most of the participants viewed the **social structure of the Vatsonga family** as an important source for well-being of family members, including the care and protection of children. The participants explained kinship ties and the child's belonging to a family as central characteristics of the Tsonga culture. Kinship ties ensured that no one would harm a child given that children were virtually related to everyone in the village. Hence, children and vulnerable people are treated as everyone's responsibility to care and to protect.

“We have kinship ties in this village to the extent that we are related to everyone in this village. That means our children are protected and cared for virtually by everyone in this village. If I do not have food, I do not starve; I just tell a relative who will give me enough to see me through.” (IKS4)

“A family in Tsonga is not just your father, mother, and siblings; a family is the whole clan and the extended family being the ones close to you. So, once there were problems in the family the extended family was readily available to take care of the child.” (IKS5)

“Vatsonga people are a united people, we respect unity. Due to this unity, we have a thriving extended family and kinship care system which does not only take care of the children but

all the vulnerable in the community including the disabled, the elderly, and the sick. The extended family has stood the test of time, colonisation failed to dismantle it.” (IKS15)

The research findings reflect the collectivist lifestyle that is characteristic of many African societies, where the family, extended family and clan play a role in the lives of all persons living in the village, including children (Robinson, 2007:145). The clan is defined as a network of individuals who are bound by kinship-based bonds and the individuals share kinship affection for each other (Hudson, Bowen & Nielsen, 2015:1). Thus, the family and kinship ties offer natural ecological resources for that support the well-being of all the members of the family and extended family.

Kinship ties form the bedrock of family structures and result in kinship care and the involvement of the extended family in the care and well-being of children. To explain this view, one of the many participants that made this point shared the following:

“Relationships, which is where kinship ties are also born, because of the way we relate to each other, teach our children to value kinship ties. For example, in the Vatsonga, your father’s brother is also addressed as father, so is the sister of your mother, you also address them as a mother. That makes the relationship reciprocal because when you are called father by your brother’s child it means the child is obliged to respect you just as their biological father. In return, you were also obliged as an adult to be a father, a real father to the child. In the Vatsonga, a child can approach anyone among their father’s siblings and make demands for provisions and that would be granted without any grudge; such is Tsonga culture for you.” (IKS4)

The African philosophy of *ubuntu* and the collectivist nature of the Tsonga culture underlie the concept of communal responsibility of childcare (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:42; Magano, 2018:239). The African worldview adopts the virtue of *ubuntu*, in which individuals have to be moral beings and morality is expressed through caring for one another as a pre-requisite to be called a person (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013: 83-84). *Ubuntu* provides a framework for communities to empathise with the poor, with orphans and other vulnerable members of the community as well as assisting them in numerous ways (Mkabela, 2014: 287-288). As evident in the research findings, there is a sense of obligation on the part of individuals to do ‘good’ to others as dictated by *ubuntu*, and collectivist societies place value on kinship ties as supportive networks (Dolamo, 2013:4; Hlongwane et al., 2018:60; Mashingaidze, 2014:476; Mkabela, 2014:288).

In terms of child protection, the concept of *ubuntu* can contribute to the nurturing environment for children, as observed in South Africa where some NGOs have used the philosophy of *ubuntu* to rally communities behind orphan care efforts (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:42). Nurturing environments mean that communities provide child-friendly milieus whereby the care and protection of children are not only the responsibility of biological parents but of society as a collective (Magano, 2018:239). In addition, *ubuntu* underlies the informal social protection

networks in communities that are still relevant in modern-day times for meeting people's social, economic and spiritual needs of people (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:85, 89).

In describing characteristic aspects of their **community life**, the participants described **housing**, namely their settlement patterns and the way they arrange their huts, as part of their IKS. The participants explained that Vatsonga people are polygamous, with men marrying several wives. The father's hut is at the centre and the wives' huts surround the husband's hut. Boys and girls had their separate huts, but girls normally slept with their mothers in the same hut.

"Then our housing arrangement; the Tsonga 'muti' (homestead) was arranged uniquely and it was the same from one Tsonga homestead to another. The Vatsonga men were married to many wives, so his hut would be at the centre surrounded by his wives' huts and then at a distance was the girls' and boys' huts." (IKS28)

"A Vatsonga man married a lot of wives, so you would find a lot of mud huts at his homestead surrounding the husband's main hut. These huts are colourfully decorated and with different patterns as well. We use cow dung as a floor and sometimes cow dung is also used to plaster the walls of the mud hut." (IKS2)

"At the 'muti' was the father, mother, and children. You would find the father's hut, the kitchen ('kishi-chitanga'), 'lau' (boys' hut), 'chivala' and the girl's hut - the actual Tsonga name is escaping me." (IKS5)

The Vatsonga people also had a traditional way for the protection of the homestead. This was important given the testimonies of most of the participants in Zimbabwe that they lived near Gonarezhou National Park which then exposes them to stray lions, elephants, leopards and hyenas, among others dangerous animals.

"We also have traditional ways of scaring away wild animals from our fields and homesteads. Sometimes we use fire, sometimes using the noise of the drums, using noise made up of a string known as 'litava'. One just throws 'litava' in the air in a special way and the noise is made and that would scare away animals." (IKS3).

The settlement pattern described by the participants is also described in earlier studies on the Vatsonga people (Manganye, 2011:9). The homestead was known as *muti*, was made up of round conical thatch-roof mud huts, and provided residence to the man, his wife or wives and children, whilst families kept livestock such as goats and cattle, among others (Malaza, 2012:7-10; Manganye, 2011:9).

It became evident from the findings in this sub-theme that Tsonga IKS promotes an environment that can offer a safety net to members of the community, including orphans and vulnerable children. The extensive involvement of the parents, extended family members, neighbours, and members of the entire community in the well-being of others indicates supportive factors in the different ecological layers in the child's environment that influence the child's development and functioning (Christensen, 2010:102; Louw et al., 2014:29-30;

Saraw, 2009:2). Indigenous African ethnic groups belong to collectivist societies and adopt an Afrocentric worldview, which emphasises the values of interdependence, cooperation, human relationships and collective responsibility (Chauraya, 2012:254; Louw et al., 2014:14; Van Zyl et al., 2018:699). These aspects related to the spirit of *ubuntu* provide evidence of the influence of Tsonga IKS on the vigour of the ecological systems in supporting the well-being of its people. This notion is important for child protection, which is a multifaceted issue that needs to be viewed from an ecological perspective to allow a holistic approach that takes into consideration the child and his/her environment and context (Saraw, 2009:2).

- **Sub-theme 2.4: Socio-economic life**

From the data collected from the participants in the samples both in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, it became evident that the Vatsonga people practised a wide range of socio-economic activities that are influenced by their IKS. The different categories of socio-economic activities that emerged from the data are discussed in this sub-theme.

The participants described their **agriculture and land** as closely linked to Tsonga IKS.

“Our cropping systems and the crops we grow and how we grow them, all that is IKS. We can interpret the weather patterns and analyse the soil and know which crop to grow on a given soil type without the assistance of modern knowledge. We just use knowledge from our forefathers.” (IKS22)

“Again, you would see that here is a drought-prone area, hence we grow drought-resistant crops such as sorghum. It was through the traditional wisdom that we grow sorghum. It did not take some agricultural demonstrators from the government to teach us.” (IKS6)

“They take pride in being master farmers and those who do not harvest big tonnes are regarded lowly, so because of these cultural practices you would see that we have a challenge of high school dropouts because children will be herding cattle or providing labour in the fields.” (SWK2)

The socio-economic life of the Vatsonga, like most African ethnic groups, is largely agrarian (Malaza, 2012:7; Manganye, 2011:9). As the examples in the above quotes, most of the participants cited the growing of crops as a major socio-economic activity of the Vatsonga people as part of their broader IKS. The Vatsonga’s diligence in growing small grain crops ensures that their families experience food security, hence protecting their families and children against hunger and starvation.

To back up their dependence on crop cultivation, the Vatsonga people have their **seed preservation systems** based on their IKS. The seed is stored and preserved for the next season in a Tsonga traditional kitchen (*xitanga*) and the secret was that the smoke that circulated in the kitchen would cure the seed and fortify it against weevils. The participants explained that the smoke is bitter, so no weevil or rodent would tamper with their preserved seed.

“Also, we had a unique way of preserving seed for the next season and preserving and storing grains for consumption. We had a granary (chithlata) and some storage basket woven from reeds (ngula). Seed was normally stored in the kitchen so that the smoke from the cooking fire would preserve it from weevils and rodents. All this was based merely on traditional knowledge”. (IKS26)

Most of the participants cited **traditional soil analysis** and **weather forecast methods** based on their IKS, as part of their socio-economic life.

“We also can do our soil analysis and grow appropriate crops for those soil. If you get into my field I know where to grow round nuts, groundnuts, and sorghum among other crops because not all soil is suitable for every crop. After the rains, we know when to plant and when not to plant because if you do not have the skill to establish whether the amount of moisture in the soil can make the seed germinate, you will make a loss because you can plant and the seed rot inside because of insufficient moisture in the soil or maybe there would be more than what the seed needs to germinate.” (IKS12)

“We even know how to interpret the weather. So, if we interpret that the rains were close, we will do some broadcasting in terms of our seed and leave it like that. Then after some hours, the rains would come and cover the seed and that was it.” (IKS14)

“We have people who can interpret weather patterns in this area and who knows various plants and their medicinal value.” (IKS22)

The participants explained that the weather forecast experts are part of the community of Tsonga IKS experts and they rely on plants, the behaviour of animals and birds as well as the wind direction and the nature of clouds to forecast the weather. This knowledge compliments their crop production, hence ensuring food security in households which then ensures that children do not starve. The importance placed on food security shows that the Vatsonga emphasised securing a basic need of children, namely their provision rights. The UNICEF 2019 report on the state of the world’s children shows 1 in 3 children in the world suffer from hunger and/or malnutrition; hence calls on the world to equally focus on children’s basic rights such as the right to food (UNICEF, 2019:1).

The participants explained that **cattle and other livestock** are a sign of personal and family wealth among the Vatsonga people hence they are jealously guarded (Maluleke, 2018:26; Chabalala & Allen, 2004:68). They breed cattle, goats, and other livestock; however, cattle are central to their lives and in Vatsonga family, cattle are viewed as the ‘real’ wealth.

“We have cattle, and we value cattle. That value and viewing cattle as central to our wealth you might not find in other ethnic groups but for us it is important. The cattle are used for many things, among them for ploughing, reparations, lobola and sacrifice to the ancestors, and sometimes even for providing shelter for the ancestors. In this family, we have a big black bull we call Tsamwisi and that is the name of one of our great grand ancestors.” (IKS9)

“When we consider the education of the child, it is that wealth and status according to Tsonga culture seem to be based on two things, livestock and having grain reserves. When one has that, one is seen as wealthy and of higher status as compared to an educated someone without these two things.” (SWK1)

“Take for example cattle herding; cattle are so important to the Vatsonga so that if need be, a child has to be absent from school and herd cattle.” (SWK6)

The participants explained that the more cattle a man owns, the more wives and children he is likely to have; hence, one is regarded as a rich man in the village. They explained that the focus of a Vatsonga man is not on slaughtering or selling the cattle but on wealth accumulation with minimal wealth expenditure due to the need of accumulating status in the village.

Whilst cattle offer a form of social security to the household in times of need, the cattle are not necessarily used as a form of income generation. Children, many of them under-aged, were expected to herd cattle either for a wage or as part of the family chores. Furthermore, the participants mentioned that children must look for stray cattle under the instruction of their parents or guardians. Children’s participation in household chores, such as herding cattle, is one of the key controversies in discussions on children’s rights and child well-being (Laird, 2016:360). In addition, childhood chores and responsibilities that interfere with schooling, are in conflict with children’s right to education as stipulated in the CRC, Article 28 (OHCHR, 1989), and the ACRWC, Article 11 and Article 15 (African Union, 1990).

Hunting was nostalgically cited by the IKS expert participants as part of the Tsonga socio-economic life. However, almost all the participants bemoaned how the advent of conservancy has destroyed their practice of hunting, although Tsonga IKS advocated for responsible hunting practices to still conserve the animal population.

“Our hunting and cooking were part of our culture. Men were the ones who went out into the bush and trap animals like the antelope, bushbuck, warthog, hare, and many more. They used ‘miphasha, mathlari na urha’ [spear, bow, and arrow]. All this are gone now. As you may know, just some few kilometres from here is Gonarezhou National Park, it’s a national reserve. Attempting to hunt there lands you in trouble.” (IKS1)

“The hunting was done responsibly. You were not supposed to kill more than what your family would eat, and you were not supposed to kill just for the sake of it. So, animals were protected but the government under the colonial administration moved us and fenced the area. Now today, our cattle have limited pastures and we have no access to those animals; if anything, those animals stray and terrorise us. Just last week a pride of lions came here and terrorised our cattle; they killed some in our village.” (IKS4)

Many of the traditional African communities were herders and hunters, as indicated in the above quotes. Kalenga (2015:3) is of the view that the practice of hunting is part of the IKS of many traditional African communities.

Some participants in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe cited **traditional fire making** as part of their IKS. Not everyone has the skills to make fire but just a few fire making experts existed in the communities where the interviews were conducted. The fire-making experts are part of the broader group of community IKS experts among the Vatsonga. Various participants

described how the fire is made and there was consistency in their description of the process, as described below:

“To us, it is simple but nowadays not every Vatsonga man can make fire, it demands skill. For us, we were taught this during cattle herding periods as small boys. You simply need two sticks which you rub against each other and once you see smoke you put the burning stick into some dry dung of cattle; cow dung has an advantage of enduring on once it catches fire and then you put some grass and twigs; there you go, you have the fire, just like that. This helped us a lot to make a fire in the bush when you go for hunting. We had no stick matches, so we relied on these traditional fire-making methods.” (IKS22)

“We use two sticks specifically made for fire-making. These two sticks have notches which are important for creating the friction as we rub it against each other to make the fire. These notches, we call them ‘masinga’ in Xitsonga. We also take the cow-dung or the elephant’s dung or of any grass-eating animal - domestic or any animal from the forest. This dung is put on a green leaf, if you happen to use a dry leaf the fire will be difficult to make so once you rub the notches together and you see smoke coming out of the two sticks, you insert the sticks into the dry dung and add some grass then you blow gently. Once the fire starts, you add some more grasses and later some twigs. Finally, you add some logs, and you have your fire.” (IKS26)

There was consensus among the IKS experts interviewed in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe that **traditional tools and weapons** are part of Tsonga IKS and heritage.

“I think you also find IKS in our weapons and tools which we inherited from our grand grandparents. Most of these tools are now regarded as sacred as you find them in the traditional hut of worship (‘tembele’). Some of these tools, like assegais, bows and arrows, they are in possession of spirit mediums, traditional healers and all those people possessed by several spirits like the ‘VaNgoni, VaNdau, VaLozvi’ among other spirits.” (IKS24)

The participants explained that tools like hoes were still being made locally but the war-making weapons like assegais are now kept as heritage by those whose great grandparents left behind such weapons. There is a spiritual significance attached to such weapons, hence they are normally stored in the family temple known as *ntumba* among the Zimbabwean Vatsonga and *ntembele* by some Mozambican Vatsonga.

Some participants referred to the traditional Tsonga culture that viewed **girls as a form of material wealth**. Thus, a poor family, when plagued by hunger and starvation, would trade a young girl for grain under the *kushavisa mwana* practice. This practice has vanished in times of modern law.

“Thus, a poor family if they covet the wealth of a rich man, they could approach him and offer to give him a future wife. If the rich man agrees, he was given a young girl as his wife and in turn, he will maintain the family of the girl. They were now his in-laws, hence he then treated them as such. It does not mean that the man then slept with the child. No, he waited until the child was initiated then could take her as his wife or give to one of his sons as wife; such was the ‘kushavisa mwana’ system.” (IKS2)

However, the social construction of girls as a source of material wealth, appears to persist under the *lobola* system where, when the girl is married, the groom’s family has to pay cattle

and money to the bride's family. Information on this aspect will be presented in Sub-theme 3.5).

In conclusion, the findings of the study described in this sub-theme indicate that whereas some socio-economic practices of the Vatsonga people were protective of children, others could put children at risk. Children's participation in socio-economic activities are often related to the concept of child labour; an aspect that will be discussed in Theme 10.

7.2.2.3 Theme 3: Conceptualising childhood and child well-being

The third theme reports on data findings related to the conceptualisation of childhood and child well-being as described by the participants. The findings in this theme show that the Vatsonga people have certain conceptions of childhood and child well-being. These conceptions will be discussed in the sub-themes that emerged within this theme, which include concepts of child and childhood, the value placed on children, child well-being that is largely conceived in terms of physical well-being and the material needs of children, self-reliance of children, and that boys and girls were afforded a different status in society based on gender.

- **Subtheme 3.1: Childhood not determined by age**

The research findings show that for the Vatsonga people, childhood would not be determined by the child's age.

"You see this age issue in terms of the number is not something we consider. I told you that once the child gets weaned off they gain some form of autonomy from the mother and rely more on their siblings for care and support, so from as early as they (boys) can walk adequately and have gained speech, they accompany the other boys to herding cattle." (IKS29)

"What the adults consider is not numeric age but physical indicators like menstruation, breasts and buttocks, then one is sent for initiation. When they come from there, they are deemed ready for any sexual relationship." (SWK5)

"To them, childhood ends with social markers such as starting menstruation, initiation, body physical changes, among other indicators. But I am sure if that is addressed; we can tap into their xinto/ubuntu philosophy." (SWK6)

"They look at milestones like breasts, beard and social status or indicators such as marriage and initiations. These various conceptions of child and childhood bring confusion because if a married child for example suffers abuse the likelihood of the case not reported is high because they consider such a child to be an adult." (SWK3)

The above views were shared by most of the IKS expert participants in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This issue was a bone of contention for social work participants who viewed childhood in terms of chronological age laid down in the Zimbabwean and Mozambican law. The sample of IKS experts identified various markers determining childhood and adulthood.

These markers included puberty initiation rites, views on maturity, personal relational status, and marital status.

Puberty rites of passage are the major social marker for the transition from childhood to adulthood in the Tsonga culture. Once initiated, even at the age of twelve, one is considered an adult; hence, children who completed these rites of passage can marry and fraternise with other adults. On the other hand, a man or woman who is above the age of majority but is still to go through initiation ceremonies is regarded as still a child, as explained by some of the participants below:

“Our rites of passage, the most celebrated being the ‘khomba’ process for both girls and boys; this is a source of pride for every Vatsonga girl and Vatsonga boy. Tied to this was the names associated with the initiation, it was a source of inspiration for a boy to emerge from the process with a new name, heh, one would say ‘I am, Kazamula, Muzamani or Hlengani’ - that was for boys. For girls, one would say ‘Now I am Njakeni or Mhlava’.” (IKS7)

“On girl initiation, it is also a good avenue because the beauty of it is that it does not involve genital mutilation as what other ethnic groups do. The Tsonga initiation is all about teachings, song and dance so if we can convince the Vatsonga in this area that they send their girls at a later stage, say at 18.” (SWK5)

Most of the IKS expert participants highlighted **maturity as a marker**, implying that childhood can be determined by gauging one’s maturity. In this case, one can be viewed as an adult before he or she reaches the age of majority if they demonstrate maturity in dealing with societal expectations, including the capacity to do chores such as the construction of huts, hunting, ploughing and making pottery. Childhood is also context-specific based on the existing personal relational status. Thus, what matters in the Tsonga culture are relationships and rank within the social structures. It was found that where a child is an uncle to an adult, that adult is obliged to treat that child as an adult and their senior. Some of the participants mentioned marriage as a marker for determining adulthood. A married child is considered to be an adult, doing most of the adult chores and fraternising with other adults, according to the Tsonga IKS. Various scenarios were put forward by the participants.

“What you call a child might not be a child in our eyes and what you call an adult may not be an adult in our system. So, it is important for them to know the rites of passage and how we perceive issues of childhood. I think that is very important, very important.” (IKS8)

“Someone not married, and for a girl, they have not yet started their menstrual cycle and for boys, they have not started to experience wet dreams, then you know that they are still a child. Age is not an issue, but we look at maturity ... So, we look at maturity and what one knows in order to see if one is still a child or an adult.” (IKS15)

Some of the markers of childhood according to Tsonga IKS are not aligned with the definition and rights of the child as described in the CRC, Article 1 (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC, Article 2 (African Union, 1990). Both of these documents define a child as a person under the age of 18, whereas child marriage, initiation rites that can be harmful to the child, and

household chores that can be regarded as child labour, are condemned in ACWRC, Articles 15 and 27, and the CRC, Article 32. These aspects are also highlighted in the literature on child rights and child well-being as indicating different conceptualisations of childhood (cf. Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29; Statham & Chase, 2010:2).

Many of the participants' views on childhood resonate with literature in which childhood has always been viewed as **a period of innocence and irrationality** (cf. Woodhead, 2009:2017). Some participants expressing their lived experiences of and opinions on childhood, reported the following:

“A child knows nothing, they are just blank, and they can do anything even eating millipedes when not monitored by an adult.” (IKS1)

“A child is someone who is not mature and cannot tell what is wrong or bad. If I send them, they cannot comprehend my instruction. Like this little one you see here; if I send them, what can they bring to me? They will bring nothing because they do not comprehend my instructions.” (IKS15)

From the perspective of the so-called moralists, children are seen as blank slates that need adults to 'moralise' them through education (Giesinger, 2017:201). The above views of the participants emphasise the IKS perspective that children should be socialised by adults.

- **Subtheme 3.2: Children are valued in the Tsonga culture**

Vatsonga children are given value. Participants explained that children are the glue that keeps marriages intact and are viewed as the **perpetuity of the society**. Therefore, married couples will go to great lengths to ensure children being born into the family, as indicated in the following quotes:

“A child is so precious to us, the Vatsonga, to the extent that if a couple went for years without a child, they would lose their wealth approaching various traditional healers to rectify the situation. The extended family would also make arrangements like having the man marry another wife if the problem was thought to be the wife or they would make secret arrangements for the man's younger brother to be intimate with their brother's wife so that their brother could have children.” (IKS14)

“They view children as valuable; they are like assets to the Vatsonga community to the extent that barrenness normally stirs domestic violence within a family.” (SWK5)

Furthermore, children are regarded as **ancestors incarnate**, which play a significant role in the value placed on children. The participants explained that both the boy child and the girl child are given the names of the members of the family who have passed on (ancestors). This ensured that every Vatsonga child or any child born in a Tsonga village had a name, following the rituals done by the family to name the child. Every child will have at least two names, but some have more than two names depending on the context. This value placed on children

could, however, result in both negative and positive practices that either hamper or enhance child rights.

“I must say, in Tsonga culture children are our ancestors incarnate. Hence, when a child is born, they are not only given a name at birth then it ends there, no. The ancestors would demand to be named after the child and we would sacrifice to the ancestors (‘ku phahla’). The child would cry all day and night (‘ku rilelavito’). We would visit a ‘nyanga’ to cast some lots (‘tihlolo’) then we would know who of the ancestors is supposed to be named. Such a child was accorded respect which was befitting to an ancestor. We would not be harsh to such children because ill-treating such children is tantamount to ill-treating the ancestors.” (IKS34)

“Almost every child in Tsonga was given a name of an ancestor. It is the way it is. It is very rare to have a child who is not named after an ancestor; that raises the eyebrows of the community. Normally it meant that the ancestors did not recognise the child as one of their own, hence the conclusion reached would be that there was infidelity on part of the couple.” (IKS37)

A child who bears the names of ancestors would not be ill-treated for the fear of retribution from the spiritual world. However, those children who were unlucky not to be named after an ancestor could be exposed to all sorts of emotional abuse as expressed by one of the participants:

“Of course, such a child was kind of side-lined but not denied care and protection. Normally, if the family felt that the child was not theirs the child was sent to their maternal grandparents or any extended family member from the maternal side to look after them.” (IKS24)

The above sentiments were shared by other participants. Children are so valued that they are treated fairly, ensuring that they grow up to bear the name of the family to the posterity. However, in return, a child was supposed to always be respectful to the elders and their elder siblings. The participants, for example, shared that children are supposed not to make noise at the *bandla* forum (men’s forum or family conference) and, after the elders finish eating, the child has to collect the plates and return them to the kitchen where the women were.

The respect that children should show to elders is a common concept underlying the principle of *ubuntu* (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Mkabela, 2014:284; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:85). It is also in line with Article 31 in the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), in which the responsibility of children to respect their parents and adults are prescribed. It can be concluded that the value placed on children due to their role in enhancing a marital relationship or being regarded as ancestors reincarnate, can contribute to societal views that support child well-being. On the other hand, children who were not named according to the Tsonga indigenous practices could be exposed to adverse reactions from others, although they would still be cared for by members of the extended family.

- **Subtheme 3.3: The concept of child well-being**

Child well-being stands for the holistic nature of a child; it includes everything from physical health and safety to the psychological, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social development and well-being of the child (Moore, 2013b:3). The participants' views on child well-being included different aspects of well-being.

The view that **well-being is when the child's basic needs are met**, was a prominent notion of well-being held by the participants and was a predominant response for almost all the participants.

"Well-being is when children get food, clothes, water, and have a place to stay; that is well-being. Child well-being include the child getting shelter, food, clothes, and love and care from the family and the extended family. A child who gets all this is in well-being." (IKS38)

"In addition, when a child has enough food, is bathed and they are adequately clothed then you know that the child is enjoying life." (IKS30)

"Ensuring that there is mealie-meal, and my child gets enough food. The child needs nothing more than food and clothes, which is what the child needs. Otherwise, anything else is luxury but what must always be present in food and clothes." (IKS39)

"Clothing, this era of schooling the child should have uniforms, shoes, winter clothing for winter and blankets for the child. That is well-being. The child who is well looked after, who has food, shelter, and drinking water has good well-being." (IKS17)

"What else does the child need for survival more than food, clothing, and playing, all that is available in Tsonga culture? We engage in agricultural practice here, we keep cattle, goats, chicken and that was food for our children. We use our traditional practices to grow enough food for our children." (IKS4)

The literature indicates that in many parts of the world, including Africa, the conception of child rights and child well-being is more focused on provisions rights as these rights do not threaten parental control and interests (Boussena & Tiliouine, 2015:140; Segura-April, 2016:173). The latter provides an example of the influence of social constructionism on people's views of children (Moore, 2016:475; Schenk, 2019:71). Provision rights are those rights that guarantee the basic needs of the child (Staller, 2008 in Conley, 2010:41). This conception was noted in the participants' views about the concept of well-being as related to meeting children's physical needs.

Most of the participants also conceived child well-being as experiencing **joy, peace, harmony, education, freedom and safety**.

"For a child, well-being is freedom, childhood is freedom. When we were children, we were free. We would work just a few hours in the field, and we will be let loose because we were children. We would spend the whole day playing and being adventurous in the forests, eating fruits." (IKS31)

"Now that we have schools, they go to school and come back safely, until they grow up that is well-being." (IKS39)

“Bullying would not occur among the siblings given the emphasis on family unity. We, the Vatsonga, socialise our children that as a family they have to be united.” (IKS38)

“In Tsonga culture, people were chided not to laugh when they see a disabled person, it was believed that if you laugh the ancestor will punish you and you would also have a disabled child in future.” (IKS15)

“The disabled children were supported by adults in most of their things and our culture dictated that when you see a disabled person do not laugh because tomorrow you may have a disabled child; so such idioms rebuked people from looking down upon disabled children.” (IKS17)

Child well-being was furthermore associated with the **absence of violence**. However, the absence of violence featured in most participants' views of well-being as the absence of domestic violence, which was largely associated with the well-being of a married girl child, as held in the following views:

“A child who is married, we say she is enjoying well-being when they will be living in peace and harmony with their husband without any violence.” (IKS37)

“For a married girl child, when they are not beaten by their husbands, that is well-being. Everyone will adore them as someone enjoying well-being. For a girl child, well-being is to be married to a good husband who looks after them very well and does not beat them up. Well-being is not about material things it is about happiness, joy, peace, and harmony with relatives and absence of wife battering (domestic violence).” (IKS30)

The above views also suggest the views held about child marriages in Tsonga IKS. Whilst most of the participants confined well-being to physical needs, safety and freedom of violence, the aspect of the **emotional well-being** of children is evident in the importance placed on parents and families providing emotional support to children and protecting children from emotional distress.

“Parents are a source of support to their children until they die. ... A parent remains a source of emotional support, if they get very sick the parent especially the mother is called to be with their son or daughter even if their son or daughter is in their sixties; such is our culture. ... if death strikes in a Vatsonga community ... the community will be there for the child to offer emotional and material support.” (IKS22)

“Among the Vatsonga, the children themselves had a duty also to look after each other. The mother played a bigger role in providing emotional support to the child. ... Grandparents also played a big role in the provision of care and support.” (IKS11)

“The idea was to save you (children) from the emotional stress associated with handing death; so they wanted you to grow up and ... then be able to handle these other deaths in the community. Likewise, children were not burdened with being present at the graveside.” (IKS7)

“I can speak on burials, in Tsonga when a person dies we do not allow children close to the process, we do not show them the corpse as what other ethnic groups do, we do not want the child to be affected psychologically. ... We did not end there; we would ensure that children were told at a later stage in life when they are mature to comprehend what death means unlike just exposing them to the shock.” (IKS22)

One participant, a social worker, explained that they adopt a holistic perspective of child well-being, including aspects such as children's standard of living, behaviour and emotions as well their interaction in the family and with friends:

"For a child well-looked after, we look at their life and living standards for us to conclude whether they are in well-being or not. We also look at their behaviour. We also look at the mind, because a child in well-being is someone not stressed. ... for a child in well-being when you look at them, they are free and they do not show some signs of stress. You also look at their participation in what is taking place in the family; if they are not playing with others then you can tell that this child is in trouble they are not in well-being." (SWK11)

In summary, what is central to this sub-theme is that the concept of child well-being was mostly described in terms of basic needs being met, the child experiencing joy and peace, and not being exposed to violence. Although most of the participants did not refer to the emotional well-being of children, the emphasis that the participants placed on emotional support to children and the protection of children from stressful situations refer to practices that place value on children's emotional well-being.

Of note, is that emotional support was not only provided by the parents and family members, but also by members of the community. The research findings show that the Vatsonga people are strongly attuned to the concept of child well-being and its various facets when considering the following statement on the concept of child well-being by Statham and Chase (2010:5): "There is some emerging consensus that childhood wellbeing is multi-dimensional, should include dimensions of physical, emotional and social wellbeing; should focus on the immediate lives of children but also consider their future lives; and should incorporate some subjective as well as objective measures." Furthermore, parenting among the Vatsonga does not end with the attainment of the legal age of majority, neither does it end with marriage or employment. As described by Participant IKS22, parenting is an ongoing process until death. This conceptualisation of the role of the parent can be tied to the Tsonga construction of childhood, where a child is not viewed in terms of chronological age but social terms, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Hence, one stays a child through relational ties.

- **Sub-theme 3.4: Teaching self-reliance and responsibility**

The research findings indicate that Xitsonga-speaking children are mentored to grow up into self-reliant and responsible men and women in the future through life skills training and mentorship done by the elders.

"Vatsonga children are mentored to be hard workers; so, they grow up doing chores, they work according to their age as part of mentoring them into adult life and as a way of giving them life skills. How can they know how to cook, how to hunt, how to weed in their fields unless they are exposed?" (IKS32)

“Hard work as a Tsonga value, we teach children hard work and self-reliance to the extent that children become economic at a young age.” (IKS38)

In the **mentoring of boys**, they are not only taught economic-related skills such as crafts, ploughing and hunting, among other skills, but they are also taught other important lifelong learning issues such as sexual reproductive information. They received life skills training from their uncles.

“They would be trained in making tools such as hoes, axes, hunting and war antics among other things. They were also taught about sex and sexuality issues by their uncles and received some counsel towards marriage and what they were expected to do as an adult man once they get there.” (IKS16)

“Another forum (bandla) is the men’s forum. This is the men’s place in a homestead. During the night the boys ensure there is fire at the ‘bandla’ and our food comes there, we do not mix with women. This is the time to advise on men’s issues to the boys and young men. The fire kept us together, socialising whilst exchanging advice.” (IKS40)

The girl child was not left out in the process of being mentored into becoming self-reliant and responsible women. In the **mentoring of girls**, the aunts would be tasked with the biggest responsibility to ensure that the girl child would grow up to be a fully developed woman in terms of household chores and issues of sexual reproductive information. In traditional Tsonga communities, girls were not exposed to formal labour but in recent times they have become exposed to child labour as helpers for richer families in the city or within the neighbourhood.

“There is the role of aunties in training the girls different life skills. They are trained on how to use grinding stones, how to prepare various Tsonga dishes so that when they get married, they do not fail to perform these duties.” (IKS23)

“This is a recent development. I grew up knowing that only boys would leave home and go to South Africa or in the cities and nearby farms in Chiredzi to work. Girls remained at home for marriage but nowadays they also go to search for work in the cities and they can go as early as 12 because normally they work as maids.” (IKS14)

It appears that mentoring the child serves as a form of **apprenticeship** for the responsibilities for adult life, where children are taken step by step from easier tasks to harder tasks as they grow up and mature.

“So even those in grade one in school, for example, when it comes to the fields, they are given age-appropriate tasks, such as usually asked to drop seeds onto the ground whilst the older children and adults then do harder things like tilling the land or weeding. So, every member of the family has a role to play.” (IKS29)

“Once they are strong enough, they partake in tougher duties. They are supposed to prove themselves first at home before going to work full time. They were not just supposed to go to work, they first tell the parents especially the father who would then dedicate the trip to the ancestor to bless the child whilst on their adventures; otherwise just going without the blessings of ancestors normally ended in tragedy.” (IKS32)

“So, children were not let to just jump into adulthood, they were fully prepared and gradually so.” (IKS16)

The above views reveal that the Vatsonga people are aware of age-appropriate tasks for children. The child is seen as an active contributor to the household economy with increasingly taking responsibility for looking after themselves and the family. One participant clarified that children’s active participation in household tasks are not regarded as abuse:

“Abuse was not known because when you say children must not work [and] when they work it is abuse; to us, it is not. Because how are they going to work for themselves when they are grown up without exposure?” (IKS2)

In mentoring boys and girls, children are socialised into **gender-based roles**, as described by the following participants:

“We do not have confusion on who does what. Girls were known for baby minding, cooking, grinding mealie-meal, fetching water, fetching firewood among many chores and the boys were hunters and cattle herders.” (IKS12)

“Their chores are different; the girls sweep and cook whilst the boys work in the fields with a plough, hunt, construct huts, and do other harder chores in the home.” (IKS18)

“Boys do not fetch water and they do not cook. We do not allow them to cook, their duty is to herd cattle, to plough the fields, make tools among other chores which are supposed to be done by men. The girls cook, fetch water, sweep, and do many other chores which they see their mothers do.” (IKS18)

The research findings highlight the value that the Vatsonga people place on preparing children for becoming self-reliant and responsible adults. It becomes clear that mentoring children towards this goal entails age-appropriate tasks, gradually increasing from easier to more advanced levels, and which are determined by the child’s gender. Mentoring is done by parents as well as members of the extended family. Mentoring of children in Africa is viewed as a collective responsibility as individuals’ interests, goals or rights are subordinate to the community interests and goals (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:22). In the context of *ubuntu*, children are supposed to be socialised and mentored into morally upright citizens conforming to the ethics, norms and values of society (Mkabela, 2014:284). The differences in the values and ideals between individualist and collectivist societies provide an understanding of differences in parenting between the two cultural orientations (Triandis, 1884 in Descartes, 2012:61).

In terms of child protection, a central aspect of this sub-theme is the notion that child maltreatment is socially constructed (D’cruz, 2004:103). It transpires that what could be considered as child labour, thus maltreatment, under international and regional conventions and the Zimbabwean and Mozambican law, was regarded as a process of teaching self-reliance and responsibility according to Tsonga IKS. It also became apparent that children’s engagement in household chores is viewed among the Vatsonga as part of child participation

in the household economy for better child outcomes within the family, as is also indicated in some literature findings (Laird, 2016:304; Nhenga, 2008:xvi). However, child labour in some instances amounts to child maltreatment by all standards, given that it interferes with the child's schooling. The aspect of children's education will be discussed in more detail in Sub-theme 7.3.

- **Sub-theme 3.5: Status of the boy child versus the girl child**

This sub-theme reports on the research findings associated with the concept of equality, specifically on equality between the girl child and the boy child. The findings show an unequal status between boys and girls among the Vatsonga people that manifests itself in different areas of life, as will be discussed in this sub-theme.

In their description of the **unequal status** between boys and girls in the Tsonga culture, the following views were expressed by the participants in terms of the higher status assigned to boys:

“The boy child in Tsonga is revered because they carry the family name into the posterity whilst the girl child gets married and prosper another family, so for that matter they were not prioritised. But in terms of value, they have a big value because when they get married the family receives cows as lobola as opposed to the boy child who has to send cows to another family as lobola. ... when it comes to status, the boy child is in a better position because it is through them that the family name is propelled forward. The boys do chores like ploughing, hunting, and cattle herding whilst girls cook and sweep, so there is no equality.” (IKS31)

“They cannot be equal when they do different chores but when it comes to them accessing food, shelter, clothing among other necessities all of them get that. When it comes to inheritance a boy child is the most preferred heir apparent and is given the land and the cattle on behalf of the family.” (IKS18)

“In terms of protection, yes all of them were protected but in terms of equal status, that is not how we do it in Tsonga because the boy child is the future head of the family and the girl child would get married and make another family great; so, there is no equality there.” (IKS38)

“The status is different. Boys are always preferred because they will remain in the homestead as opposed to girls who would get married. So even when it comes to inheritance or sharing of property rights, the boys were given more as compared to girls.” (IKS40)

The research findings show that in the Tsonga culture both girls and boys are well cared for and protected; however, boys are assigned a higher status than girls. The boys get preferential treatment because they are viewed as the future family heads and it is through them that the family would exist in perpetuity, unlike a girl who upon marriage leaves her biological family and benefit her husband's family. There was consensus among the views of participants in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe that the perception of girls as 'lesser beings' led to some of

the violations of the rights of the girl child that were being experienced in the communities where the interviews were conducted.

In the face of limited resources, the preference to **access education** is given to the boy child who is viewed as more profitable to the family than the girl child.

“I think it is important for you to know that many parents do not put much effort into raising the girl child as compared to the boy child. They think the girl will get married so why waste my resources. Even if you look at access to education, they prefer to send boys rather than girls. They do not know that they should ensure that the girl child also access education just like the boy child. But for us who are enlightened, we send them both, you see this girl there (pointing at her daughter) ... I am trying everything I can do so that she accesses education. I treat them equally; right now, one of my daughters is at the university.” (IKS40)

“Nowadays we give them both an equal chance but when I grew up my brothers were given preference because my father did not have enough money to send all of us to school. So, he preferred to send my brothers arguing that for girls we will get married hence by educating me he was investing for another family. That was some years ago; as for now, we send them both to school.” (IKS38)

The perception that boys have a higher status than girls, results in the violation of the rights of the girl child to education. As mentioned in the above quotes, other participants also alluded that the perception is slowly vanishing with more and more households respecting the concept of equality between boys and girls as sacrosanct. The African Charter (African Union, 1990) in Article 11 stipulates the right to education for all children, thus including the girl child.

Most of the participants revealed that there is no equality in terms of **property and inheritance rights** between the girl and boy child, which is also the case between the woman and man among the Vatsonga.

“... when you look at inheritance, the boy child is the one who is given the fields and cattle from their father because the girl child is regarded as a passing traveller who will go and be part of another family; but the boy child remains to perpetuate the family name.” (IKS14)

“Whilst all were precious and were given food, clothes, water and all that would make them live, when it comes to inheritance you would see that the boy child was favoured sorely because the girl child was regarded as a passer-by who would get married ... but otherwise, if their marriage for some reason fails, they can come back home and still be given some portion of the family land.” (IKS17)

“The girls in Tsonga are also the pride of their father because they are the source of wealth because they get married and as a father, I charge lobola; I can say I need five cows and I would be given the cows. The boy child as one who remains in the family, I would then allocate land to them once I see that they were no longer young anymore. It was my responsibility as a father to ensure that I have enough cattle to give to my son so that they pay lobola for their first wife.” (IKS36)

“The status is different. Boys are always preferred because they will remain in the homestead as opposed to girls who would get married. So, even when it comes to inheritance or sharing of property rights, the boys were given more as compared to girls.” (IKS40)

The practices related to inheritance and land ownership described in the above quotes, confirm the consequences of the higher status of the boy child. Lombard (2019b:407) highlights the importance of ensuring equality and the empowerment of women and girls in compliance with the sustainable development goal of equality and empowerment. The author argues that, given the central role of women in caring for vulnerable members of the family and community, the empowerment and equality of women will also support the attainment of the other development goals.

The **practice of lobola** mentioned by the participants was viewed as another contributor to inequality between boys and girls among the Vatsonga of Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This practice involves that when a man and woman decide to get married, the man has to pay a bride price (*lobola*) to the family of the girl (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:218; Shokane & Masoga, 2018:10-11). Thus, whereas the girl child would be valued by her family for bringing wealth to the family, in return the family is not keen to give her property rights for the fear that when she gets married, she will take the wealth to the family of her husband. Jayachandran (2015:75) furthermore believes that the *lobola* system contributes to gender inequality in that it reinforces views that women are the property of the men who pay for them.

The research findings furthermore show that the Vatsonga people have a **traditional leadership** in which it is the male child who inherits the throne from the father. In addition, the boy child is viewed as the posterity of the clan through marriage and pro-creation to further the interests of the whole clan. The boy child is also the most preferred candidate to oversee most of the various rituals done at the family level, which results in the elevation of boys above the girl child.

“We have a traditional leadership that is patriarchal. It is the male child who inherits the throne from their father. As for us the throne is not normally inherited from one family to another, it is normally directly inherited from the father to the son like that.” (IKS23)

“Our leadership styles were restricted to men only because we are a patriarchal society. Funny about us, is that the heir apparent is the eldest son unlike in the culture of our neighbours, the Shonas, who pass the throne from one family to another within the extended family.” (IKS6)

As mentioned in the above quotes, **patriarchy** is one of the factors contributing to inequalities between boys and girls in the Tsonga culture. African society is characterised by its strong patriarchal systems that tend to see the boy child as an investment in terms of the family name and a form of social security for the family (Jayachandran, 2015:75; Ramphabana et al., 2019:183; Sewpaul, 2016a:33). In describing gender as a social construct, Barriteau (1995 in Descartes, 2012:56) postulates that the gender construction of being female does not only relate to being ‘non-male’ but also influences how society interacts with women. In this way,

traditional patriarchal practices can impede on people's freedoms and rights (Midgley, 2017 in Lombard, 2019b:402).

In conclusion, the research findings show an unequal status between boys and girls among the Vatsonga people that manifest themselves in areas of property rights and inheritance, chieftaincy, and access to resources. However, in terms of protection, provision and care, the findings indicate that there is no discrimination as both boys and girls get equal treatment. The clear distinction between gender roles and the imposition of gender norms resulting in gender inequalities was also found in other studies in traditional African contexts (Human Rights Watch, 2015:3; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28; Olatunji, 2013:5; Mwambene & Mawodza, 2017:21).

In Theme 3, the research findings as discussed in the sub-themes show that the conceptualisation of childhood and child well-being in the Tsonga culture may conflict with international and regional conventions on the rights of the child such as the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) and local legislation such as the child protection laws of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Conceptualisations of social issues and societal practices vary according to culture and IKS, as explained in both social constructionism (Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71) and the ecological systems theory (Christensen, 2010:102; Saraw, 2009:2), and must be acknowledged for child protection interventions to be optimally implemented.

The influence of culture and IKS is also observed in parenting and child-rearing practices. Parenting is a social construct whereby "[e]very culture develops set patterns of child-rearing practices and that what is perceived to be good parenting in one culture may be regarded as maladaptive in another culture" (Descartes, 2012:63). This aspect will be further discussed in Theme 4.

7.2.2.4 Theme 4: Child-rearing practices

In Theme 4, the researcher reports on the empirical findings associated with Tsonga child-rearing practices. The practices are discussed in terms of what is found in the Tsonga culture and IKS, with some perceived by the participants as protective and others perceived as harmful. The study established that the Vatsonga people have a thriving child-rearing system in place since time immemorial. Some of these practices are contrary to modern child rights laws. The research findings are presented in different sub-themes.

Subtheme 4.1: Parenting, caregiving and socialisation practices

The Vatsonga people have unique parenting and child-rearing practices aligned with their IKS. Most of the participants shared that child-rearing is a collective effort involving all the family

members, the extended family, and the community at large. The mother is however the primary caregiver of children, especially during the early childhood years.

The participants described the **role of the mother** in child-rearing as being pronounced from birth until a time when the child is old enough to be with their siblings, when the child's older **siblings** assist the mother with child-rearing tasks. In Vatsonga families, infants are breastfed until they can walk and can utter at least one or two words, then they are weaned. The child's sisters and brothers then take care of the child most of the time during the day, and during the night they normally put up with their grandparents until they are of an age when they then join their other siblings. However, among the Vatsonga, the mother continues to play a supervisory role, ensuring that the child gets all the care needed, including that the child has eaten, bathed and clothed. Even if these tasks are performed by the child's siblings, the mother is there to supervise.

“Child rearing practices of the Vatsonga in Mozambique is also the same as here. A child is weaned off when she can walk and talk, and once they are weaned off, their siblings then play a role in the upbringing of the child. They walk with them, play with them as well as socialise them into a child.” (IKS12)

“Once weaned off they were allowed to then go with their sisters and brothers to play but their older siblings had a duty to look after them, like after walking for a distance they would carry the younger child on their backs.” (IKS11)

“In Tsonga culture when the child is still being breastfed before being weaned, they are closer to the mother. The mother feeds them, clothes them, and carry them on their back. After, when the child can walk and utter some words though not yet fluent, the child is weaned and from that time the older siblings of the child play a bigger role of care during the day.” (IKS38)

“We also have our parenting and child-rearing ways, for example in our culture once a child is weaned, the mother is free to spend the greater part of the day without the child. The child would be with their older siblings, playing and being taken care of. The older siblings take full responsibility to provide care, love and support to their younger siblings. Children take care of each other and learn from each other. ... Older siblings also bath and clothe the child and they do so as part of their chores and the mother takes that as part of training her female children on how to look after children.” (IKS29)

As evident from the above quotes, the findings reveal that once a child is weaned, young children are allowed to go with their older sisters and brothers to play. The time that was regarded as appropriate for this transition was not determined by age but relied more on whether the child has reached critical markers or stages of child development such as crawling, walking and talking. Their older siblings had a duty to look after the young and children had a responsibility to care for each other.

The primary role of the mother, being assisted by the child's older siblings, is indicated in the literature as a common practice in traditional cultures. The role of siblings is prominent in the literature on non-Western and collective communities (*cf.* Bornstein, 2013:259; Robinson,

2007:116). In some cultures, older siblings help to care for, support, and socialise the younger ones (Louw & Louw, 2014b:146; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:22). Their role is usually culturally defined and includes feeding, toilet training, disciplining and comforting the younger sibling (Nsamenang, 2011 in Louw & Louw, 2014a:209), which is different to the role of the older siblings in Western-oriented cultures, where their interaction with their younger siblings occur in the context of play (Louw & Louw, 2014a:209).

The participants explained that the **role of the father** in child-rearing is introduced later in the life of the child. At birth, the mother plays a central role whilst the father gives emotional support to the mother. However, once the child is weaned and especially when they reach school-going age, the father's role becomes prominent. Child-rearing among the Vatsonga is an engendered process with **roles assigned to the father and mother being based on gender**. The mother's role with the boy child normally diminishes as the boy grows older as the father takes over the role. On the other hand, the father's role with regards to the girl child diminishes as the girl child grows older and the mother's role becomes more pronounced. Furthermore, the father as a male is ascribed to the role of child discipline whilst the mother is assigned the role of clothing and bathing the child or ensuring that such care giving tasks take place properly. The father's role is to instil discipline and family identity into the child, especially with the boy child. In both Mozambique and Zimbabwe, various participants' views converged on primary role of discipline by the father in child-rearing among the Vatsonga people, as captured below:

"The fathers play an important role in parenting, they are a symbol of discipline. It is very usual to hear a mother say that they will report the child to their father when the child misbehaves because it is the father who normally administers corporal punishment which includes spanking and sometimes a strong reprimand or withdrawal of benefits; for example, they can buy other children clothes and the one who has been consistently misbehaving can be excluded until they reform." (IKS29)

"The father normally comes to mentor the boy child and, also, to instil discipline to all the children. All problematic and naughty children in Tsonga are reported to the father who is known for discipline. However, once the girl gets older and has reached puberty the father rarely interacts with the girl; it is the mother who then assumes the mentoring role." (IKS38)

"The mother played a bigger role in providing emotional support to the child and provision of care such as bathing the child and feeding the child. The father is normally called in to reinforce discipline in the child and to fend for the family and ensure that there was enough meat and grain in their house. Grandparents also played a big role in the provision of care and support." (IKS11)

"The mother has a role and duty to train up the girl child into female chores like cooking, sweeping, fetching water and firewood. On the other hand, the father groomed the boy child in hunting, making tools, construction of huts among other duties. It was a taboo to see a boy child in the kitchen that was the world of women and girls." (IKS14)

The specific parenting practices of the Vatsonga as described above, confirm that child-rearing patterns and the socialisation of children vary within different cultural contexts (Robinson,

2007:139). The specific roles of the father and mother as well as gender-based socialisation of children in the Tsonga culture confirms the view of Descartes (2012:56) that gender is a social construct, saying that “gender constitutes a set of norms and values relating to appropriate behaviours that determine roles and attributes.”

Many participants echoed the important **role of grandparents** in childrearing among the Vatsonga. In the event of death of the parents, the grandparents were said to be the most preferred caregivers. In addition, grandparents have the role of ensuring that children are socialised into being true Vatsonga citizens bearing the norms, values, beliefs and aspirations of the Vatsonga people.

“Our school was through storytelling; we would tell a lot of stories which I could no longer remember most of them. Children would gather around the fire during the night and an elderly adult would tell various stories which were full of meanings, some of the stories you would end by asking the children what they would have learnt.” (IKS40)

“Remember, orphans are looked after by their grandparents, uncles, aunties and other members of the extended family, so it is impossible to discriminate my own son’s child or my daughter’s child. To us kinship is respected, and it is something which creates a deep bond between the adults in the extended family and the children within the extended family.” (IKS33)

“They were looked after by their grandparents. The child was not supposed to be in lack after the death of their parents.” (IKS36)

“In instances of death, we have a robust system, once both parents were dead the grandparents took over especially the paternal grandparents.” (IKS1)

In terms of the caregiving practices described by the participants, caregiving in indigenous communities are more reliant on multiple caregivers, including grandmothers and siblings, rather than on the singular role of the mother in caring for the infant (Arnett, 2008:606; Bornstein, 2013:259). As indicated in the research findings, the mother still assumes the primary caregiver role and cannot be regarded as “just one of many caregivers” (Mesman, Minter, Angged, Cissé, Deniz Salali & Bamberg Migliano, 2018:846).

In line with the participants’ descriptions of the important role of grandparents in the care of orphans in Tsonga communities, reports on children in Africa describe the critical role of grandparents in the care of orphans. However, the concern is raised that grandparents struggle to fulfil this role due to the extensive number of orphans due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic that raids Africa (Mufumbate & Meahabo, 2016:39-40). The research findings furthermore emphasise the valuable role of grandparents in transmitting cultural norms, values and beliefs of the Vatsonga people to the next generations through stories that would form of IKS. Of concern, is that IKS, being a tacit knowledge transferred by word of mouth, may become obsolete due to the influence of acculturation (Ossai, 2010:2-3).

- **Sub-theme 4.2: The extended family and communal care**

The research findings show that in the Tsonga culture a child is seen as belonging to the whole community, hence the community's and extended family's role in caregiving was pronounced. According to the Tsonga culture **children belong to the entire community**, not to the biological parents and immediate family only. Every member in the community is supposed to look after the child, which ensured that local community members can keep an eye on all children and would never harm somebody else's child. Many participants praised the merits of communal responsibility, arguing that even when misfortune strikes, the child was never desolate.

"We do not only care for my immediate biological family, but I care for everyone in the family as long as I can do so." (IKS22)

"Another good practice is that IKS dictated that a child belonged to the whole community and the whole community bore the responsibility of upbringing the child. In reciprocation, the child was duty-bound to respect every adult in the community, which brought cohesion." (IKS27)

"In my culture, the good thing is that every child belonged to everyone, especially the extended family." (IKS2)

"The whole community's adults are also addressed as parents (vatsvali); this also gives them a right to discipline any child in the village and also meet the needs of the child in this village." (IKS29)

The concept of communal care, as described by the participants, can be related to the African philosophy of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* provides moral values related to humanity and compassion and serves as an ethical guide for an individual to become a moral person through mutual support and caring for one another (Berg, 2001:196; Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Mkhabela, 2014:284-285). Mkhabela (2014:285) describes *ubuntu* as a collectivist worldview. This worldview is characteristic of African traditional societies and promotes values such as solidarity, mutual support and sharing in communities (Magano, 2018:23; Makhubele, 2008:43).

The Tsonga views on childcare reflect the childcare practices in collectivist societies where, in addition to their parents, the neighbours, teachers, 'other mothers', and members of the whole village take responsibility for the well-being of children (Magano, 2018:236; Nwoye, 2017:57). As mentioned by Participant IKS29, community members would also discipline children, which is an accepted role to discipline children in a dignified manner (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25). Magano (2018:236) regards the communal responsibility for children as the reason for children at risk being a rare phenomenon in traditional African communities. Strong relationships and collaboration strengthen the mesosystem, which serve the best interests of

the child and is especially important in economically disadvantaged contexts (Berk, 2013:27; Rhapolo & Makhubele, 2018:315).

The participants furthermore provided information on the **extended family** and on how their involvement with children was structured.

“In our culture, a child has many parents who can be categorised into the biological and social parents. ... The mother’s siblings (the sisters) are also called the mother by the child and in return they reciprocate by also playing all the motherly roles to the child. Likewise, the father’s brothers are also the child’s fathers and they reciprocate in playing the fatherly roles, those of disciplining the child and providing for the child.” (IKS29)

“We had a strong kinship system (‘vuxaka’) to the extent that if one person was rich in the family, we would send our children to him to send them to school and would do so non-grudgingly. During school holidays children used to come to the countryside to their cousins, aunts and grandparents. So, children grew up with a sense belonging to a bigger extended family, they had a bigger social safety net to lean on at any given time. Thus, when death struck that was not an issue at all, the child’s welfare was covered.” (IKS6)

“Most of our people in this area still value the extended family. We look after each other as families, you do not only look after your biological children and siblings, and you look after the whole extended family. So, if you are rich it means everyone in the extended family is rich because your wealth could be used to help the whole extended family.” (IKS21)

“The extended family looks after many unfortunate children despite the challenges we all face; but it is our responsibility to look after the children.” (IKS27)

It transpires that with parenting done collectively through the extended family, everyone in the extended family plays a role in the upbringing of the child. The members of the extended family would take on the traditional roles of mothers and fathers in that they would provide in the child’s material and educational needs, discipline, and sense of belonging, amongst others. The extended family plays an important role in collectivist societies (Van Zyl et al., 2018:699) and is commonly found in African societies where the family can serve as a safety net for vulnerable children (Magano, 2018:239; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:22; Nwoye, 2017:49).

In this respect, the research findings show that the extended family’ role is more pronounced in the case of **orphaned and vulnerable children**.

“To us as the Vatsonga when we speak of the family, we do not refer to the father, mother, and their children and end there, no. To us a family is bigger, it includes the aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents including the aunts, uncles, and cousins of the grandparents, the list goes on until it almost everyone in the village becomes your family member. In that regard, children could not be easily harmed or be neglected; neither could they go without food, shelter, and clothing among other necessities. When their nuclear family fails to do so, the extended family chipped in and provides parenting and in all the needs of the child.” (IKS28)

“So, the extended family is a haven for all children who might be less privileged and have poor parents. The extended family takes care of orphans and provides for those families who have poor parents or sick parents.” (IKS29)

“The major element is our extended family, the kinship ties which we value and ensure that our children who are orphaned are cared for and that we have a communal responsibility to raise the child together as a community.” (IKS23)

The value placed in the extended family by the Vatsonga people helps in ensuring that children at any given time have a safety net. The extended family is the one that continues to absorb orphans into the community, and this was touted as the main reason why no children were living and working in the street as seen in Maputo and other big cities in Mozambique.

Asked if the status of the child within the care of the extended family was the same as that of the child in the biological family, most of the participants indicated that there is an equal and fair treatment of orphans among the Vatsonga, as explained by the following participant.

“In our culture ‘n’wana wamun’wani i n’wana wawena’ (one’s child is your child), so the treatment is just the same.” (IKS29)

Most of the participants had confidence in the extended family as a safe place, though they were aware that there could be unscrupulous relatives who ended up abusing the child. However, the general pattern was that the participants were quick to explain that the neighbours would report such acts because of the communal responsibility for children’s well-being in the culture. As such, information of abuse ended up in the ears of the elders who would then remove the child from the abusive extended family to another benevolent family member to look after the child.

“As I said, children are precious to Vatsonga people, so we have strong systems to look after the child. The extended family which I have just explained, and our traditional leadership were also the eye ensuring that children were not abused. Families would correct and rebuke each other when abuse occurs, and serious abuse was referred to a traditional leader to prosecute.” (IKS31)

“The culture protected children both boys and girls. Our culture provides every child with care because we believe that the child belongs to us all; hence it is the responsibility of everyone to look after the child. We are an eye on the child.” (IKS33)

Whilst the extended family is still relevant especially in the rural areas, the participants explained that the practice was said to be threatened due to migration which has resulted in family ties being broken in some instances. It also emerged from the data that the extended family continues to be relevant even in the advent of diaspora families. Some participants shared that they continue to depend on members of the extended family for remittances despite thousands of miles between them.

The principle of *ubuntu* underlying the Afrocentric worldview (Hlongwane et al., 2018:53) becomes apparent in the model of communal care described by the participants. *Ubuntu* emphasises the interconnectedness of people and is often portrayed in the saying “*umuntu umuntu ngabanye*”, meaning a person is a person through others (Mugumbate & Nyanguru,

2013:83-84). The involvement of the extended family in childcare ensures that in the instances of death the child continues to receive parenting from the extended family. The extended family plays a crucial role in African communities to care for orphans, especially HIV and AIDS orphans (Mushunje, 2006:12). The orphaned child would thus not be admitted in a children's home as is the case modern-day Zimbabwe and Mozambique but would be absorbed within their extended family for care and protection.

The involvement of communities and in the extended family is aligned with an increasing focus of child welfare services on keeping children in their communities and family contexts, rather than opt for formal alternative care arrangements such as institutional or foster care (Conley, 2010:45-47). However, it should be kept in mind that in situations where these families experience structural challenges such as poverty, low income and unemployment, family problems may arise that increase children's risk for abuse and neglect. Therefore, especially in developing countries, social assistance to families can reduce the risks associated with extreme poverty (Lombard, 2019b:397, 400).

- **Sub-theme 4.3: Ensuring children's optimal growth**

The participants described several ways in which the Vatsonga people ensured children's optimal growth. Four practices were prominent in the data collected, namely prenatal and ante-natal care, child spacing, child-sensitive eating and feeding practices, and appreciation of a clean environment.

Most of the participants considered child-bearing practices including the rites and practices that the mother must undergo before, during, and after the birth of each child as part of Tsonga IKS. The Vatsonga people have systems in place for **pre-natal and ante-natal care**. The mother was well looked after during pregnancy, at birth, and immediately after birth. The first-time mother received mentoring from the community elders and support from her mother, grandmother and mother-in-law.

"We have a very effective system that sees our children being raised as healthy and socially responsible. ... When it is the first birth, the woman's family especially her mother played a central role; they would be present to offer moral support and also helped look after her." (IKS28)

"Once the child was born, they stayed indoor with their mother for almost a week, then a naming ceremony which was just a small ritual was done and the child would be named. All that is part of what constitutes our IKS." (IKS19)

"After birth, the mother, known as 'tsvegani', was well looked after; especially her mother or mother-in-law ensured that they cook for the mother, wash their clothes and do all the chores whilst the mother recovers. In the meantime, the general public was not allowed to see the child until the child was officially brought out of the house (kuhuma ndwini). So, a child is well looked after in Tsonga." (IKS33)

The participants furthermore described that the Vatsonga people value **child spacing**, which forms part of their IKS associated with parenting and child-rearing practices. They have a plethora of established practices to ensure child spacing, some of which include the use of myths, natural methods, and the practice of the father being absent from the home until the child reaches certain development milestones.

“If you look at issues of childbirth and child spacing, we have mechanisms in place. One of the mechanisms was that if a child is born, the father soon after the naming ceremony of the child would leave to go to South Africa or Zimbabwe or any city in this country and work there. They could spend more than a year there and when they come back the child was weaned, and the couple would then have another child.” (IKS21)

“The couple was not allowed to have sex until the child grew teeth; so, this helped in ensuring that there was child spacing.” (IKS28)

“... nowadays, they use modern pills and know each other (be intimate). No wonder why even the rains are scarce these days.” (IKS21)

“We also used to have natural ways of child spacing because of myths which were spread to ensure that husband and wife do not know each other whilst the child was still young. For example, it was believed that knowing your wife or husband when the baby was hardly a few months old, which would make the baby a weakling.” (IKS26)

The practice of child spacing is evident in certain cultures in which sexual intercourse of the parents is not allowed before a child is weaned, usually between the age of two and three years (Mwamwenda, 1995 in Louw & Louw, 2014b:145). The participants explained that the trend of men having to leave home as part of the child spacing mechanism is now declining with the advent of modern birth control measures which the Vatsonga have embraced.

The Vatsonga people have **eating and feeding practices** to ensure the optimal health and growth of children. The research findings show that there is a sanctioned order of eating among the Vatsonga children and adults alike. These views were expressed by participants in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe, as in the following examples:

“The Vatsonga, when eating a meal, the younger child was the last to pick the meat but they benefited in the long run because the older children in times of drought were supposed to leave enough food for the younger child even if they were still hungry. In times of drought, the mealie-meal and other foodstuffs were not allowed to completely run out. When a mother reports to the family that the food was running out, the provisions for the children would be there that would cover even two weeks to go but these were special reserves for children.” (IKS11)

“The Tsonga system of seniority among the children was so unique and enhanced the well-being of our children. When having meals and these meals were shared meals, one plate of relish and another plate of sadza [a thick porridge] then all the children would eat from the same plate. It is the eldest child who picked the portion of the meat first and the youngest was the last to pick, this disadvantaged the younger child but in the end the younger child has the benefit of being the last to leave the plate. Thus, even as an elder child, you were still hungry but once you see that the ‘sadza’ was now small you have to leave that to the younger child. The younger child was supposed to eat until they are satisfied, such as our practice.” (IKS3)

The research findings echo the established age and relational hierarchy in the Tsonga culture, as described as part of a culture of respect in Sub-theme 1.2 (values underlying the Tsonga culture). Choosing a meat portion, for example, follows the order of seniority; thus, to the disadvantage of younger children, the older children are given preference in picking the first piece of meat. However, leaving some food on the plate for the younger child to continue eating, ensured that the younger child would not go hungry. In times of drought, the child is prioritised to the extent that if there is no adequate mealie-meal, the adults were exempted from the meal, and only the children were fed. This practice provides evidence of the value placed on children and their well-being in the Tsonga culture.

The Vatsonga people have a strong sense of cleanliness and an appreciation of a **clean environment**. The environment is seen as belonging to the ancestors and the entirety of the spiritual world. Thus, when the environment was littered, the old women of the community engaged in some form of environmental clean-up campaign known as *kelekele*. This practice was done by senior women who would have reached menopause.

“To me ‘kelekele’ comes to mind, that process helped to maintain a clean environment for the children and adults alike and it caused the rains to come so that was very important because it ensured that households have enough food to feed their children.” (IKS8)

“To avert impending drought, old women who have reached menopause would go around the village picking up litter and then burn it. During this time around they also rounded up any woman known to have aborted to reprimand them because this was thought to be a contributing factor to the ancestors being angry, hence them not releasing the rains. What ‘kelekele’ did was to discourage abortion and encourage a safe and clean environment because littering the environment meant that the ancestors would be angry, and it would result in drought. However, this exercise was also a challenge in the idea that it subjected women to some form of violence perpetrated by other women because, as I explained, women who were thought to have aborted were subject to public scorn and were paraded for everyone to see.” (IKS9)

The above quotes reflect the holistic perspective underlying the Afrocentric worldview, which reflects the distinct relationship of indigenous communities with nature and the interrelatedness of people and elements of their environment (Mkabela, 2014:286; Maathai, 2009 in Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:253). Societies that follow an Afrocentric worldview, such as the Vatsonga people, adopt a spiritual perspective of their relationship with the environment (Thabede, 2008:234). However, this practice was also meant to discourage abortion and, as mentioned by Participants IKS8 and IKS9, could contribute to violence against women and exposure to public humiliation to ensure that the ancestors are atoned and release the rains which were believed to be sensitive to the cleanliness of the environment.

In recent times, social work has magnified its focus on environmental aspects, and this has been witnessed by the profession’s endorsement of the SDGs’ focus on a sustainable environment (IFSW, 2017:14). There is realisation that the profession should expand its

'person in the environment' focus to include the built and natural environment as opposed to concentrating on the social environment. Ensuring a clean environment contributes to sustainable development, which "promotes environmental, economic and social well-being for present as well as future generations" and "safeguards, builds and enhances the natural environment and promotes social equity" (Naidoo & Muthukrishna, 2016:2).

- **Sub-theme 4.4 Naming of children**

The research findings show that the Vatsonga people have an intact naming system which ensures that every child gets a name upon birth. In addition, it was established that whereas the initial naming process is an adult affair, once the child grows up, they were free to give themselves another name known as *vito ra vujaha* and *vito ravuntombi*. Central aspects described by the participants included the naming process, naming ceremony, the meaning of a name, and naming linked to spirituality.

The **naming process** of the Vatsonga people was found to be a unique process. Once the child was born, they would have a name because the midwife was the one immediately charged with the responsibility to name the child. This ensured that even the child who was born out of wedlock would get a name. However, later in life when that child went for initiation, they were allowed to then choose an initiation name of their choice. For boys, once they reached an age of being gainfully employed, they would also give themselves a name of their choice (*vito ra vujaha*), and normally this would be an English name. Thus, it was rare for this name to be in the Tsonga vernacular, as was the case with their name at birth. In some cases, the child would have a name of an ancestor.

"A child in Tsonga culture is named by a midwife but the family still had a right to name the child. But to do so, they had to give a gift to the midwife and ask her to allow the family to give the child another name. But this is no longer the case because women now give birth at clinics and hospitals; that is why you now see a proliferation of English names in our children. A child could also cry for a name ('ku rilela vito') of an ancestor; in that case, you had to visit a traditional healer who would cast some lots and advise the family on the ancestor after whom the child is to be named." (IKS14)

"The child was named by the midwife but with the advent of clinics, parents are now more and more playing a prominent role in naming the child. Those who follow traditional beliefs may also name the child after the ancestors but as for us, we are Christians, so we no longer follow that route. Then when one gets initiated, they would also give themselves another name. This name became the most prominent in the village because failing to call someone by this name was a sign of looking down upon the initiation system, so it is punishable. Therefore, the initiation name was significant." (IKS20)

"The naming system of the Tsonga ensured that every child has a name whatsoever. It was the primary role of the midwife to name the child, but the family was allowed to also name the child. ... The system gave the child a chance to then give themselves another name of their choice when they went for 'Khomba.' This 'Khomba' process also enhanced the child's sense of belonging and identity of being a Vatsonga. It was an opportunity for the child to reconnect with their identity." (IKS11)

It appears that the traditional naming process of the child in the Tsonga culture has changed in more recent times. With the effect of acculturation on Tsonga IKS and the introduction of formal maternal health care systems, the role of the midwife in the naming process has diminished.

Most of the participants shared that Tsonga names are not just ordinary but that **names carry a meaning**, which would carry a specific message to a targeted audience which could include the in-laws, friends, enemies, the name bearer (the child) or the family. Some of the names shared by the participants which carry a special meaning are as follows: *Ganyani* (Be Wealthy), *Xisiwana* (The Poor One), *Vulani* (Confess), *Nyenyani* (Hate), *Lahlekani* (Get Lost) and *Tshungane* (Be Courageous). The community would also give a child a name that corresponded with his or her character. This was known as *vito rakudhuulela* (a nickname).

“Tsonga names are not ordinary names; they carry a meaning. When a child was born and the family was happy, the child would be named Tsakani which means ‘be happy’. Such names were rampant among the Vatsonga. The names carried a message to a specific target audience and upon initiation the child for the first time were given autonomy to choose the name of their choice. ... The community too would give you a name corresponding to your character or something significant you have done, for example, if you were always in a hurry people may call you Madhlakuhamba, literally meaning he who eats whilst walking. So, every name was very important to the Vatsonga.” (IKS11)

“When the child was born, (the child) was given a name normally by the midwife. This name was known as ‘vito ra vuhlangi’ (the name of childhood). The name given captured the situation and context of the family, the community, or the child. For example, a child could be named Usiwani (poverty) when the family was generally struggling ... The names in Tsonga carried a meaning so the childhood name is normally in vernacular to put a specific message and capture the context.” (IKS2)

Naming of children among the Vatsonga people is furthermore linked to their belief system and spirituality. The Vatsonga people believe that their elders who have passed on come back in spirit to protect the living. This belief then affects their child-naming practices; hence, a child would receive the **name of an ancestor** and that child is accorded respect as an ancestor incarnate. It was also found that a child without a name of an ancestor was accorded a low status by the community.

“I am yet to see any child in Tsonga culture who did not carry the name of an ancestor. It is only now that they are those of Christian faith who shun this practice but otherwise in a pure Tsonga homestead every child was named after an ancestor. It was possible to have many children sharing a name because the ancestor may demand to bestow the name on several children within the family.” (IKS3)

“We have the ‘ku rilela vito’ (crying for a name). What would happen as that the newly born baby would cry without ceasing. You give the baby milk; you sing for the baby and do all you can, but the baby would continue crying. When that persists for days, the parents would then consult a Nyanga who would tell them that one of their ancestors wanted to be named on the child, so some ceremony would be done to ... give the child the name of the ancestor.” (IKS10)

“That value we placed on children is also seen in their significance in our spirituality, the fact that children were given names of ancestors, which is a great honour because ancestors are honoured in our culture. Children with those names were so respected that they were not mistreated because of their significance. You can imagine your girl child named after your mother; beating her up was the same as beating up your late mother so that way children were protected.” (IKS24)

“In Tsonga (culture) children can cry for a name of an ancestor to be named on them. They can cry uncontrollably day and night and as a family, you can consult the services of a ‘Nyanga’ to cast their lots to determine why the child is crying. And once they found out that the child was supposed to be named after their ancestor, some white cloth was bought and an elderly person in the family, a male elder for that matter, would then name the child and speak to the ancestors that the family has heeded the call of the ancestors hence their name was now being given. That child was then respected because they symbolised the ancestral world.” (IKS27)

As explained by the participants, one could not treat a child named after an ancestor as ordinary. Therefore, a person could not beat the child who was bearing the name of the ancestor as it was like it was beating the ancestor. The participants reported that there were instances of those who abused children bearing the names of the ancestors receiving severe punishment from the ancestors. Such punishments would include the wrongdoer falling sick or being plagued by misfortune. This ensured that children were treated well in fear of reprisals from the ancestors.

The research findings show that the naming process is so significant among the Vatsonga that it deserved a special **naming ceremony**. One such naming ceremony is the *Kunyikavito* ceremony. This ritual involved various elements and procedures to be followed. First, when a child is born, lots were cast to look for the deceased person who wanted to be named after the child. Once given that name, the child was respected as they became the ancestor incarnate. Thus, if the ancestor was a traditional healer the child would also become one, or a hunter, a witch, a farmer; everything that the ancestor was, would normally manifest itself in the child. Beer would be brewed, and a lot of food prepared for the family and community to celebrate the birth and naming of a new baby. This process was explained by some of the participants who shared the following:

“The child was an incarnated ancestor, so it was important to let the ancestors decide whom among them was supposed to have their name on the child. Beer would be brewed, and chickens slaughtered for the naming ceremony.” (IKS28)

“As a family we would then go at the place of sacrifice (gandzelo) and then let the ancestor know that we were now naming the child after them.” (IKS14)

“The family would consult a Nyanga who would cast lots to determine the ancestor who wants to be named on the child. Once determined, then a naming ceremony through sacrifice to the ancestor at a tree of sacrifice (gandzelo) is done.” (IKS18)

The naming of children after the ancestors and the naming ceremonies as described by the participants is also found in the literature that describes the African worldview. Thus, the

naming of children in the Tsonga culture should be viewed taking into account their cultural context and social environment. The birth of a child has always found its place in the spiritual world of Africans; hence every birth was followed by a naming ceremony done as a ritual (Berg, 2001:34). In African societies, the name given to a child is in general anchored in the worldview of the people and the meaning attached to a name has a significant influence on several aspects of a person's life (Olatunji, Issah, Noah, Muhammed & Sulaiman, 2015:72). The influence of culture on naming is described by Agyekum (2001:211 in Olatunji et al., 2015:73) as follows:

[N]aming can be considered as a universal cultural practice; every human society in the world gives names to its newborn as tags majorly as a means of identification, but how the names are given, the practices and rituals involved, and the interpretations attached to the names differ from society to society and from one culture to another.

The participants furthermore explained the importance of instilling identity in Xitsonga-speaking children. This aspect will be discussed in the next theme.

- **Sub-theme 4.5: Instilling identity in children**

The research participants highlighted that the Xitsonga people place a strong emphasis on the formation of a personal, family and cultural identity in all children. Children are taught about their family history through recitals, poetry, initiation rituals and totems.

“Totem poetry is also central as a source of IKS in this area. Totem recitals and family tree recitals were key in helping children memorise their identity and origin.” (IKS13)

“Identity is also respected or fostered when they do those initiations where the child is given a Tsonga name of initiation and they are well respected in their society for being an initiated person.” (SWK7)

“We have family tree recitals where children are taught to memorise their genealogy starting from their name, to their father's name, their grandfather's name going on and on. It is through this practice that children internalised their genealogy. Close to this is the totem recitals; it is an important repository of family history. If you meet someone with the same totem as you, you are supposed to recite your totems and then compare any similarities differences in order to establish if you were related or not.” (IKS23)

“You also find IKS in traditional poetry such as recitals of family trees and recitals of totems which is key in instilling identity in the children. It is very easy to identify a lost child because you could only ask them to recite their totems and that would help you to quickly identify the family of a child. This practice also ensured that no marriage took place between family members who were not allowed to marry each other.” (IKS21)

The above quotes substantiate that participants viewed recitals of totems and genealogies, which form part of their IKS, as a practice through which children internalised their genealogy and instilled their identity and sense of belonging. Children are taught to memorise their family tree, starting from their name to their father's name, their grandfather's name, going on and on, following a patrilineal genealogy. Totems and genealogies are used to establish whether

one is related to one another or not, given that those sharing the same totem considered themselves as close relatives even if not bound by biological ties, and marriage among them was prohibited. Totem and family tree recitals are thus an important repository of family history.

The participants viewed totems and genealogies as an extended family phenomenon that has the advantage of creating a social safety net for the child, given that those who shared the same totem were obliged to look after each other. The father or the grandfather was responsible for teaching the boys their totem at a *bandla* (men's forum) whilst the mothers or grandmother taught the girls at their place of cooking. The adult asks the child to recite the totem or genealogy and correct the recital, where necessary, until the child could flawlessly recite his or her totem or genealogy to the end. This instilled ethnic and clan identity which made sure those children did not enter into incestual relationships out of ignorance. As mentioned by Participant IKS21, totem and family tree recitals also helped to allocate the family of a lost child.

One participant gave an example of genealogy recitals, captured below with actual names changed to maintain the confidentiality of the participant:

*"I am Dayani so as a child I would recite my lineage with an adult asking me
Wena hiwena mani?
Mina niDayani
Dayani wamani?
Dayaniwa Naison!
Naisonwamani?
Naisonwa Mzamani
Mzamani wamani?
Mzamani waMukhachana
Mukachana wamani?
Mukachani waLisenga
Lisenga wamani?
Lisenga waLismart?
Lismart wamani?
Lismart waMakasani
Makasani wamani?
You would go on and on until to the last fore-bearers such is part of our life." (IKS2)*

The above stanza asks the child to recite their genealogy through a question-and-answer segment. The questions revolve around asking the child to name the next patriarch in line until the last ancestor. In English, a short excerpt of this recital would translate as follows:

Who are you?
I am Dayani
Begotten by who?
Dayani son of Naison
Naison son of who?
Naison son of Mzamani.

Mabvurira and Makhubele (2018a:22) explain that totems have been used for centuries in indigenous African contexts. A clan adopts an animal associated with certain values and virtues to serve as a totem. The totem serves to express a collective identity and strengthen a social bond for the family. In the African worldview the importance of clans and family tree, as well as the priority placed on children knowing their family tree and history, is paramount (Magano, 2019:236). Persons who share a totem will provide mutual support to one another (Dondolo, 2005:119; Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:82). Totems denote a person's identity and cultural roots and can enhance children's self-esteem and cultural identity, which is especially valuable for children who have been orphaned. Totems and genealogy can therefore enhance identity and also bring stability in the life of a person (Magano, 2018:239-240; Morapedi, 2007-2008:48), which is of special importance in the lives of vulnerable children.

- **Subtheme 4.6: Rites of passage for boys and girls**

In this sub-theme, the researcher presents the key aspects that emerged in terms of the participants' views and lived experiences of rites of passage for Xitsonga-speaking boys and girls. The rites of passage rituals and ceremonies formed a significant part of child-rearing practices and served as a mentoring and counselling tool for the child.

"You know, in our culture, the 'Khomba' initiation system for both girls and boys is central to our IKS. You cannot talk of the Vatsonga of Zimbabwe without mentioning the 'Khomba' system. Boys went to their own 'Khomba' process, whereas the girls did the same they went to their process, but the two processes are both known as 'khomba,' only that of the girls is known as 'tikhomba ta vavasati' (girls' khomba system) and that of boys is known as 'tikhomba ta vavanuna' (men's khomba system)." (IKS2)

"I think what stands out is the male initiation ceremony and our female initiation ceremony. These stand out as good practice which taught our children what it is to be a Vatsonga man and woman." (IKS15)

"A Vatsonga child goes through the 'Khomba' system which is a nursing and nurturing basket. The boys went through their ceremony (ngoma) and girls went through their own (tikhomba tababasati). These puberty rites ceremonies equipped both girls and boys with life-long skills as well as sex and sexuality issues of the Vatsonga people." (IKS16)

"This 'Khomba' process also enhanced the child's sense of belonging and identity of being a Vatsonga. It was an opportunity for the child to reconnect with their identity." (IKS11)

"It gives a child an identity and a sense of belonging to the ethnic group and their family. It also made men respect women and women to respect men." (IKS19)

In terms of the processes followed, the participants shared that the initiation ceremonies for both boys and girls are normally done in winter. The ceremonies involve the initiates retreating into a secluded area where a trainer (*mudzhabhisi*) will take the boy or girl children through the curriculum. The boys are trained by male *mudzhabhisi*; likewise, the girls are trained by a female trainer. Traditionally, the initiation ceremonies for boys were not done annually but

were only done in a year when there was a bumper harvest; however, the initiation ceremonies for girls were done every year.

From the information shared by the IKS expert participants, the **rites of passage for girls** appeared to be more pronounced among the Vatsonga people in Zimbabwe and to be practised on a lower scale in Mozambique. Menstruation, and not age, was said to be a marker used for a girl child to qualify for initiation, hence it was widespread that one would have girls as young as twelve years attending initiation.

“For girls, we take them through some initiation ceremony, and I think that is an opportunity for the girl child to be mentored into a woman. Our children are growing up not knowing what they are expected to do in adulthood but through the ‘khomba’ initiations the girl child is taken through what it means to be a Vatsonga woman and what is expected of them in marriage.” (IKS27)

“We also have the initiation ceremony for girls which delayed sexual debut for girls. It protected them from those men who may want to have an affair with young girls because in Tsonga culture an uninitiated girl was regarded as too innocent to indulge in any sexual relationship. The initiation also taught the girl child Tsonga values which ensured that she was a responsible woman who knew that she was not supposed to be too close to men.” (IKS13)

“We do have female initiation as a puberty rite of passage to adulthood. Menstruation and not age as a marker for one to qualify for this initiation so you would have as young as twelve going for initiation which is a big problem and its fuelling child marriages. However, it is good when it comes to what the girls are taught. This ritual is an opportunity for girls to be taught about womanhood, respect and how to treat their husbands when they get married.” (IKS28)

Some participants cited the initiation of underage girls as a big problem and a chief driver promoting child marriages in the area. However, there was consensus that the initiation curriculum was beneficial in preparing girls for adult roles and to instil Tsonga values and virtues. During initiation, Vatsonga girls would be taught about aspects such as womanhood and marriage. It was also found that initiation ceremonies, if properly handled, can become a protective factor for girls. Children delayed their sexual debut because without graduating from the *khomba* system one was regarded as a child and not ready for sex. As such, the participants suggested that in traditional Tsonga life child sexual violence was minimal because men could not think of having a sexual relationship with a girl who was still to go through the *khomba* initiation ceremony.

The **rites of passage for boys** are also known as *khomba*; sometimes also known as *murundu*, *kuchina ngoma*, and *tikhomba ta vavanuna*. The initiation process ensured that boys accessed information on sexuality, clan history, and chores expected of them as boys and what the adult world expected of them when they become grown-up men. The initiation system also gave the initiates an identity because without going through the *khomba* system one was

not regarded as a true Vatsonga. The process involved Vatsonga boys going for circumcision and then retreat for the initiation process for about two months in the bush.

“Under the Tsonga culture and tradition, one was not a man unless they went through the initiation (kuyangomeni/kuchina ngoma/kurubha). This was done when we had good harvests, not yearly as is the case these days. It was done sometimes once in five years. So, the boys went into the bush for almost a month or two being mentored on what it is to be a Vatsonga man. As a woman, I do not have the details of exactly what other things or the content of their curriculum, which is not for discussion with women and non-initiated men. Our role as women there was to cook ‘sadza’ and other meals for the initiates and their mentors. Upon graduation the boys donned white cloth (cheka wobasa) and in their hands held a long stick, they then went around each homestead of the initiates where they were received with joy. Beer and a big meal were available for the celebrations.” (IKS1)

“The Khomba also gave respect to the initiates. Even during some village meetings, if a child who was circumcised stood up to speak, he was listened to and was given respect by fellow initiates and those who were non-initiates alike. But it does not mean that the initiated boy had all the power, no, they respected those who were initiated before them. Those seniors, even if they were of the same age as the newly initiated, those initiated many years ago was listened to and their counsel was considered seriously. The ‘Khomba’ system is the most revered practice in Tsonga.” (IKS5)

The participants shared that at the time of the research study the circumcision was done by government doctors as opposed to in the past when it was done by the elders. One of the participants mentioned that traditionally, the circumcision ceremony was not conducted with young boys:

“Back then we did not send young children to the initiation ceremony as what is happening now. They (now) send very young children who can just forget what we would have taught them during the circumcision ritual.” (IKS14)

As in the above quote, most of the participants explained that the purpose of the initiation was basically to mark transition from being a boy to being a man. Any initiated boy was considered an adult and could be consulted in matters affecting the family and village. Likewise, an uninitiated adult male was viewed as a minor, even though having children of his own.

The rites of passage were touted for instilling respect for both men and women in the society due to the ‘curriculum’ initiates are made to go through. A general theme that was raised by the participants was the role that male and female initiation played in teaching children responsible sexual behaviours, which would lower the risk of early sexual behaviour or sexual abuse of children.

“The initiation ceremonies which we spoke about negatively, if properly handled by way of ensuring that a child gets initiated at a later stage that has the capacity of protecting them against any sexual harm because they will be regarded as innocent and defiled (by sexual relationships) until they get purified through initiation to be a real woman who is now ready to be in a sexual relationship.” (IKS23)

“The ‘Khomba’ system which we do as Vatsonga is a way of instilling desired values and good behaviour. An initiated man or woman was expected to carry themselves

exceptionally hence to hear that an initiate has raped someone, that was a taboo; and if that happens, the punishment from the council of elders was severe so people would just avoid that.” (IKS2)

“The ‘Khomba’ system protected girls in many aspects, it ensured that before initiation they were considered as non-women so no one would dare have a relationship with such a child.” (IKS1)

“The female initiation in a way enhanced the protection of girl children because they were taught to refrain from any sexual relations ... On the other hand, true Vatsonga men would not have any sexual relations let alone forced sexual relations with a child who is not initiated.” (IKS29)

Male and female initiation rituals, as described by the participants, are performed by the majority of African communities as rites of passage marking the end of childhood (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:111; Giesinger, 2017:208-210). Thus, a person who fails to go through initiation rites is perceived as still a child despite them having reached the age of majority as prescribed in modern law of their country (Ndofirepi, 2013:89). In many African societies, initiation rituals and ceremonies are important for children’s socialisation into adulthood (Nwoye, 2017:54).

It should be noted that cultural practices, such as initiation practices, are often a contentious issue in human rights debates. In the context of child rights, harmful initiation practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is outlawed in the ACRWC, Article 21, which refers to children’s right to be protected from harmful cultural practices (African Union, 1990). In the context of child protection, UNICEF (2006:1) refers to child protection as “preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage.”

According to social constructionism, this conflict between traditional practices and modern legislation is based on the differences in constructions of social phenomena and social issues (Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71), for example of the concepts child, childhood and maltreatment. The legal framework in both Zimbabwe and Mozambique was found to be largely Eurocentric given its inclination to the CRC which has been increasingly viewed as a perpetuation of Eurocentric views on childhood (Briggs, 2005:103; Giesinger, 2017:208-210; Mkabela, 2014:287).

7.2.2.5 Theme 5: Indigenous ways of mentoring and socialising children

The participants explained that the family, including members of the extended family, are assigned the responsibility for the mentoring and socio-emotional support of Xitsonga-speaking children. The family members have the role of mentoring and supporting children and use methods guided by Tsonga IKS. These aspects will be discussed in the following sub-themes.

- **Sub-theme 5.1: Mentoring embedded in the Tsonga culture**

According to the participants, the Vatsonga people's cultural norms and practices are intended to socialise and support children. As discussed in Theme 4, the main socialisation institution in the Tsonga culture is the family, supported by the male and female initiation practices and the *bandla* (men's forum). In addition, the modelling of desired behaviours according to the Tsonga culture by parents, older siblings, members of the extended family and members of the community at large, is a general practice for socialising children. The lifestyle of the Vatsonga people is then in itself regarded as an education and a socialisation system.

"We valued education, but our education system was based on socialisation and some apprenticeship of some sort through the child being groomed by adults. So if I have a son they would learn by observing and doing what I will be doing; when it is hunting I would hunt with him, if it is constructing some huts I would construct with them and they will learn from that. They also learn through songs and games." (IKS17)

"Our cultural practices were an education on its own. Children have a variety of games to choose from. They could play 'Xinyambela' to teach them about courtship, they could play 'tigava' to teach them about adding and subtracting, they could be told folktales by their grandparents from which they would draw many lessons for life." (IKS19)

"The songs and games are the other form of school which the child was exposed to in a family. The mother, the father and the grandparents, as well as older siblings, were the teachers, and the child would learn from observing their conduct and also listen to their counsel." (IKS20)

"The child grew up being taught to love and live with others in harmony. This was done through storytelling, 'kulaya' (mentorship), and general upbringing. We brought up children who were full of humility through 'kulaya', children who would from time to time receive advice from their aunties and uncles." (IKS32)

Concluding from the above descriptions, as well as in information from earlier themes, the mentoring and socialisation of children in the Tsonga culture is based on a communal pattern of caregiving and grounded in indigenous collective values (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:85; Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29). It transpires that the indigenous methods of socialisation and education of Xitsonga-speaking children are more informal, including observation, myths, storytelling, songs and games. These methods of socialising and educating children are commonly used in traditional African societies, and are important sources of IKS (Bogopa, 2012:245; Mapara, 2009:140; Ossai, 2010:4; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1). In addition, the mentoring of children by certain members of the extended family (*kulaya*) was highlighted by the participants as a strong feature of the lifestyle of the Vatsonga people. The methods of educating and socialising children will be discussed in the following sub-themes.

- **Sub-theme 5.2: The mentoring system (*kulaya*)**

The participants explained that the Vatsonga people have a social system, the *kulaya*, which involves mentoring of children by members of the extended family and is still being followed

in their communities. Through *kulaya*, Xitsonga-speaking children receive mentoring, advice, and counselling for them to grow up according to the values and norms of their culture. Girls received mentoring and counselling mostly from their aunts, whilst uncles are mostly the mentors for boys.

“Our children were cultured through the ‘kulaya’ practice. Thus, children received advice and guidance from their aunties (hahani) and uncles (malume). A child was free to approach these people for advice and mentorship. ... That is another important practice of the Vatsonga people.” (IKS25)

“Then our family counselling system, the ‘kulaya’, is so helpful. It is the duty of aunties and uncles to from time to time sit down with children at various stages of their life and teach them what life entails and offer advice on various issues concerning life. If a child was a rogue one the people would not blame the child, they would always blame the child’s family for failing to offer good advice to the child. That is still in practice in this community.” (IKS12)

“Vatsonga children have access to a family counselling and advice system which is ongoing. This is known as ‘kulaya’. Every child would have someone whom they would confide in, normally an auntie, uncle, or a grandparent. This person’s role did not end at childhood, but it continued right into adulthood and married life. From time to time you would approach this person for advice and guidance on any matter.” (IKS38)

“Cultural practices are also part of our IKS. This includes practices such as ‘kulaya’ where aunties counsel the children to prepare them for adult life. This ‘kulaya’ practice ensured that we produced well-cultured children, children who respected their elders, and helped out their elders with various chores.” (IKS21)

The research findings on the *kulaya* practice described in the quotes above, confirm the close involvement of the members of the extended family in the lives of Xitsonga-speaking children. Especially aunts play a central role as role models, teachers, and as children’s confidante (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2006:483; Ndlovu & Hove, 2015:102). As mentioned by the participants, the aunts and uncles were socially sanctioned with the roles of mentors and counsellors to Xitsonga-speaking girls and boys respectively, to the extent that the family would be blamed for wrongdoing by the children.

Research on mentoring of adolescents found that mentoring by non-parental adults, whether occurring naturally or in mentoring programmes, resulted in positive outcomes for the adolescents (Ssewamala, Nabunyab, Mukasaa, Ilica & Nattabia, 2014:2). The positive effects are seen to be derived from three interrelated processes during mentoring: promoting young people’s emotional well-being and social relationships, enhancing their cognitive skills as part of the discussions and instructions, and the mentor serving as a positive role model (Moodie & Fischer, 2009 in Ssewamala et al., 2014:1). All these processes seem to be evident in the descriptions in the quotes above. The *kulaya* system provides evidence of the value of informal social support networks that are still found in African societies, that can serve as safety networks for children (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:85, 89).

- **Sub-theme 5.3: Poetry and totem recitals**

The participants explained the use of poetry and totem recitals as methods to socialise and teach children according to Tsonga IKS. As discussed in Sub-theme 4.5, the Tsonga parenting system strives to instil a sense of identity and belonging in a child through totem recitals and other poetry related to family history. The participants indicated that poetry and totem recitals were also used as an indigenous method to socialise children by highlighting praiseworthy qualities in people.

“We have poetry, either praise poetry for a hunter or a child who would have done well; poetry for our totems and clan names which are recited for identification with other ethnic groups.” (IKS9)

“The poetry includes totem recitals. The totem recitals were taught to children at a young age and you grew up reciting those from time to time. At old age totems and poetry was recited when you meet someone who would have the same totem as yours and you want to establish if you are related or not. They were also recited to thank a person who might have done well, this included maybe a hunter after returning home with some meat or if your child excels in school, you have to recite their totem poem to thank them.” (IKS10)

“Reciting of totems and the family tree was done as a poem of some sort, so poetry is another source where you can learn our IKS, my son.” (IKS3)

Poetry is an established figurative way of expression in the African oral tradition and is used in different contexts such as ceremonies and healing practices (Makgopa & Koma, 2009:147-148). A totem adopts a certain animal, based on symbolic value and virtues such as certain strengths related to the lion as a totem (Magano, 2018:240; Pfukwa, 2014 in Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:82). In this way, poetry and totem recitals can be used to enhance children’s self-esteem or model positive behaviour (Magano, 2018:239-240).

- **Sub-theme 5.4: Children’s songs, games and dances**

Tsonga indigenous childrearing methods also include the utilisation of children’s songs, games and dances to ensure that the child masters certain desired social skills and developmental milestones. Some of these activities are aimed at children knowing their siblings and family history as well as engaging in physical activities to live a healthy life. In addition, the children’s games, songs and dances kept them occupied and taught them about life. As children grow older, songs and games are used to teach them about courtship. Furthermore, songs, games, and dances were also used to transmit IKS to the younger generation.

“Songs, games, and dances are also the main sources of our IKS, they are the vehicles through which IKS is passed from one generation to another. It is through songs and folktales that knowledge about the values of the Vatsonga was transmitted from one generation to another.” (IKS7)

“Rich in our culture are the songs, we have songs for every occasion, songs for sombre moods and songs for joy, spiritual songs and non-spiritual songs, and these songs also carry a message be it of hope or a teaching or a rebuke or just a message of encouragement.” (IKS32)

“We also have children’s games like ‘tigava, xinombela, mbalembale’, among other games. Some of these games were played during the evenings like ‘xinombela’ (a courtship game) and then things like ‘tigava’ were played during the day. These games were school unto itself. The games taught our children different lessons.” (IKS21)

“These [games] ... are the child’s school. It educates, it entertains and at the same time it contributes to the child’s physical development because they run, they jog and they do many sorts of things during their play and leisure time, that gives the child various benefits.” (IKS29)

“Several children’s games like ‘tigava’ actually taught children to count and many games replenished the children’s mind, so you can see that we had an education system with a unique curriculum.” (IKS26)

The participants explained that some of the games such as *mbale-mbale*, *tigava*, and *pada* are mind teasers and that many games involve solving some mathematical problem of some sort. Some games, dances and songs were meant to inculcate human values and ethics upon children whilst some were simply meant to make children relax and be happy or simply enjoy the company of their siblings and create bonding. Some participants mentioned the following song and game where children will be singing the names of their siblings memorising their siblings’ names:

*Ahiyenin’wanamhani!
Ahe! Ahiyenin’wanamhanikiriva!
Mhlomulin’wanamhani!
Ahe! Ahiyenin’wanamhanikiriva!
Usiwanan;wanamhani!
Aheahiyenin’wanamhanikiriva!
Kufamunin’wanamhani!
Ahe! Ahiyenin’wanamhaniKiriva! (IKS37)*

In English, this song could be summarised as follows:

*“Let us go my sibling!
Yes, let us go my sibling!
Mhlomuli my sibling!
Yes, let us go my sibling!
Usiwana my sibling!
Yes, let us go my sibling!”*

Xinyambela was popular with many of the participants in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe as one of the songs that teach children about courtship. Those participants who were asked to sing the *Xinombela* songs, sang it as follows:

*“Xinyambelavatekanahivushaka! (Repeated several times)
Heleximakweru!” (Repeated several times)*

In English, this song translates to:

“Xinyambela it’s the game of the relatives!
Here you are, my sister!”

Another courtship song was as follows:

“*Gangiri we Ganga! (x2)*
Gaanga wako! (x2)
Loyi animulavi nilava loyi! (x2)
Ganga wako! (x2)”

In English, the song translates to:

“Can I propose you!
Propose yours!
I do not love this one but that one!
Propose yours!”

What was said to be central to children’s songs and play, is that children’s play will always happen under close supervision and in proximity of the adults during any time of the day. Those games which were played during the night such as courtship games were supposed to be done during moonlight and closer to homesteads to ensure safety.

The value that the participants assign to songs, games and dance as media for education, and not only for entertainment and relaxation, is echoed in the literature. Of the most characteristic features of African songs, is that they contain positive messages such as humanism, cooperation and participation that encourage hard work; that they have a call and response pattern, which teaches cooperation and respect; and that they contain idioms and expressions that develop children’s acquisition of their language (Nompula, 2011:92). Furthermore, dance and games enhance children’s mathematical skills as well as social skills such as cooperation and kindness (Magano, 2018:240). Although the importance of song, dance and games in the African worldview is significant, these forms of IKS are threatened with extinction (Bogopa, 2012:245; Stears, 2008:136).

- **Sub-theme 5.5: Storytelling, myths and legends**

According to the participants, storytelling formed a significant educational medium to teach Xitsonga-speaking children about various aspects of life, including the values of *ubuntu*, caring, love and compassion, among the many desirable values and virtues underlying the Tsonga culture. The stories exposed children to the ‘first school’ before they entered formal schooling. Thus, by the time they go to a formal school, they would have learnt skills such as listening skills through folktales.

“*So, stories were part of our education system. We would tell those stories during the night and the stories had significant meaning and moral lessons with them.*” (IKS30)

“The use of storytelling was important in entertaining and educating children. It was a medium of transmitting our culture to our children. The stories helped children learn the expectations of the community on them as children and what they were expected to do once they transitioned to adulthood.” (IKS12)

“These stories were a conduit through which IKS is passed from one generation to another. We learnt a lot from the stories, they were not just meant to entertain us but they were also meant to be a school on its own, teaching us what life is and what a Vatsonga person should do and what are the values of the Vatsonga people. All these you find in stories which constitute a big chunk of our IKS.” (IKS22)

“our rich oral tradition. We have a lot of stories which we were told when growing up to educate us on various life issues, we also have myths and legends sometimes just meant to ensure that we do not go against the wisdom of the elders.” (IKS38)

“That traditional songs and traditional stories are sources of IKS of the Vatsonga people. The stories and songs mirror the whole belief system of the Vatsonga and is a way of transmitting that belief and value system to another generation.” (IKS26)

Storytelling is a common practice in indigenous and many African communities (Dumbrill & Green, 2008:492; Magano, 2018:239). The research findings show that storytelling was not only used for entertainment for children but played a central role in teaching Xitsonga-speaking children on aspects such as life skills and social values and norms. For many African children, the models of good behaviour found in folktales guide their moral development and character formation (Olojede, 2014:3, 7). As mentioned by the participants, storytelling was furthermore used as a medium to transmit Tsonga IKS to the younger generation. IKS is known as being transmitted orally (Ossai, 2010:2) and, in this sense, storytelling is described by Kpanake (2018:201) as “core cultural media” for African children.

- **Sub-theme 5.6: Role or fantasy play**

The participants described that among the Vatsonga people, role or fantasy play, known in vernacular as *madzumba*, was viewed as enhancing children’s well-being and helping them to understand adult roles. Role plays were especially done by the younger children who were still too young to be doing productive household chores.

“The role plays, ‘madzumba’, enhanced the child’s well-being. It was a vehicle of socialisation and grooming given to a child to learn and comprehend adult roles. Children would go to their play centre normally just a few metres from the huts. They would allocate themselves roles such as mother, father, child, dog, cat among other roles, and then act out what they see adults do in real life. They would cook, plough, weed among many other things which they would do acting out real life in their community.” (IKS11)

“This (transmission of knowledge) was through various means but largely through word of mouth, apprenticeship whereby we watched the adults do it and would mimic them starting at kindergarten age where we will mimic the adult roles through role plays (madzumba) and to the level where we could do the actual tasks with the adults, watching until we can do exactly as them. ... They would make clay pots and animals and even cook. They would mimic our normal routine as a family.” (IKS6)

“The younger children during the day would do their role plays. So, on playing, Tsonga culture has room for children to play and have fun.” (IKS34)

“When it comes to role plays, (madzumba) they played near but at least a distance where they can do their things undisturbed but under the watch of adults.” (IKS5)

“Another IKS which I think enhances the well-being of Vatsonga children is our games. ... they would do some madzumba (role plays) and play whilst learning various roles for adult life.” (IKS7)

In the literature, role play is described as a familiar activity for children in African society (Mutema, 2013:60). During the role-play, children imitate adult roles such as those of the father and mother, and imitate what they see being practiced by adults in preparing food, preserving it, serving it, worship and other practices done by adults.

In concluding this theme on the indigenous ways of the Vatsonga of mentoring and socialising their children, note can be taken of the statement by Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) on the African indigenous ways of mentoring and socialising children. These authors note that viewing the traditional ways of teaching as simplistic overlooks the rich complexities involved in traditional educational activities such as storytelling, poetry, music, songs and dance (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:2). From the research findings described in the different sub-themes, it is clear that these activities were not only used for entertainment purposes but had a strong focus on teaching children aspects such as language, mathematical skills, social skills, and cultural norms and values.

By using methods such as storytelling, songs, dance, and poetry that contain moral messages, African children acquire virtues such as integrity, modesty, patience and perseverance, amongst others (Nwoye, 2017:54-55). Many of these desired characteristics of children relate to the principles of *ubuntu*, which underlies the African worldview of communal care and well-being (Hlongwane et al., 2018:62; Mkabela, 2015:287; Thabede, 2008:233). The socio-cultural competencies that were described by the participants as the desired outcomes of the mentoring and socialisation of children, clearly explains the concept of the “cultural model of virtue” (Levine & Norman, 2001 in Quinn & Mageo, 2013:21). The cultural model of virtue will determine the competencies that are regarded as desirable within a certain culture. In this sense, the ecological systems theory emphasises the influence of culture on child-rearing practices and the desired outcomes for the child (Louw et al., 2014:30).

7.2.2.6 Theme 6: Dealing with adversity and social problems

Theme 6 focuses on the research findings related to how the Vatsonga people deal with adversity and social problems within the context of their culture and IKS. From the various views that were put forward during the interviews, themes on a justice framework based on traditional leadership and the family conference as a way of dealing with social issues

emerged, which will be discussed as sub-themes. Further sub-themes will contain information on other prominent aspects found in the data, namely reparations for wrongdoing and dealing with problems such as child abuse. The research findings presented in Theme 6 will be discussed from the perspectives of the participants, thus in line with the concepts underling social constructionism

- **Sub-theme 6.1: Tsonga IKS provides a justice framework**

It emerged from the research findings that the Tsonga IKS carries in it a particular justice system to resolve disputes and execute justice among the Vatsonga people.

“IKS also provided a justice framework for the wronged. You see in the case that there was a bad person in this community who would harm the child, the matter was reported to the traditional leader; he (the perpetrator) would be heavily fined and made to pay reparations to the family, unlike the modern justice where you pay to the state. Is the state the one wronged? Why should the perpetrator be locked in jail and the survivors and their family are left without anything to hold on (something tangible) as a ‘sorry’ from the perpetrator? Before they are locked up, our IKS demanded that they pay for their sins, they pay the chief, they pay the community, and they pay the wronged family.” (IKS8)

“The Tsonga IKS provides a justice framework which have stood the test of time, however this system appears to be a harbour of child abuse as cases may be settled through consensus of the elders without the perpetrator getting justice. Like the issue of child abuse cases which finds itself to the traditional leaders’ court, which hampers child rights because the traditional leader does not use the constitution or any modern law; they use their traditional wisdom and IKS to adjudicate on the cases.” (SWK1)

As described in by participant IKS8, it is evident that the Tsonga traditional justice system deal with transgressions by community members, where decisions are made based on the cultural customs and traditions (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25; Shutte, 2001:28). In Sub-Saharan Africa, traditional justice systems are still widely recognised to deal with the problems and concerns of local communities (Makhubele, 2008:42; United Nations, 2016:1, 11). The information provided by the participant shows the influence that their IKS and cultural values, norms and traditional practices still has on how the Tsonga communities deal with adversity and social problems such as child abuse. However, the social work participant questioned the role of the traditional justice system in cases of child abuse in which the country’s legal system must be applied. Authors such as Katiuzhinsky and Okech (2014:81) acknowledge this situation in which social workers must uphold human rights and at the same time be sensitive to local cultural contexts.

The traditional Tsonga justice system was described as strict and functioned according to specified procedures, in which the **traditional leaders and village chiefs** played a prominent role.

“Traditionally we would report to the local village head. Even today we report to him then proceed to report to the police. But in Tsonga tradition, the village head would deal with

such issues and when they feel that the issue was of a big magnitude they would refer it to the area headman until it would reach the chief if need be. Some trivial abuse cases were dealt with at a family level, the elders would just rebuke whosoever was wrong.” (IKS20)

“The traditional leadership also played a part in less serious child abuse cases that could be dealt with at the family level, things like beating the child severely. Normally the grandparents would chip in and rebuke the child’s parents and normally the grandparents were supposed to be given a gift as a sign of remorse by the wrongdoer.” (IKS17)

Another way in which the traditional chieftaincy ensured that the community members abide by the rules, was the use of corporal punishment. This was a harsh punishment that deterred people from crime, however, children would not be subjected to this form of punishment.

“Traditional chieftaincy and how they ensured that errant citizens were kept in check ... sometimes through corporal punishment, the chiefs would use a sjambok (a whip made of animal hide) to administer corporal punishment on wrongdoers including those who took other people’s wives or abuse of children. The punishment was severe, and it deterred people from repeating the same crime. ... A child was not subjected to severe punishment by the chief, it was the parent of the child who would appear before the chief and get fined on behalf of their child, however, the parent would then discipline their child later at home.” (IKS30)

As in the above statements, various participants pointed out that Vatsonga traditional leaders played a pivotal role in dealing with offences against children in areas of their jurisdiction. The traditional leadership structure was composed of various layers and levels, beginning at the level of the village head, and escalating to the headmen and the chief up to the paramount chief. Chigwata (2016:72) describes the traditional justice structure as comprising of a village head who is at the bottom of the traditional leadership structure, reporting to a sub-chief (headman) who reports to the chief; hence, the chief and in some instances a paramount chief is at the helm of the structure. Also, when the involved parties were not happy with the ruling by the village head, the first level to receive and adjudicate over matters, they would appeal to a higher level.

Of interest is that the whole process was an adult affair with the child minimally involved. However, the child victim would receive emotional support from family members.

“Maybe if I can add that in our traditional justice proceedings a child if they do something wrong that warranted the chief to prosecute, it was not the child who was prosecuted but the family of the child. So, the prosecution was for adults, not the child. A parent was prosecuted on behalf of a child; it was up to the parent to then discipline their child later.” (IKS22)

“Life continues, she (the victim of abuse) will be in the family and the aunties and uncles would counsel and comfort her.” (IKS40)

“The child would receive consolation, advice and counselling from the responsible adults like aunties and uncles whilst the perpetrator was being tried by the traditional court or the two families were negotiating for a deal.” (IKS38)

The views of participants from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, of which the above quotes are examples, succinctly summarise the research findings on the traditional Tsonga justice system. The Tsonga justice system does not approach the perpetrator as an individual but the whole family is considered a perpetrator. The only time that perpetrators are treated as an individual is when they are a member of the family and they have committed the violence against a member of their own family. In addition, some participants explained that traditional leaders were guided by the need for restoration, cohesion, and unity in coming up with their judgments. The collectivist approach of subordinating individuals to group goals and interests was also found in the literature in which authors emphasise that the African worldview is underpinned by the interconnectedness of persons (Mkabela, 2015:287; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013:83-84). The apparent lack of participation by children who are victims of transgressions reflects information in the literature that put blame on indigenous African communities for not upholding children's participation rights (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108; Collins, 2017:15; Gal, 2017:63).

Furthermore, it appears as not all cases of wrongdoing were reported to the traditional authorities, but that some families would rather report such matters to a so-called witch doctor or *nyanga*.

“Traditional leadership was key in dealing with these matters, but some families would seek the intervention of the spirit world. They would just approach a ‘nyanga’ who would sort that family so that they are plagued by misfortune as a way of punishing them for their bad behaviour.” (IKS40)

“So when such things happen, the adults would consult a ‘nyanga’ who would either consult the spirits for an explanation or just cast lots (tihlolo) so that he gets the explanation and it was normal that if in the community there was any child molester or abuser who would have angered the ancestors, that would come to light and the perpetrator would be brought to book and the community asked for forgiveness as a collective.” (IKS6)

Social work participants viewed the role of the traditional leaders in child abuse cases in a negative way. They accused traditional leaders of sweeping child abuse cases under the carpet upon receiving some reparations and fines. In this respect, the social workers mentioned that their interventions had to be guided by legislation.

“Most importantly I administer the Children’s Act of 2008 which is the major child protection law in this country so I use that more often; I can say almost on a daily basis.” (SWK2)

“I use the Children’s Act of July 2008, which is the major law that I interact with on a daily basis as I work with children, remember I am placed in this department entirely to protect children.” (SWK4)

Taking into account the differences that can occur between traditional justice systems and modern legislation, it must be noted that traditional justice systems are still prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa and recognised in some countries (United Nations, 2016:1, 11, 17). However,

as perceived by the social work participants, traditional courts could cover up cases of child maltreatment, which would not be allowed by the country's legislation. The United Nations (2016:17) point out that the proceedings followed by traditional justice systems are aimed at reconciliation and harmony (United Nations, 2016:17). From the perspective of Mupedziswa et al. (2019:24), African traditional justice systems are guided by the values of *ubuntu*, which is a beneficial aspect of these justice systems.

One of the characteristics of protective environments for children is proposed as a fitting legislative framework in support of child protection (Child Frontiers, 2012:6-7). Therefore, the potential of collaboration between traditional justice systems and the formal justice system must not be overlooked as is, for example, made provision for in the South African Children's Act 38 of 2005. In articles 70 and 71 of the mentioned Act, the children's court may refer certain matters related to child well-being to be followed up by an appropriate lay forum, including a traditional authority, to settle matters through mediation out of court. This is not the case with Zimbabwe and Mozambique with child protection laws limiting child protection cases to be handled by formal court systems.

- **Sub-theme 6.2: Family conferences**

The participants explained that, according to traditional Tsonga practices, family conferences would be implemented in cases where there were violations against the child reported to the family elders. The family would then sit down to deliberate on whether to solve those challenges at a family-to-family level or to resort to the traditional leaders. It is upon failure to find solutions to resolve the matter at the family conference level that the matter was then referred to the traditional leaders for processing. The family conferences were the concerns of adults; thus, children were not allowed to attend the meetings. However, initiated children were sometimes admitted into these family conferences because they were regarded as adults.

"As a people, we sit down when there are issues in the family or the village, we sit as a forum (bandla), you find this in our culture." (IKS40)

"Children do not participate in family conferences when they take place. It is us, the adults, who sit down and make decisions. Children can only come to bring water or food to the elders or come to collect the plates after a meal, not to sit and deliberate in a family conference. The elders would sit down and look at the matter and deliberate on the issue until a resolution was made." (IKS34)

"No, that is the world of adults because it is serious business. Remember, even women are normally not admitted in that conference what more about children." (IKS19)

"For children to do what? That was not their space, it was for family adults especially we the men and of course aunties sometimes were called in to be part of the conference. But it was a male affair, so in case of the Vatsonga the family conference was the 'bandla' there

was no other conference. ... Those (initiated children) were no longer children. Remember, once initiated one was an adult.” (IKS14)

From the research findings, it was further established that when a child was orphaned, the Vatsonga people do not utilise a family conference, but the child was free to go to any family member within the extended family. However, grandparents were the most favoured when in kinship care of orphans.

“In Tsonga culture, the family conference was not convened solely for such purpose. One would just volunteer, if it is my sister they would just communicate and agree with their husband and then take the child. If it is my brother, likewise they would just communicate to their wife that there is a need to take the child and look after them. Yes, I can personally share what happened to me when my parents passed on. My father’s sister (auntie) just took me into his family once both my parents passed on and they looked after me until I was a grown-up man, no conference was convened to discuss my issue. Family conferences only thrives where there is unity within the extended family; if there was no unity it just took a volunteer to take the child.” (IKS15)

“In Tsonga culture, it does not need a family conference to decide that. Any well-wisher in the extended family will just express that they were taking the child. If the child was mistreated others would see it and take the child or the child themselves can see that they are not comfortable in that family and then move on to another member of the extended family.” (IKS34)

As with the traditional judicial system described in Sub-theme 6.1, social work participants expressed concern that family conferences in both Zimbabwe and Mozambique was a conduit for child abuse cases being swept under the carpet once the family of the violated the child received some form of reparations. In addition, family conferences were criticised largely by social workers on the non-involvement of the child in the conference, which was regarded as putting the interests of the adults above the interests of the child.

“In communities when an abuse happens, especially sexual abuse and child marriages, the perpetrator can hide within the cultural practices of the community and choose to have his matter heard by the traditional leaders who will then fine him some goats and the two families reconcile. In this case, it is the families in other words adults choosing to reconcile yet the child is abused. We are fighting that, and many communities are reforming. They now know that statutory cases are handled by the magistrate courts, not by them, theirs is to identify such cases and refer.” (SWK1)

“When it comes to decision making in a family conference that is a preserve of parents, including members of the entire extended family. Thus, the voice of the child during family conferences is mute as adults make decisions without consulting the child.” (SWK6)

Family conferences can be a way to generate resources in communities and can serve as an extension of formal services (Walker, 2012, Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008 in Lombard, 2019b:400). Family and personal matters such as inheritance, family violence, divorce and childcare are firstly dealt with by the extended family. Matters that cannot be resolved within this forum will be referred to the local chief and the elders, or to public service providers such as social workers (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008 in Lombard, 2019b:400). For social workers,

family group conferences have been identified as an important tool to empower families and work in partnerships with them to make decisions on the care of vulnerable children that are responsive to family and cultural contexts (Barn & Das, 2016:942). In terms of cultural competence, family group conferences contain five key areas: the consideration of the cultural context; acknowledgment of local cultural traditions; acknowledgement of the community, their language and the role of the family elders in convening the family conference; community education; and raising awareness (Waites et al., 2004 in Barn & Das, 2016:946).

The concern expressed by the social work participants should be noted in light of the example shared by Shumba and Moorad (2000 in Rapholo & Makhubele, 2018:311) that in some cultures the stipulations on human rights provided in legislation are dismissed as ideas that are foreign to the culture. In South Africa, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 in Article 70 makes provision for family group conferences set up under the guidance of a suitably qualified person to deal with matters brought before the children's court. However, as stipulated in Article 71, lay forums "may not be held in the event of a matter involving the alleged abuse or sexual abuse of a child." In Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the Children's Act does not accommodate the use of lay forums in child protection cases.

- **Sub-theme 6.3: Reparation for wrongdoing**

The participants explained that the traditional Tsonga justice system involved the payment of reparations, *kuriha* and *kurihapfuko*, depending on the nature of a case. *Kuriha* was described by the participants as a general payment of damages, whilst *kurihapfuko* refers to the payment of damages associated with wanting to appease the spirits of a wronged deceased person who will haunt perpetrators if they disregard the payments. The research findings show that traditionally these payments largely involved using girls as a form of payment, which is a violation of child rights as protected in local child laws of both Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The following quotes provide information on the practice of *kuriha*:

"Normally the perpetrator would not be treated as an individual but their whole family would be treated as perpetrators and when the penalty was given that was handed down to the whole family. Likewise, the reparations would be paid to the whole family of the wronged child. ... Some families still do that, even with violations of child rights, but it is being discouraged as the government has taken over the administration of such issues." (IKS29)

"This was our justice, very fair in my view unlike what happens now that the perpetrator when found guilty, pay the government money as a fine and the wronged go empty-handed. In Tsonga the wronged must receive a payment, the traditional leader receives a payment as well and the community at large would also receive a portion through some goats which the perpetrator would be fined and that were slaughtered for the people to eat." (IKS37)

"Now people just report to the police but traditionally, not long ago, the matter would be reported to the traditional chief and the concerned parties would come for negotiations at the chief's court (bandla). Normally the perpetrator would be asked to repay the aggrieved family and also be fined some goats for the chief and their court members." (IKS38)

“... for us, our justice is based on consensus and building and repairing broken relations between the perpetrator and the victim’s family. So, in doing so we fine the perpetrator in a way that they give some livestock not only to the chief but to the wronged family and we also give room for the perpetrator and his family to approach the survivor’s family for a settlement of which if they reach a settlement the chief can just endorse that and just fine the perpetrator for profaning the chief’s area.” (IKS22)

As evident from the quotes, the practice of *kuriha* was perceived by the participants as one that was more reasonable than modern law, as it showed fairness to the victims and aggrieved family. The reparations were paid as a form of fine for wrongdoing to the wronged family and the practice of *kuriha* was normally done through payment of livestock. This form of reparations is intended to empower the wronged family as opposed to when the state is the one who receives a fine as is the case in modern justice systems.

The above views reflect the traditional African perspective that the whole family and sometimes the community are affected by criminal acts, rather than only the individuals involved (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:32). Banks (2011:169, 182-183) notes that some authors link the above practices to the practice of restorative justice in Western contexts in that it promotes aspects such as social harmony and the healing of the victim, the offender and the community.

The participants described reparations to a wronged family especially in cases of murder through the practice of *kuriha pfuko* (reparation as atonement for the dead).

“We also have ‘kurihapfuko’, a practice where a family that would have wronged another family uses a young girl to pay off their wrong-doing to the wronged family. This girl was normally taken as a slave of that family and when she was grown up, she was then taken as a wife by one of the men in that family. We normally consult the deceased in the wronged family to decide who should marry that girl. ... This practice was done if a family member died because of murder or some witchcraft. So, their spirit would come back and haunt the family of the murderer; not necessarily the murderer but the whole family of the murderer could be afflicted by sickness or any misfortune. Upon consulting a witch doctor (‘nyanga’) the spirit of the dead would speak to the living through the nyanga and demand that they wanted reparations in the form of a young virgin girl.” (IKS21)

“The reparations of avenging spirit using girls is a bad practice which should be discontinued. On this one I agree with the government that it should be discontinued; it is a bad practice.” (IKS34)

The participants indicated that *kuriha pfuko* as part of the Tsonga IKS was done either through paying cattle to the wronged family or by giving a virgin girl to the wronged family. The form and amount of payment were determined by the deceased whose spirit would come alive through the *nyanga* who would act as a medium for the spirit of the dead to speak to the living. The chosen girl had no option but to go to that family as a slave. This practice violated child rights, as mentioned by Participant IKS34, and could thus be considered as a harmful cultural

practice. However, another participant, Participant IKS35, mentioned that these practices were very rare in modern-day times, as the government “is against it and preaches against it.”

As stipulated in the CRC (OHCHR, 1989), Article 24, Section 3, as well as in the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), Article 21, State Parties must take responsibility to protect children against harmful traditional social and cultural practices. However, it appears that many harmful practices are still infringing on African children’s rights to protection due to the values and norms of some African cultures (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:108; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28; UNICEF, 2017:17). Therefore, child protection advocates should increase their focus on the protection rights of all children in the Sub-Saharan region (Davis et al., 2012:31).

- **Sub-theme 6.4: Interventions in cases of child maltreatment**

Many of the IKS experts who participated in the study alluded to the effectiveness of the traditional Tsonga measures for the protection of children.

“We had no abuses that much in those days. Things like rape for example was a taboo in this area ... How can one rape a child given the strong and punitive traditional justice systems which we had?” (IKS34)

“Sexual abuse was an abomination, it was not so common, even nowadays we go years without any case of child sexual abuse. But in the case that something like that happened we report to the traditional leader who would convene a council to prosecute a perpetrator.” (IKS2)

“Traditionally, the traditional leadership would handle it. They would bring the two families together because in Tsonga (culture) a perpetrator is not treated as an individual but the whole family was treated as such. So, if the perpetrator was found guilty the family would have to pay the wronged family (kuriha).” (IKS37)

“The traditional leadership would deal with those issues; it was their duty to ensure that we lived in peace and no child was abused. ... We still have people who report to the traditional leadership whilst some go straight to the police to report.” (IKS16)

“Traditionally we would report to the local village head, even today we report to him then proceed to report to the police. But in Tsonga tradition, the village head would deal with such issues and when they feel that the issue was of a big magnitude they would refer it to the area headman until it would reach the chief, if need be. Some trivial abuse cases were dealt with at a family level, the elders would just rebuke whosoever was wrong. We also take such perpetrators of child abuse to the council of the initiates who know how to deal with such perpetrators, both ‘shovori’ (a non-initiate) and ‘murubi (the initiate). They would punish them for profaning Tsonga values.” (IKS20)

One participant furthermore explained that traditionally there would be no formal investigation into alleged child abuse, as the child in such instances is free to leave the home and live with members of the extended family.

“What investigation do you need more than having the child deserting that family to choose to live with another family? There was no investigation; one would just take the child in. Remember, the child was free to go to any family member within the extended family. Even my children, if they want to go and stay with my relatives they just go they do not need to

first request them that they want to come and live with them, they are entitled to live with them as relatives. But that does not mean that we were not monitoring how the orphaned child was treated, we monitored, the community also kept an eye, so is the traditional leadership.” (IKS30)

However, some participants were sceptic about the protection of children by the traditional Tsonga justice system and were of the opinion that, although the Tsonga culture has systems of dealing with child abuse, some of them exposed children to further abuse. One participant mentioned that the *kulaya* or mentoring system in the Tsonga culture could lead to child abuse cases not being reported to the relevant authorities.

“The challenge is that if a child reports to their auntie or uncle (who is a mentor) that they were molested by a close relative, the auntie or uncle may silence the child.” (IKS23)

“The chances of just rebuking the person in favour of protecting the existing family ties are very high because we value kinship ties hence sometimes when something bad is done by a family member we choose to forgive them and mend relationships.” (IKS33)

With the interventions related to child maltreatment according to the Tsonga culture, the research findings indicate that most of the IKS expert participants regarded the traditional justice system as a strong deterrent for child abuse. Therefore, child maltreatment was reported as a phenomenon that was unfamiliar in indigenous Tsonga communities. However, some aspects of the system, as in the example of the mentoring system, could encourage a culture of silence on matters related to child abuse. In cultures that support a communal or collectivist worldview, such as the Vatsonga, individual interests play a subordinate role to the communal interests and the needs of the family thus supersede those of the individual (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Magano, 2018:239; Mkabela, 2014:285). In a study on the influence of culture on the disclosure of child sexual abuse, Ramphabana et al. (2019:183) concluded that African values amongst families, such as the value of family relationships, patriarchal practices and taboos around sexual abuse, could contribute to non-disclosure of child sexual abuse.

7.2.2.7 Theme 7: Perceptions related to children’s rights

The core focus of this study was on the role of IKS in child protection. In this theme, the researcher will discuss four sub-themes that emerged from the research findings that relate to children’s protection rights: children’s rights to basic care, their rights to education, practices in the Tsonga culture related to discipline, and practices related to childhood responsibilities.

- **Sub-theme 7.1: Children’s right to have their basic needs met**

As explained by the participants, children’s rights for the Vatsonga people relate to the provision of basic care and allowing children the freedom to play. This view of rights largely correlates with the views expressed on child well-being, as discussed in Sub-theme 3.3.

“Clothes, the child has a right to be clothed, well clothed. They should also have food and have respect for their elders. To me, that is my understanding of rights.” (IKS35)

“It includes the right to shelter, freedom, the child should be free to play, they should play with others. More so, they should have food. These are important rights among the Vatsonga but nowadays some of us have added education to those rights.” (IKS40)

“They care for them, they provide basic rights to the child, like food, shelter and the right to play.” (IKS35)

“Generally, in Tsonga (culture), a child has access to food, clothing, shelter, and play; this is key, and we do not discriminate. Every child in the homestead gets this.” (IKS33)

“The right to shelter is another right which was so pronounced among the Vatsonga. There is a distinct hut for boys and another one for girls and their mothers that ensured that children accessed shelter. The right to food is yet another important right, children of the same age ate from the same plate to ensure that no child was left behind. That also fostered bonding and unity among the children, and they grew up together knowing that they were a family. Finally, I would share that the right to play is another right observed by the Vatsonga. During the day the children do their role plays (madzumba) and during the night they played various games among them (Xinyambela).” (IKS16)

The above descriptions indicate that the Vatsonga people largely view children’s rights in terms of their provision rights. Children’s provision rights, which are also referred to as children’s rights to survival and development, focus on meeting their basic needs (Staller, 2008 in Conley, 2010:41). The research findings show that there was a narrow focus on provision rights, with no mention of participation and protection rights. The association of child rights with their right to provision was also found in other studies on the African continent that investigated the realisation of children’s rights (Redmond, 2006:3, 15-16). However, Kaime (2005:232) argues that a child’s right to survival and development is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of all other rights of the child, which links with the discussion in Chapter 5 of the research report that children’s provision, protection and participation rights cannot be seen in isolation.

The nexus between the provision and protection rights of children is often discussed in the context of child poverty; a phenomenon that has a significant effect on meeting children’s basic needs (provision rights) on the African continent. In this respect, poverty increases the vulnerability of children and increases their risk for child maltreatment (Conley, 2010:40; Masuka, 2013:82-83). Child protection and children’s right to protection can therefore not be viewed from a narrow perspective, but should follow an ecological approach that considers all factors in children’s environment that can increase their vulnerability for maltreatment (Gearty, 2011:243; Morrow & Pells, 2012:906). Collins (2017:18) therefore suggests that children’s protection rights should include their rights to a standard of living that will support their holistic development, as well as their right to education.

- **Sub-theme 7.2: Children's right to education**

The participants explained that, traditionally and before the emphasis on formal schooling, the family would be the main educator of Xitsonga-speaking children. Even with the emphasis on education, young girls' involvement in household chores and young boys' responsibilities in agricultural practices would often be prioritised over formal schooling, as would their attendance of traditional ceremonies. Hence, children would absent themselves from school to herd cattle, work in the home and fields, or attend initiation ceremonies.

"The main education institution in Tsonga was the family. The child learnt by observing their older siblings, parents, and the community at large. The 'bandla' (men's forum) was also key in teaching the boy child what life is all about. Male circumcision and female initiation are also key education systems of the Vatsonga people. We also used some myths and taboos (zviyila). Women at their place, they also taught girls. We also used story-telling to teach our children Tsonga values of generosity, kindness and humility." (IKS15)

"Nowadays, the important rights of children are going to school. They also have a right to learn their language, to be clothed, and to have a share of the land. Especially the boy child should have the land because you cannot start a family without having a piece of land." (IKS32)

"As Vatsonga people, our life is tied to cattle and goats, but cattle are very central to our lives. Cattle to a Vatsonga family was the real wealth. The more cattle you had, the more wives and children; you were the richest man in the village. ... It was not surprising to see the children of a rich man not attending school looking after goats and cattle, which was their wealth; so, the child was looking after their wealth." (IKS2)

"... but in some instances, if there were ceremonies to honour the ancestors, some of these children ... will be at the centre of the ceremony. They may even end up being absent from school if the ceremony coincides with schooling, so that is another setback though has its advantages." (IKS22)

"You would have some children miss class. However, nowadays effort is made to ensure that school-going children are enrolled for the initiation during the holiday and graduate whilst it is still a holiday. But it is a bit difficult because some overzealous elders here just force children, even during school days." (IKS6)

As indicated in the quotes above, child responsibilities in terms of working in the fields and participation in cultural practices were often prioritised above attending school. In addition, several participants shared that children of about ten years of age accompany the adults to the fields during dawn and then later come back to bath and go to school, which may impede the child's concentration at school. To the Vatsonga people, food is a primary concern in the best interests of the child, before education and other interests. This information was confirmed by social work participants who professed that Xitsonga-speaking children record low school attendance during the cropping season due to their parents prioritising food security over the child's educational interests.

"During cropping season, it becomes a challenge because some parents choose to have their children go to the fields rather than going to school. I am sure if you verify with the

department of education you are likely to receive shocking figures of low attendance during a cropping season.” (SWK1)

“Children are woken up at dawn to go to the fields; after the fields then they proceed to go to herd cattle or to do other household chores. If it is school days then they go to school, they get to school tired, hence their concentration is compromised.” (SWK2)

“They value education but when there are pressing household tasks to be performed, it is normal for them to have a child absent themselves from school so that they perform household tasks.” (SWK3)

It became apparent during the interviews that if agricultural and other cultural practices were not handled properly, it would expose children to harmful practices such as being absent from school during the peak cropping season. These practices are in conflict with international law such as the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) that stipulates children’s right to access education (Article 28) as well as in regional policies such as the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) in which this right is stated in Article 11. In addition, the CRC, in Article 32 stipulates that children should not perform any work that can interfere with their education (OHCHR, 1989). Children’s rights to education form part of the category of provision rights (UNICEF, 2014c).

- **Subtheme 7.3: Discipline and the use of corporal punishment**

A central aspect of Theme 5 was that Xitsonga-speaking children were mentored and socialised with a focus on the “cultural model of virtue” (Levine & Norman, 2001 in Quinn & Mageo, 2013:21) of the Tsonga culture and IKS. In achieving socialisation goals, the research findings show that the use of corporal punishment among Xitsonga people is still widely practiced as a way to discipline children to behave according to the local social norms.

“The parenting practices entrenched in the Tsonga IKS seem to be the same in Mozambique and here, the issue of corporal punishment of children is condoned in Tsonga culture. Children, if they do what an adult think is wrong, they get beaten.” (IKS12)

“If they are naughty, they are rebuked and corrected, even using a whip. That is not abuse, it is child discipline. So that is acceptable in our culture to discipline a child.” (IKS19)

“It (corporal punishment) protected the child and brought up well-behaved children as opposed to what I see now.” (IKS30)

“In terms of beating the child, in Tsonga that is permissible, but it was regulated, for example you were not supposed to hit the child in the presence of their grandparents. If you did so, that was an abomination; you were supposed to pay the grandparents under the ‘kuriha’ system.” (IKS15)

“I am sorry to say, in as much as we are considered, that cannot be abuse, unless you hit them to kill. But if it is just a twig to remind them to behave, that is not bad, that is meant to raise people who respect elders and our values.” (IKS40)

“When it comes to corporal punishment, it was permissible, but it was done in a way that did not injure the child but just as a way to instil discipline in the child. If the child runs away for safety at their grandparents, who normally are not located far from where the child would be – because in Tsonga we settle just outside our father’s homestead – so, if the child dashes to the grandparents’ place you were supposed to spare them.” (IKS17)

Most of the participants held the view that corporal punishment did not amount to abuse, because it was an accepted form of discipline in the Tsonga culture. However, systems were in place to regulate the use of corporal punishment given that the grandparents had a role to intervene and keep corporal punishment in check. In the context of children's rights, corporal punishment is regarded as an infringement of children's rights (Southern Africa Conference on Children's Rights, 2011). The CRC, Articles 37 and 39, instruct that no child should be subjected to degrading treatment or punishment (UNHCHR, 1990). The ACRWC (African Union, 1990), Article 11(5), stipulates the following in this regard:

State Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is subjected to schools or parental discipline shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the child and in conformity with the present Charter.

Social constructionism explains differences in conceptions on specific social issues or phenomena in different contexts (Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71). The use of physical punishment as a discipline strategy is a much-debated issue, with the dilemma that in some cultures physical punishment is regarded as an accepted way of discipline, whereas in others it is regarded as abusive (Bornstein, 2013:262; Korbin, 1987 in Robinson, 2007:163). It has been found that parents in collectivist societies and non-Western and African contexts tend to rely more on physical punishment as a method to discipline children than parents in Western contexts (Robinson, 2007:141-142, 148).

Sub-theme 7.4: Childhood responsibilities

The 'ideal child' in the Tsonga culture is seen as one who can be independent and self-reliant at an early age. These qualities were discussed earlier in Sub-theme 3.4. In the mentioned sub-theme as well as in other sub-themes, participants referred to children learning by means observing and doing, described by different participants as an "apprenticeship" that prepare children for adult life (refer Sub-themes 1.1, 5.1, 5.5). In following this value, children were required to take on allocated responsibilities.

"Children in a Tsonga village are not just bystanders in the household economy activities, they have roles in the household. They do chores such as drawing water, fetching firewood, cooking, working the fields, among other tasks. This is more or less the same in Mozambique just as it is here." (IKS12)

"We grill our children to work hard so that tomorrow they are self-reliant and look after their children. A boy child from the word go they are exposed to hunting, cattle herding, ploughing, and construction of huts, among other masculine chores. The girl child in Tsonga is not left behind; they have their chores as well including working in the field, sweeping, cooking, and childcare. They were socialised to ensure that when married, they were in a position to support their children and husbands." (IKS37)

"The boys ... they do not work long hours like adults, but they just work a little as part of socialisation. But they should play. Boys would get their chance to do their games whilst

herding cattle whilst girls as they go about their chores, they would also have time to do their games.” (IKS36)

“We have our child-rearing practices of which some of you may not approve but that is the way we were raised. ... the older siblings would also ensure the safety of the younger children. It is a cycle because the adults would socialise their children, then the children when older they would also socialise the younger children as they would take them to do their errands like fetching water, fetching firewood, playing games and it was the duty of the older children to care for younger children whilst the adults would be away working maybe in the fields or elsewhere.” (IKS38)

“For this one, we can pass a hundred percent as Vatsonga people because we ensure that our children do not just work without play. After working, the boys would go hunting and herding cattle, and that was also done for fun. There were many games they played whilst herding cattle, so it was time to play as well.” (IKS34)

“So, it is not strange to see a young child carrying on their backs another child. As an outsider you may think that is abuse, no, our children love it, in fact, they cry to be given a chance by their mothers to carry their younger siblings on their backs.” (IKS35)

The findings are indicative of the role that Xitsonga-speaking children play in the household and socio-economic activities of the family. Children’s responsibilities are related to various chores which they are given to socialise them into responsible citizens. From the above quotes, it appears that child responsibility is perceived as important as their right to play and leisure, as described in the CRC, Article 31 (OHCHR, 1989), and the ACRWC, Article 12 (African Union, 1990), showing that it was important to balance children’s household responsibilities and opportunities for play.

The active participation of children in income-generating activities could in other contexts be viewed as child labour, as was also alluded to by some of the above participants. The concepts of child responsibility and child labour are often contentious issues in different socio-cultural contexts (Laird, 2016:308). Child labour is one of the key challenges to child well-being and child protection on the African continent (Nhenga, 2008:xvi; Lachman & Poblete, 2002:587). However, as proposed by social constructionism, perceptions of social phenomena are based on social constructions and can vary in different contexts (Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71). In Africa, children’s responsibilities are regarded as a form of child participation, and is therefore not regarded as a social problem (Nhenga, 2008:xvi; Wyness, 2013:345).

Article 31 of the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) points to the responsibilities of children, which is a stipulation that is unique to the ACRWC and differs from the CRC (Memzur, 2008:6). Article 31 stipulates that “each child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society ... subject to his age and ability ...” (African Union, 1990). Should this principle be ‘loosely’ interpreted, it could create the risk of child abuse by parents and guardians, for example in terms of child labour. From a Eurocentric lens, the exposure of children to basic economic activities is viewed as harmful to the child (Laird, 2016:306). This perception creates a

challenge to most Africans who do not see the harm in children's participation in economic activities such as assisting adults in working in the fields (Nhenga, 2010:7).

The findings in Theme 7 highlight aspects of the Western versus non-Western worldviews. The views presented by the participants can be related to the Afrocentric collectivist worldview that emphasise cooperation, mutual support and sharing, amongst others (Magano, 2018:238; Makhubele, 2008:43). African children are socialised to the hardworking and to assume responsibilities from a young age, which include their participation in errands and tasks in the family (Louw et al., 2014:14; Nwoye, 2017:51-52). This view is opposite to the Western, individualised worldview that strongly focuses on the rights of the individual (Magano, 2018:287; Mkabela, 2014:288). To this effect, some authors regard the CRC as a Western-based document that does not take into account the values and norms of non-Western cultures (Le Grange, 2012:56; Memzur, 2008:6).

The Tsonga culture did not escape the effects of acculturation. This aspect was mentioned by many of the participants and will be discussed in the next theme.

7.2.2.8 Theme 8: Acculturation and IKS in modern times

Acculturation is defined as a process in which one group adopts the cultural norms and practices of another group. Acculturation will differ from group to group and from individual to individual, depending on the extent to which the culture of origin is maintained or the new culture adopted (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:99; Morapedi, 2007-2008:47). Many of the participants described their concerns over the decline in Tsonga IKS due to acculturation. They explained aspects that led to acculturation and the influence thereof on their IKS, and provided examples of aspects of the Tsonga IKS they observed being affected by acculturation, including their traditional rituals and ceremonies, socialisation methods, the justice system, and traditional medicine and healing methods.

- **Sub-theme 8.1: Acculturation and its influence on IKS**

During discussions with the participants on their conceptualisation of Tsonga IKS, it emerged that they were strongly aware that some aspects of their cultural practices were suffering due to acculturation. A decline in IKS in general was thus a concern of most of the participants, who identified their IKS as on the verge of extinction. This change was described by Participant IKS40 as follows:

“What can old people tell you; we have forgotten everything by now. I am too old to remember anything (laughs) [estimated around 85 years old]. ... Who still follows these things? I am surprised by a young person like you who still want to follow that route and seek to understand our culture. Our culture in this area is under siege from all angles, it is

being absorbed by (acculturation) and it is being washed away by the forces of modernity. ... another issue is Christianity.” (IKS40)

The major causes of acculturation cited by the participants are the influence of Christianity, colonialism, political change and migration. Some of the participants made the following comments and provided examples with regards to the influence of **Christianity** on the Tsonga culture and Tsonga IKS:

“Culture is everything. It is in a culture where you find songs, games, dances, traditional medicine ... Christian Vatsonga no longer abide by them.” (IKS40)

“But most Vatsonga people are now Christians, so they have thrown away our practices and IKS. They now follow the Bible and modern knowledge; they have thrown away the IKS. IKS is evil to them.” (IKS5)

“It is only now that there are those of Christian faith who shun this practice but otherwise in a pure Tsonga homestead every child was named after an ancestor.” (IKS3)

“Those who follow traditional beliefs may also name the child after the ancestors but as for us, we are Christians, so we no longer follow that route.” (IKS20)

Another factor identified as a chief cause of the disruption of the Tsonga IKS, was **colonialism** and with it, the introduction of Christianity and the advent of modern law. In Mozambique, a unique cause was explained, namely that of the government unity and reintegration policy which resulted in the key civil servants such as teachers being posted to other regions and not their regions of origin. This resulted in Portuguese becoming a dominant language uniting the many ethnic groups in Mozambique, which also led to a disregard of the local cultural practices by the “foreign” civil service.

“My son, our IKS is endangered and is on the verge of being wiped out completely largely due to colonisation which sought to make us ‘black Portuguese’ by being assimilated into the lifestyles of Portugal. That killed our IKS. It is not surprising to meet a Vatsonga old person who cannot speak their language but could speak Portuguese.” (IKS18)

“But the challenge is that our children are more and more confined to schools where they sing Portuguese songs and speak Portuguese more than Xitsonga. If you speak Portuguese more fluently you are regarded as the one that is sophisticated, and everyone emulates you.” (IKS7)

“It is not like as the Vatsonga we did not go through education before the coming of the Portuguese; we had our education system which was destroyed by them. Up to today, our IKS is decimated and put to the periphery.” (IKS6)

Some participants identified the **political change** in Mozambique, such as the national unity and integration policy the Mozambican government adopted soon after independence, as one of the major causes in the decline in Tsonga IKS practice, as explained by the following participant:

“Then after independence we had a programme of national unity and cohesion. Under this policy, our children were thrown into other provinces to work there and children from other provinces came to work here. That left us without teachers who could speak Xitsonga

hence they relied on Portuguese as the medium of instruction. In the offices it was not allowed to speak in vernacular all this was meant to foster national unity but that was at the expense of our culture and IKS.” (IKS28)

“The problem is that most of the IKS is now history. We are just talking about them but ... some of them have vanished with the coming of the law.” (IKS23)

A factor that was shared by participants in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe, was the role of **modernisation**, as indicated in the following verbatim quotes:

“One who is seen still make Tsonga pottery or cooking from the Tsonga pottery and drinking from the gourd is seen as backward; hence, such a person needs to be transformed into a modern person as if all of us admire modernity. I worked for years in the conservancy and also in the mines in South Africa with the Whites, but I still respect the role that was played by our IKS and culture to bring me up and to cement community cohesion.” (IKS5)

“I have children and grandchildren who work and stay in the cities. Some of them feel that we are not comfortable here, so they want us to go and stay with them in the city. Haah, I just do not feel comfortable to be away from this land. Here in this small room which you are seeing, I am just comfortable; I comfortable here even if I do not have electricity. I just feel good to wake up and go to the fields and have a look at the crops; that gives me joy rather than to wake up and spend the whole day listening to talking tins (radio & television), doing nothing.” (IKS20)

The decline of IKS was also attributed to **contact with and inter-marriages with other ethnic groups**, about which one participant held the following view:

“In my view, they change over time as we interact with other people and due to intermarriages in our case there are a lot of intermarriages with the Shona people, hence a lot of our IKS is affected that way.” (IKS15)

The above factors that the participants believed contributed to the changes in adherence to their culture are also found in other parts of the world, where factors such as Westernisation, urbanisation, increased mobilisation, and intercultural contact result in acculturation and the suspension of certain cultural beliefs and practices (Bornstein, 2013:260; Johnston, 2015:375). Acculturation is, however, not regarded as absolute, and many persons in Sub-Saharan Africa still adhere to certain cultural beliefs, values and practices although they have adopted a more Western lifestyle (Mkabela, 2015:285; Robinson, 2007:164; Thabede, 2008:238). This view was held by participants who stated the following:

“Ahhh my son, the Tsonga IKS is fast fading away just as the rains no longer come as in the past, so is how the world has changed. But the few that still lingers, you find them in our totem recitals, songs, dance, traditional clan poetry, our housing patterns, our food, our medicine, and so forth and so forth.” (IKS1)

“Tsonga IKS is still relevant ... a lot of families still rely on it. ... Some rituals and beliefs which guide how children should be treated are still influential in this area although Christianity is killing IKS.” (IKS28)

“The extended family in my view remains very relevant although it might have taken different forms, for example, those in cities, we call them to send us money to meet needs

of the children like school fees and uniforms, and they provide that based on the kinship ties. So, it is very relevant.” (IKS34)

In acculturation, individuals, families or groups choose which aspects of their culture they want to maintain, as described in the above quotes (García Coll & Magnuson, 2000:99; Robinson, 2007:164). Participant IKS4 believed that the Tsonga IKS was still relevant in current times: *“My opinion is that IKS is still relevant but I think government should work with our traditional leadership to preserve and even revive our IKS.”* Thabede (2008:238) confirms that core elements of a culture can endure over time.

- **Sub-theme 8.2: Acculturation and socialisation methods**

The participants mentioned that many of the cherished cultural practices that were also relevant to the socialisation of children and the intergenerational transmission of the Tsonga IKS were affected by acculturation.

The participants pointed to a **decline in their traditional songs, games and dance** that were important vehicles for the socialisation and education of Xitsonga-speaking children. They cited the school and schooling system as the chief contributor to the decline in the use of traditional songs, games, and dance, whereas the school is a conduit through which traditional songs, games and dance could actually be perpetuated.

“The schooling system in a way is killing that. Yes, at school they sing and dance but that is not the way we used to do, we had those games, songs and dances for the night. These are suffering because children come from school too tired to spare time for those traditional songs, dance, and games. They are busy with their homework and other demands from their formal schools, so they no longer have adequate time to do what we used to some decades ago before schools were everywhere.” (IKS22)

“Our songs and games are now reduced into some archived songs which are just sung on special occasions, either for school cultural competition or maybe to entertain the President if he visits. That is when you see the children singing and dancing to traditional songs. Yet, the purpose of those songs, dances, and games were for the children to learn about life from them, hence they were supposed to sing them almost every day and night until they get the meanings behind each story, each song, each game and each dance”. (IKS27)

“We had our various children’s games and songs, so educating, so entertaining, but these are fading away. The schools have replaced that. Our children are now forced to sing English and Shona songs and play English and Shona games when our Tsonga is so rich in that area.” (IKS21)

“If you look at school children, they spend the whole day in school and they are given work to take home, and that ensures that children do not find any time to play their traditional games. They only play these traditional games for competitions in schools otherwise they are too busy for that.” (IKS26)

The advent of the electronic media such as radio and television were cited by most of the participants as the cause for the **decline in the art of storytelling**. Some participants put the blame for this situation on the school system. The Tsonga stories were praised by the

participants for carrying important teachings about human values and virtues, among other things, which were meant to sustain children in their adult life. Hence, some participants were of the view that Tsonga stories should be electronically packaged so that the children could listen and watch them either on radio or television.

“The advent of radio and television is killing this tradition. People are glued to televisions or the children are glued to their books to do their schoolwork which they are given to do at home and you as an adult are then supposed to help them; so the story-telling time is stolen (laughs).” (IKS23)

“We also have various stories told to children, especially during the night. Those stories were full of education and were also entertaining. These were normally told by grandparents during the night around the fire. I miss those days because now, whom can you tell those stories to? The children are more interested in the schoolwork when they come back home from school.” (IKS24)

“We have folktales but, ah, this practice is now dead because children go to school and some stay in towns. How do we tell them stories? They are busy doing schoolwork and for those in cities they watch television, watching some other people’s stories, they forget our own culture.” (IKS2)

Other views on the decline in storytelling were raised, citing the death of older persons who were regarded as repositories of knowledge about storytelling. This challenge is explained by the widespread African proverb that “when a knowledgeable old person dies, a whole library disappears” (Ossai, 2010:7). The participants also felt that Tsonga legends and myths are fading away due to enlightenment which results in modern children being able to figure out that the legends and myths are just legends and myths, and not something to follow.

“These legends, myths, and stories are a way of preserving our history entertainingly. Regrettably, these myths, legends and folklores are fading away. Those who knew them are also dying whilst even the young do not have time to be bothered by listening to these folktales. Today’s children because of education, they know that this is just a myth and they can challenge it but, in the process, they would be endangering themselves in some instances.” (IKS22)

The participants’ concerns over the decline in indigenous Tsonga songs, games, dance and stories can be understood against the background of these activities being significant indigenous ways of mentoring and socialising Xitsonga-speaking children, as described in the research findings in Theme 5. Children in traditional African cultures are socialised in the traditions and customs of their culture, which include songs, dance, games, and storytelling, containing moral messages through which they learn about virtues such as integrity, patience, modesty, and perseverance (Nwoye, 2017:54-55). These activities reflect the oral tradition of transferring knowledge in indigenous communities (Bogopa, 2012:246; Magano, 2018:236). As mentioned by Participant IKS22 above, these methods provide age-appropriate ways to “entertainingly” teach children about the Vatsonga and preserving their history. In Africa,

storytelling reflects the role of oral narration in the upbringing of children and is central to the transmission of the values of *ubuntu* to African children (Kpanake, 2018:201; Ojede, 2014:7).

- **Sub-theme 8.3: Acculturation and traditional ceremonies**

The participants furthermore highlighted certain traditional Tsonga ceremonies that were affected by acculturation. It appears that especially the traditional marriage processes and burial ceremonies were influenced. Changes in the **traditional marriage processes** were cited as being influenced by modernity and Christianity and was viewed as a major reason for marriages breaking down and the high divorce rates in modern times as compared to traditional times.

“It’s because our children are rushing to those churches for the colourful weddings, shunning our systems. Before they know it, the marriage is gone. What these youngsters do not know is that a wedding is not marriage, a wedding is just some event, but marriage is a life commitment. ... Children in the past used to listen to us, their parents, but now with the coming of the rights, there is discord. Our children just wake up and tell you that they want to be married, yet in our culture one was supposed to approach their auntie (‘hahani’) or maternal uncle (‘malume’) to let them know that they wanted to get married.” (IKS22)

“The adults play a big role in marriage, and the marriage is basically between the two families not between individuals as what is the case in modern marriages. You see, two people being married during the Christian wedding ... as if marriage is about those two. No, marriage in Tsonga is between the families and that is the same whether in South Africa, here in Zimbabwe or Mozambique, wherever you find the Vatsonga, that is the same.” (IKS17)

“The marriage is not between individuals, but it is between families ... but here in Zimbabwe our children just do their things there. It is their marriage. This is wrong and not condoned in our culture, but what can we do about it? Nothing! We are just watching whilst our cultural practices are trampled upon.” (IKS25)

“Marriages are also part of the IKS in this community. The aunties played a big role in our marriages; they invested their time in pre-marital counselling. These marriages were not easily breaking as what we see now, they were built on a solid foundation.” (IKS4)

One participant also noted with concern that their unique **burial ceremonies** were being influenced by those of Christian faith and through interaction with non-Tsonga ethnic groups. The Vatsonga have a special burial place for each family, called ‘*Xilahlelweni*. The idea of a communal burial place (graveyard) was said to be foreign to them.

“The Vatsonga have a special own burial place for each family, it’s called the burial place, ‘Xilahlelweni’, literally meaning a place where we bury the dead. This idea of a communal burial place is foreign to us, it is the influence of Christianity and Portugal on us. Especially the Catholic faith diluted our IKS in this area. We are also influenced by the South African culture because our children go and work in South Africa, they are the ones who will bring home some of these foreign practices. ... Now, it is a different story, the church has taken over the burial process, some families no longer follow these practices, they follow the Christian faith.” (IKS28)

Traditional initiation ceremonies, however, seemed to withstand the influence of acculturation to an extent, as described by the following participant:

“The major source of our IKS is the culture. Culture is not evil; even us who are Christians, there are certain Tsonga cultural practices which we cannot just let go; things like the initiation ceremonies, those we still do despite being Christians. Our relationships and the status that we accord to each other based on those relationships, that remains unaffected by Christianity. So, the culture is the bedrock of our IKS.” (IKS20)

As explained by the participant, initiation ceremonies are an important part of African culture and IKS. In Africa, the initiation ceremonies are closely linked to the conceptualisation of childhood and adulthood as a child’s maturity would be determined by the rites and rituals that he or she went through (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:111). Initiation rituals and ceremonies form an important part of teaching children social and life skills to prepare them for adulthood (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:111; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:24; Thabede, 2012:242) and were thus a prerequisite for a person to be considered an adult, also in Southern Africa among the Vatsonga (Bekker, 2008:395; Joyce, 2010:89; Ndofirepi, 2013:89).

As described in Sub-theme 2.1, the participants viewed the traditional Tsonga rituals and ceremonies as a significant manifestation of their culture and IKS, which would explain their concern about the effects of acculturation on the continuation of their culture and IKS. Rituals and ceremonies are important aspects of African culture and IKS, and are performed in the event of birth, initiation, marriage, and death, amongst others (Khosa, 2009:78-87; Edwards, 2010:218; Magid, 2011:137; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:2; Sodi, 2009:65).

- **Sub-theme 8.4: Acculturation and the traditional justice system**

Modern law was regarded by the participants as the cause of changes in the traditional legal system. The traditional legal system of the Vatsonga was described as an effective system for the prosecution of perpetrators, amongst others of those who committed offences against children (see Sub-theme 6.1). The participants explained that their traditional legal system is, however, no longer recognised under modern law and, if anything, the traditional legal system being under fire due to child rights concerns could be a conduit through which perpetrators could easily get away with cases of violence against children. A second view expressed by the participants was that there is conflict between the modern law which is retributive and punitive and the traditional legal system which is restorative and based on consensus and community cohesion building.

“Unfortunately, our government does not have trust with our traditional justice system, yet we did not have these courts long ago, we relied on our courts to prosecute child molesters and other wrongdoers. Now they say, ‘Do not prosecute these cases.’ ... It is just a matter of failure to appreciate our processes. They feel that our systems are lenient to the perpetrator ... So, the government seems not happy with that.” (IKS22)

“The elders would sit down and look at the matter and deliberate on the issue until a resolution was made. Normally the perpetrator would not be treated as an individual but their whole family would be treated as perpetrators and when the penalty was given that was handed down to the whole family. Likewise, the reparations would be paid to the whole family of the wronged child. ... Some families still do that even with (concerns over) violations of child rights, but it is being discouraged as the government has taken over the administration of such issues.” (IKS29)

“But these days the police have taken over. We report to the police, which is not justice because the government will just fine or punish the perpetrator without any consolation to the wronged. But in our system, the perpetrator is also supposed to pay the wronged (kuriha).” (IKS2)

“The traditional leadership was key in dealing with these issues. We would report to the local village head who would convene a council on known days and then the traditional leader would try the perpetrator. But nowadays, people prefer to report to the police or to that government department responsible for child welfare. In this area we report to those volunteers with blue bicycles.” (IKS19)

As described by the participants, the Vatsonga people had a traditional legal system in place, which is still followed by some. In their legal proceedings, a hearing by a council consisting of elders would take place and decisions were made following the local traditions and customs of the culture (Makhubele, 2008:42; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25). In this way, important matters in the community, including matters related to children, were handled (Shutte, 2001:28). Challenges in terms of the traditional Tsonga legal system, as described by the participants, are echoed by authors who note that although IKS could contribute to modern justice and legal systems, it is often overlooked in contexts where Eurocentric legal frameworks have been introduced (Banks, 2011:167; Briggs, 2005:103; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:24).

- **Sub-theme 8.5: Acculturation and traditional health care**

The participants were furthermore concerned about changes in the traditional health care beliefs and practices based on Tsonga culture and IKS. They expressed the view that Vatsonga children were not weaklings; traditionally they were not easily attacked by diseases as what happens now. The explanation they gave is that, due to modernisation, it could be because of the kind of food that Vatsonga children are eating and that the people no longer use traditional medicine that much, hence exposing children to overwhelming vulnerabilities.

“Our children are now vulnerable to sicknesses and their mothers no longer believe in traditional medicine; they think that is old fashioned. That is a big problem.” (IKS31)

“Today if you administer medication to these children who are born in clinics and depend entirely on modern medicine, it does not work for them. But to us and our children, it (traditional medicine) worked, it worked. You see me here; I do not know the door of a clinic. If I get sick, I just look for some traditional medicine and I am fine.” (IKS2)

“You see, back then there were no clinics, but we survived. We relied on the trees for survival, the trees provided the medicine from its roots, herbs, leaves, and many more

which we used to treat virtually any kind of ailment. But now that has changed ... people no-longer know that traditional medicine can cure many ailments.” (IKS14)

“Our traditional medicine and herbs provide that much needed health care as I said that it cures most of the ailments. This is relatively cheaper because it is readily available, however nowadays there are concerns over issues of dosage and hygiene concerning traditional medicines.” (IKS29)

“If children suffered from any diseases, we could treat them using traditional medicine. Herbs, tree roots and barks were normally used to treat various ailments of children especially xipande which was treated by making a concoction and then give the child to drink or you can prevent it by giving a child a protective charm which you would put around their neck or on their waist.” (IKS13)

“Sometimes children were protected from the evil spirits and sicknesses through protection charms which were put around the child’s neck as a form of some necklace, or as some armband or on the waist. All this was meant to ensure that the child grew up a healthy person.” (IKS11)

As described by the participants, the decline in the use of traditional medicine and healing methods occurred due to the influence of modernisation and Christianity. The Vatsonga, like other ethnic groups adopting an African worldview, believe in the spiritual world and thus, the role of traditional medicine and traditional healers (Masango & Nyasse, 2015:60; Ross, 2010:45; Thabede, 2008:233; Truter, 2007:57). In the African worldview disease and illness are linked to the spiritual world, such as supernatural powers and unseen spiritual forces, the anger of the ancestors, or witchcraft (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:80; Makgopa & Koma, 2009:156; Nwoye, 2017:47). Traditional healers are regarded as having knowledge of the spiritual world, which enable them to perform healing rituals and practices (Masango & Nyasse, 2015:53; Ross, 2010:54). Healing practices are still used by many African people (Truter, 2007:56). Therefore, it is important to understand indigenous views on illness being related to a spiritual world (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:80).

Based on the research findings presented in Theme 8, it can be concluded that the IKS participants viewed their beliefs and practices based on Tsonga IKS as still relevant to aspects such as their traditional socialisation methods, rituals and ceremonies, justice system and health care system. Those people who were influenced by acculturation were described as often maintaining certain aspects of their culture and relying on their IKS for events such as marriage and burial rituals when they migrate back to the rural areas to practice their IKS; a phenomenon described as bi-culturism (Sue & Sue, 2008:140). Boakye-Boaten (2010:108) noted this phenomenon where most African people are in-between traditional and modern lifestyles. However, IKS remains the mainstay of most of the rural populace in Africa who rely on their IKS for agriculture, food and medicine, amongst others (Ossai, 2010:2; Shoko, 2012:642).

7.2.2.9 Theme 9: Relevance of Tsonga IKS to child protection and well-being

Despite the challenges of acculturation discussed in the previous theme, the participants believed that Tsonga IKS is still relevant to the lives of Vatsonga people in modern times and that several aspects of the Tsonga IKS could contribute to the protection and well-being of children. These aspects will be presented as the sub-themes to Theme 9.

- **Sub-theme 9.1: Communal care as a protective mechanism for children**

Most of the participants mentioned that the communal care practice in the Tsonga culture was a protective mechanism for children. According to the Tsonga culture and IKS, children belong to the whole community, thus community members would take responsibility for their protection and well-being.

“The most significant thing to mention is that children in Tsonga culture belong to the whole extended family and the entire community. Every member in the community was supposed to look after the children, so that ensured that local community members never harmed somebody’s child and that where they can, they provided for the child.” (IKS21)

“You would see every community member having an eye on the child because every child was everyone’s child such is our cultural practice.” (IKS29)

“IKS can offer and is still offering protection to the child through various practices including the extended family and the value and belief that children are owned communally, they are not owned by an individual family, but they are owned by the whole community hence the whole community was responsible for their upbringing.” (IKS24)

“The child belonged to the whole family, they belonged to the whole community, so the neighbours would not fold their hands and leave you to mistreat the child, they would apprehend and reprimand you or report you to your family elders or the traditional leaders depending on the gravity of the matter. So, it was very rare to have children being ill-treated.” (IKS9)

“Another good practice is that IKS dictated that a child belonged to the whole community and the whole community bore the responsibility of upbringing the child. ... Without this approach to life, that is when you find children begging in the cities, it is a sign that something has gone wrong in our culture, it is a sign that we have thrown away our IKS.” (IKS27)

The research findings show that, according to Tsonga IKS, the communal approach to childcare would ensure that every member of the community would keep an eye on every child. This practice played an important role in preventing harm to children as well as reporting harm that occurred. The collective responsibility for the well-being of children, as described by the participants, reflects the philosophy of *ubuntu* that underpins the worldview of many African cultures (Hlongwane et al., 2018:55; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:22). The community would thus act as guardians of the individual (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:30) and, in the case of child protection, act as guardians of each child in the community. Child Frontiers (2012:6) identify the attitudes, customs, traditions, and practices that respect children’s rights and condemn the maltreatment of children as one of the elements that characterise protective environments for

children. The philosophy of *ubuntu* in the Afrocentric worldview provide the characteristics of this element.

- **Sub-theme 9.2: The extended family as a safety net for children**

The significance of the extended family in the Tsonga culture was evident in various earlier themes and sub-themes that have been discussed. The participants believed that the involvement of the extended family in the lives of Xitsonga-speaking children contributed to child protection in Tsonga communities.

“To us, a family is bigger, it includes the aunties, uncles, cousins, and grandparents including the aunties, uncles, and cousins of the grandparents, the list goes on until it includes almost everyone in the village to become your family member. In that regard, children could not be easily harmed or be neglected, neither could they go without food, shelter, and clothing among other necessities. When their nuclear family fails to do so, the extended family chipped in and provides parenting and all the needs of the child. The child could be treated as if they were the biological child and the child would reciprocate by offering respect and helping with household chores just as they would do in their biological nuclear family.” (IKS28)

“The extended family ... is a very important aspect of child welfare and protection ... So, the extended family is a haven for all children who might be less privileged and have poor parents. The extended family takes care of orphans and provides for those families who have poor parents or sick parents. If you look at me, I am not only the father to my biological children but the whole extended family and the community. If a child within our extended family comes with a need to me, I will take that seriously and address it in a way I do to my biological children; such is how strong is our kinship ties in this area.” (IKS29)

“The child was naturally taken care of by any available member of the extended family, this normally was not a strange person to the child, this was an already known somebody to the child. You should also remember that as Vatsonga we are polygamous so yes both parents may pass on but there will be other mothers remaining in that big homestead. The child would just continue in that family as usual.” (IKS20)

As shared by the participants, the extended family would take responsibility for the care of children if their biological parents could not provide in the needs of the child. Noteworthy is that the child will be treated like the biological children in the ‘new’ family and will be cared for by family members who are already known to them. Children who were exposed to maltreatment would receive counselling and support from the aunts and uncles.

“The extended family can be lauded once again for its capacity to provide safety for children in need of care. ... The child who happened to experience sexual abuse or any other form of harm had existing platforms to receive counselling and general psychosocial support from the aunties and the uncles.” (IKS26)

“Kinship care also ensured that children at all the time they have a fallback safety net system when the family in a way could not care for the child, the extended family could just get in there and provide all the needs of the child without any difficulty.” (IKS12)

If a child in the care of the extended family is abused, the neighbours would act as a safety net.

“But the extended family had its ears through the neighbours, such information ended up in the ears of the elders who would then remove the child from that abusive extended family member to another benevolent family to look after the child.” (IKS23)

Given that some orphans are exposed to the abuse when placed in the care of the extended family in some instances (Luwangula et al., 2019:136), the safety net provided by the wider community as described by Participant IKS23, is an important measure to ensure the well-being of the child.

According to the childcare practices within the Tsonga culture and IKS, children who may need care and protection will thus not be placed in child or youth care centres or children’s homes or end up on the streets.

“Even when a misfortune strike, the child was never admitted in some children’s home as is the case nowadays, but they were absorbed within the extended family and got care and protection from that family.” (IKS21)

“It (Tsonga IKS) ensures safety and basic things like food and shelter through the family and, if that fails, that is done through the extended family. So, children in this community are not exposed to the harsh conditions of the city children who end up on the streets; here the extended family and the community will look after them.” (IKS26)

“Even up to today, if you go to our town in this area you do not see a destitute child and those children sleeping on the streets as you see in Maputo. Why? It is because those in need are taken care of through the extended family.” (IKS28)

“The value we place in the extended family, which helps a lot in ensuring that children at any given time have a safety net. ... that is why you will not see even a single child on the street in our town as you see in Maputo and other big cities. The extended family takes care of such children and look after them.” (IKS25)

The above findings are significant in the light of literature findings that present a bleak picture of the situation of children in Africa in general, amongst others due to limited resources (UNICEF, 2014a). Due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, “sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a disproportional loss of individuals in their most productive years, raising concerns about the welfare of surviving members of affected families – especially children” (Lombe, Mabikke, Enelamah & Chu, 2019:63). Besides, child poverty is a substantial issue in Sub-Saharan Africa, which increases the challenges faced by children (United Nations, 2017:16; Watkins & Quattri, 2016:20).

Sadly, Sub-Saharan Africa’s social welfare system is ill-equipped to provide adequate services to children (Davis et al., 2012:31). With numerous challenges in the face of an ill-equipped social welfare sector, social workers can involve members of the extended family as informal systems for child protection within the natural ecological resources of local communities (Davis et al., 2012:6; Hepworth et al., 2017:433). In line with developmental social work, social work practice with children has embraced the role of the extended family and communities as part of community-based responses in child protection interventions (Conley, 2010:43; O’Leary et

al., 2018:7). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the extended family is viewed as the most effective support system for families who experience crises (Foster, 2007 in Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2013:88).

As proposed by the participants, the role of the extended family in the care of children according to Tsonga IKS is relevant to the protection of children. However, factors such as poverty and HIV and AIDS have placed tremendous demands on families, and weaken the capacity of the extended family in Africa to care for and protect children (Mhaka-Mutepha et al., 2015:465; Midgley, 2017:65-66; Zagheni, 2011:761). As have been the practice in many development countries, social assistance can help families to overcome financial burdens (Lombard, 2019b:400), and ensure that children are being cared for in the extended family and community, rather than in institutional care settings. Given the damaging effects on institutionalisation on children, child protection services should adopt a developmental rather than a remedial approach by keeping children in their families and communities (Conley, 2010:39).

- **Sub-theme 9.3: Well-being of orphans and vulnerable children**

From the participants' descriptions of the care of orphaned children and the treatment of children with disabilities, it is clear that Tsonga IKS promotes non-discriminatory approaches to caregiving:

“So, it (IKS) was good in that if a child lost their parents any family member would take the child and look after them. ... But in our culture, a child in an extended family was not different from your biological child. ... I use the word orphan sparingly because I do not believe that in Tsonga a child is orphaned because they have parents in the extended family, the community, and the traditional leadership.” (IKS2)

“(Care is) not based on the status of the child as an orphan or the child is not a biological one; that was far from us. A child is a child; they deserve care and protection. That child would not have their plate, they would eat from the same plate with my children, they would share the same hut with my children, they would do their childhood chores together with my children, they would receive punishment for wrongdoing just like my own children. In Tsonga culture, there is no distinction between biological children and those based on kinship ties, to us all are our biological children.” (IKS25)

“In Tsonga, there is nothing like an orphan because the extended family cushioned children against the effects of orphanhood. The child was not supposed to see any change, they would continue with their errands together with other children and they would eat from the same plate with other children of their age; so there was no discrimination whatsoever.” (IKS36)

“IKS protected children without biological parents so that they are not exposed to harm. You see every child was entitled to a father and mother through the inheritance of wives and husbands, so not at any given time would the child be without a proper family to look after them.” (IKS12)

Some of the participants also alluded to the role of IKS in the protection of another group of vulnerable children, namely children with disabilities.

“[In earlier times], if the child was born strange to the extent that the ancestors had never seen such disability before such a child was just killed and buried by the elders. But if there was some sign that the child could live with their disability, they would keep the child and the community was taught not to discriminate against the disabled lest the ancestors get angry and make you give birth to a disabled child.” (IKS14)

“The elders also used sayings to ensure that children are protected, sayings like ‘nwana wamun’wani in’wana wawena’, meaning one’s child they are yours as well. The other one was on disability where people are not supposed to despise the disabled because if you do so you will bear a disabled child in future as a punishment for your disrespect for the disabled.” (IKS38)

The participants furthermore explained the practice of *kutsamantsaka* linked to the Tsonga kinship care system, which is related to inheritance by wives and children. When a child’s father dies, one of his or her uncles would become a surrogate father and, in a similar manner, when the mother dies one of her sisters would become the child’s surrogate mother by inheritance (*kutsamantsaka*). This system meant that the orphaned child did not have a stranger becoming his or her surrogate parent as often happens under modern laws of foster care and adoption, where strangers care for or adopt children.

The research findings indicate that the practices towards vulnerable children were guided by *ubuntu* and as well as the belief in the ancestors. In this regard, the principles underlying *ubuntu* serve as a moral guide for people to care for vulnerable members of the community and to show respect for others (Makhubele, 2008:43; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:22; Nwoye, 2017:48). Furthermore, people would avoid annoying the ancestors as it might bring them ill health and misfortune (Nwoye, 2017:47). Berg (2001:33) regards *ubuntu* and the belief in ancestors as two fundamental themes underlying the “traditional African social fabric and psyche.” In African cultures, disability is often seen as a form of punishment from avenging spirits or a result of witchcraft, which could result in discrimination against children with disabilities (Mukushi et al., 2019b:104-105). However, the research findings suggest that according to Tsonga culture and IKS, harmful practices towards children with disability would lead to punishment by the ancestors, as explained in the words of the following participant:

“The disabled children were supported by adults in most of their things and our culture dictated that when you see a disabled person, do not laugh because tomorrow you may have a disabled child so. Such idioms rebuked people from looking down upon disabled children.” (IKS17)

It is evident that the Vatsonga people place value on all children, as was also described in Sub-theme 3.2. In the following sub-theme, this principle in the Tsonga IKS will be discussed as it relates to the protection of children.

Sub-theme 9.4: The value placed on Xitsonga-speaking children

The value placed on children was evident in the research findings presented in previous themes, such as children ensuring the future of families (discussed in Sub-theme 3.2) and children carrying the names of the ancestors (refer Sub-theme 4.4). The value bestowed on children was seen by the participants as an element of Tsonga IKS that could support child protection.

“Vatsonga children are respected and valued. They are valued because they are the future of every family and they are respected because they carry the name of our ancestors.” (IKS35)

“Children are regarded as ancestors incarnate. They bear the names of the ancestors ... That protected children in a big way because raising your hand to hit an ancestor incarnate, that was inviting trouble and many people were plagued by sickness as punishments from the ancestors for ill-treating their namesakes (the children).” (IKS37)

“So, abuse of children ... was limited because people feared reprisals from the ancestors. In addition, for children with names of ancestors, it was rare to see them being ill-treated because society accorded them respect because they carried the names of our ancestors.” (IKS38)

“IKS plays a big role in protecting our children. ... the children being incarnated ancestors protected them from any potential harm because perpetrators feared that by harming such a child one was harming the ancestors and if they dared doing so they would face serious consequences from the ancestors.” (IKS8)

As described by the participants, the African culture regards the birth of a child as highly significant as it confirms the union between his or her parents (Berg, 2001:34). Most of the participants mentioned the naming of children after the ancestors as having a major influence on how children would be treated. According to the Afrocentric worldview, the ancestors play a significant role in the lives of people (Berg, 2001:33-34; Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:21-22), amongst others in guiding, mentoring and protecting the living. Angering the ancestors may result in misfortune or ill health; therefore, people would at all times avoid annoying the ancestors (Nwoye, 2017:47). As evident from the above quotes, this belief underlying Tsonga culture and IKS can thus serve as a measure to protect children from harm.

Sub-theme 9.5: Indigenous socialisation practices as protection for children

The participants regarded children’s socialisation practices based on Tsonga IKS as playing a significant role in giving information to children about the possible risks to their safety and protection, and for teaching them protective strategies. This information was passed on to children through age-related practices such as stories, myths and legends, games and songs, and totem recitals, which were discussed as Tsonga socialisation practices in Theme 5. The participants explained how these practices could contribute to the protection of children in Tsonga communities.

“IKS ensured that children were aware of the risks strangers posed to them and offered strategies on how to overcome that. The folktales, the legends, myths, and clan stories which were told, some of them taught children the risks they would encounter and offered them solutions in those stories.” (IKS11)

“IKS stand alone as tool of giving messages and information both to the children and to the adults on various issues of childcare and protection through folktales, myths, and legends. So, the traditional stories would touch on various issues which affected children and would in a preventive way warn children of the dangers they may face and how to confront such dangers.” (IKS8)

“Storytelling also depicted various potential threats to the child and the story also offered various options of dealing with such harm.” (IKS26)

“They needed to know their totems so that when lost it was easy to be re-joined with their relatives or parents.” (IKS1)

“The child would be taught to recite their totem and the family tree and when they do that it ensured that when a child was lost, they would be identified and reunified with their family. It was simply because the adults would simply ask the child who they were, who their father is and the child will go on and on so the adults would know that this child belonged to that village and then return the child.” (IKS5)

The above quotes indicate that the indigenous Tsonga socialisation practices such as stories, songs and totem recitals to teach children about general life issues (Nwoye, 2017:54-55; Olojede, 2014:7), also contained information related to the protection of children. In this way children were alerted to risks and were taught possible solutions when faced with adverse situations. It is generally accepted that traditional oral socialisation methods have been successfully used to enhance children’s understanding in modern education systems, and can also be used to teach children about aspects such as values, norms, risks and taboos in modern society (Chauke, 2018:8-10; Manganye, 2011:7-10; Phiri, 2008:3). As noted by Participant IKS8, these socialisation methods served a preventive purpose, which are in line with developmental social work that emphasises interventions on preventive levels, rather than interventions that are reactive in nature (Lombard, 2019b:397). With this in mind, it is important to note that traditional stories, myths, legends, games, and songs are at risk of extinction (Bogopa, 2012:245).

- **Sub-theme 9.6: Protection provided by mentoring and initiation**

The participants believed that the Tsonga mentoring system and initiation rituals served as measures to protect children against harm. Information on the *khomba* system (Sub-theme 4.6) and the *kulaya* system (Sub-theme 5.2) contained the description of these practices. The information in this sub-theme focuses on the participants’ views on how these two systems could contribute to the protection of children in Tsonga communities. As mentioned by the following participant, these systems and the use of stories and myths, contributed to the protection of children:

“It was unknown in this area to hear that there is a child who has been sexually abused. That was not known because our people were well cultured. All this came through ‘kulaya,’ the ‘Khomba’ system, and the stories, myths, and legends which were told to children ... Children grew up into well-behaved people who respected other people and children, which minimised things like sexual abuse. To be honest, we started hearing about the sexual abuse of children most recently. It is a new phenomenon to us.” (IKS4)

The participants explained that the **kulaya system**, through which aunts and uncles play a significant role in mentoring, guiding and counselling children, forms the backbone of a well-informed young person. The duty of the aunts and uncles was to guide children to traverse the challenges of childhood, puberty and the transition to adulthood, including issues of dating, courtship and marriage. Any issue affecting young people including issues of sex and sexuality were discussed with the aunts and uncles, ensuring that children and young persons were well informed on these aspects.

“Our culture has in place a system for morally grounding our children and helping them grow into responsible adults. We have the ‘kulaya’ system which allows aunts and uncles to give advice and mentor children.” (IKS29)

“Vatsonga children are subjected to a family counselling and advice system which is ongoing. This is known as ‘kulaya’. Every child would have someone whom they would confide in, normally an auntie, uncle, or a grandparent.” (IKS38)

“IKS, if followed, produces well-groomed citizens and well-cultured children through the ‘kulaya’ system. The system ensured that a person grew up knowing that you have to respect the next person and that there should be a big distance between boys and girls and the distance was even bigger between girls and men, so that ensured that girls are protected.” (IKS29)

“... the ‘kulaya’ system where our children grew up receiving mentorship and advice on issues of life. ... This ensured that issues pertinent to child safety were discussed and children warned of such vices and dangers.” (IKS34)

In addition, the **khomba system** prepared young people to become socially responsible adults.

“The Khomba system was a vehicle to convey what is acceptable conduct of Vatsonga men and women and in that regard, it was not approved conduct for an initiated person to do such things such as harming the child and many other things. So, that alone was a check and balance within our society to ensure that children were protected.” (IKS12)

“IKS ensured that children were children and adults were adults, not like now where you hear that a child has been sexually abused. That was a taboo. A child remained a child until going through the ‘Khomba’ process; otherwise, before initiation, no one looked at a child as a potential wife. It was also seen as a lack of values and morals to rape a child and there was a severe punishment for it. It was worse for initiated men because their code of conduct did not allow such acts. So, if one happened to molest a child yet they were initiated, they would be taken for discipline by fellow initiates because that was not allowed for initiates to behave that way. So, the ‘Khomba’ process instilled discipline and acted as a code of conduct hence it reduced the number of abuses in this area.” (IKS13)

“Children in Tsonga culture were well protected. The ‘khomba’ system instilled values of ubuntu and it was unheard of to have sexual abuse of children. If that happened, the consequences were dire.” (IKS18)

Both the mentoring and initiation systems of the Vatsonga people were regarded as contributing to child protection and the well-being of children. The value of formal or informal mentoring in children's emotional, cognitive and social functioning is widely recognised (Ssewamala et al., 2014:1-2). As the research findings indicate, the mentoring system provided Xitsonga-speaking children with a platform to discuss topics to help them to grow up as responsible adults, including on sex and sexuality, which was often a taboo topic in traditional African societies (Ramphabana et al., 2019:183). Similarly, the initiation rituals are not only a platform for transmitting IKS and preparing children for adulthood, but also serve as a social control mechanism (Boakye-Boaten, 2010:111; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:24; Nwoye, 2017:56; Thabede, 2012:242). Thus, both these systems can raise children's awareness about child protection issues and be platforms by which child maltreatment can be prevented. In the child protection field, preventive services to enhance protective measures in communities can be beneficial in communities where responsive child protection services are scarce. Responsive services such as social, health and legal services to children who have experienced maltreatment (UNICEF, 2019:11), are known to experience challenges on the African continent due to a lack of capacity and resources (Davis et al., 2012:31).

- **Sub-theme 9.7: Tsonga IKS values promote well-being and protection**

Some of the participants mentioned that the values inherent to Tsonga IKS endorse societal norms that promote child well-being and advocate against child abuse.

“Every element of Tsonga culture, in it is the well-being of children because we value children.” (IKS32)

“IKS is the source of information on what being human should be. Children in this community are highly regarded. ... they are a treasure, so who would harm a treasure?” (IKS33)

“Vatsonga people are moralists, so doing such things (abusing children) is highly immoral.” (IKS40)

“IKS plays a big role in transmitting good values to both children and adults and some of these values include that children should always be protected.” (IKS38)

“IKS taught our children about humanness and what is meant to be a child, and that is critical for their protection. Its role was to educate, to make the child aware of what in the Tsonga culture constituted abuse and what did not constitute abuse.” (IKS1)

“Our culture up to this day has a lot in it that benefits children. We instil a sense of pride, identity, and sense of belonging through the Khomba system. ... We raised true Vatsonga children full of respect for another person, a people that cared for one another, not selfish people.” (IKS5)

The participants' views on the values that are inherent to their IKS are corroborated with findings in the literature which indicate that the African worldview is guided by the philosophy of *ubuntu*. Words in the above quotes such as 'being human', 'moralists', 'humanness' and

'respect' indicate values underlying Tsonga IKS that would deter people from the maltreatment of children. These words correspond with the central values of *ubuntu*, which are described as humanity, humanness, compassion, respect and living as a moral person, amongst others (Hlongwane et al., 2018:55; Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Mkabela, 2015:286). *Ubuntu* is a "social ethic" (Mkabela (2014:285) that monitors people's actions (Hlongwane et al., 2018:59). However, given the high prevalence of social problems, Desai (2015 in Hlongwane et al., 2018:53) doubts the influence of the principles of *ubuntu* and the implementation thereof in modern-day times. Thus, Makhubele and Qualinge (2008:157) advocate for interventions to revive social and cultural values according to which people can grow up to become responsible adult members of society.

- **Sub-theme 9.8: IKS offers an alternative justice framework**

Most of the participants shared that IKS provided a justice framework that could contribute to the protection of children. This system was informed by the beliefs and practices of the Tsonga IKS, which resulted in punitive measures that would deter people from harming children.

"I think IKS plays a big role in actually prohibiting people from harming the child because IKS teaches humanness. Thus, harming a child especially sexual abuse was not condoned in our culture and that punitive measures were taken not only to the perpetrator but to his family as well." (IKS21)

"Perpetrators would also receive corporal punishment for abusing children. ... In addition, you were supposed to also pay reparations to the wronged and aggrieved as well as paying some fine to the traditional leader's court." (IKS14)

"In events that a child was harmed, and the community viewed it as such, there were justice systems in place to ensure that the wronged got recourse." (IKS12)

"Children are more exposed without IKS because with IKS it was an abomination to have an adult rape a child. That was an abomination but because now people think they are civilised, that is happening now. So, we negate IKS at the peril of our children." (IKS27)

"Vatsonga people believe in supernatural powers, so you would see that many Vatsonga people would refrain from harming the child and refrain from things like sexual abuse for the fear of punishment. In addition, some families would use supernatural powers to protect their children. ... Therefore, any sexual relationship which is unsanctioned would result in reprisals through strange sickness which would only heal after the perpetrator discloses to the family members and some damages paid, so you would have many people refrain from any wrongdoing." (IKS29)

The participants believed that the traditional Tsonga justice system contains elements that would prevent child maltreatment. African cultures have certain taboos (Thabede, 2008:238) and it is clear from the research findings that child maltreatment was seen as a taboo according to the Tsonga IKS. People who do not respect taboos would put themselves at risk for dire consequences, which may include illness or other adverse effects (Edwards, 2010:218; Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010 in Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018b:81). Traditional leaders still play an important role in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and are

responsible for promoting sound cultural values (Chigwata, 2016:70). The overseeing role of traditional leaders provide support for the participants' views that their indigenous systems could contribute to the protection of children.

Concluding the theme on the relevance of Tsonga IKS child well-being and child protection, a concern by the following participant is presented:

"I think our IKS has a role. A very big one. My only worry is that this IKS and our culture, in general, is being fast washed away by these gadgets you are using nowadays. People overly rely on radios, TVs, books, and the internet and they throw away our culture. This compromises its role. Yes, IKS is important, it helps protect children but who will use IKS to protect children? They want modern things from towns and Europe, not our 'dirty' IKS. That is a big problem we need to solve. We need to re-educate our people on the importance of IKS in protecting children; it is a cheap option." (IKS10)

This participant's suggestion correlate with calls by authors such as Makhubele and Qualinge (2008:157) for the revival of African IKS. Lombard (2019b:404) suggests that the use of indigenous knowledge can be used by social workers to support the developmental approach that accentuates prevention and socio-economic development with recognition of local contexts. In agreement, Patel (2015:138) advocates for the inclusion of IKS in social work interventions. To this effect, one of the questions posed to the participants was to ask them for their recommendations to social workers about the use of Tsonga IKS to protect children. Their responses will be discussed in the next theme.

7.2.2.10 Theme 10: Recommendations for social workers

Theme 10 focuses on the participants' recommendations for social workers working within the child protection sector within the countries under study, namely Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The various sub-themes that emerged within this theme are in support of finding an agreement between Tsonga IKS and modern practices and laws related to children.

- **Sub-theme 10.1: Knowledge and recognition of Tsonga culture and IKS**

Many of the participants recommended that social workers should get to know the Tsonga culture and IKS and recognise its relevance in modern times. Such information would enable social workers to understand Xitsonga-speaking families and communities.

"Include all the cultural practices that relate to children so that they have information on how we raise our children. That information will help them understand some of the practices from our perspective rather than for them to just assume, as they do. I think it is important to then expose them to the various IKS we have discussed ... because some just think every IKS is bad or evil. Yet, some are good, for example, what is evil about making fire using a traditional method?" (IKS21)

"I think the best way is to expose them to culture and the IKS of the Vatsonga. There is a need to also explore all the good and the bad IKS so that they are informed because some

of their criticisms of our IKS is due to them lacking information. So, there is a need to give that information to them so that they are fully aware of IKS and its roles.” (IKS27)

“They need to know us, so giving them a bit of our history and culture will help them understand who we are. You cannot work with the people you do not understand and know. Hence, it is important to know who the Vatsonga are; our history, our culture, our IKS, our perspectives on children, and our child-rearing practices. Then you can work with us.” (IKS3)

“These people from the offices do not know who we are, and the majority do not even utter a single Tsonga word; so how can they help us? They need to have an appreciation of Tsonga culture as the starting point. ... the starting point is to expose them to various aspects of cultural practices of the Vatsonga, then the IKS as they relate to their areas of child protection issues.” (IKS29)

“These government social workers have a lot of misconceptions about our practices. They lack true information about our practices, so I think it is good to take them through each practice of the Vatsonga, every IKS, and every tradition and explain how that enhanced child well-being and protection. That would help them a lot when they come to work with Tsonga communities.” (IKS11)

The research findings show a strong perception among the participants that social workers lacked knowledge about the Tsonga culture and IKS. The participants held the views that the social workers' interventions were often misguided as they were based on a lack of knowledge or on a distorted understanding of the Tsonga culture and related practices. As recommended by the participants, social workers need to be informed about Tsonga IKS, its sources, the views of the local people on children and childhood, and cultural practices, including both 'good' and 'bad' practices. In this way, social workers can interact with the members of local communities and “speak from an informed perspective”, as advised by another participant (Participant IKS13).

The need for cultural competence by social workers is widely promoted in social work and child protection literature. Hepworth et al. (2017:192) stress the importance of culturally appropriate social welfare services based on an understanding of cultural differences as “[c]ultures vary widely in their prescribed patterns of child-rearing, communication [and] family member roles” amongst others. The need for understanding the culture of service users is evident the words in above quotes by the participants that suggest that social workers “cannot work with the people you do not understand and know” (IKS3), and that the “people from the offices do not know who we are ... so how can they help us?” (IKS29).

Social workers should understand that cultural practices have specific meanings and certain functions in people's lives (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:86). Therefore, interventions by persons outside of the culture must not negate the integrity of the culture, and interventions must be acceptable by the members of the culture (Kaime, 2005:234). Cultural competence equips social workers to practice in a way that protects and preserves the dignity of people

and affirms and recognises their values (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2015:13).

- **Sub-theme 10.2: Clarify definitions of childhood**

The research findings point to uncertainties among the participants over certain terms, as what the law stipulates is at variance with Tsonga IKS. The definition of childhood was central in the data and it emerged from the research findings that there were accusations and counteraccusations between social workers and IKS experts over issues of who a child is. The participants, therefore, recommended that there should be clarification on what constitutes 'child' and 'childhood' as these terms were differently understood in the context of Tsonga IKS versus modern laws.

"Our problems with those people, is on what constitutes childhood, what constitutes child abuse and neglect. Because if they see someone at the age of 15 getting married, to them that is child marriage but to us, if that girl has been initiated, then she is qualified to get married. So, I think we need to understand each other on who is a child under IKS and culture versus what the law says so that we can work with each other with the full understanding of the views of each other." (IKS25)

"You have seen that we have a different view on who a child is as compared to what the law says ... we are not against the law, but I think it is important for them to know our understanding of childhood so that we can meet halfway on things like child labour and what they call child marriages." (IKS35)

"The issue of child and childhood, we seem to be at loggerheads there. For us, once a child goes through initiation, they are no longer a child even if they are under 18, so when that child (under 18 years) is seen married off or working, you presume that they are still children. To the Vatsonga, those are now young adults, so it is important to have social workers to understand that so that they know how best to fight issues of child marriages in this area from an informed position." (IKS7)

"I think it is also important to expose them to what characterises Tsonga childhood. Our childhood is not the same for our neighbours. For example, I told you that our children work with us in the fields and do a lot of playing during the night under the moonlight (mashusho) although those younger would still play during the day doing their role plays (madzumba). It's important to understand all this, so that if you say we are abusing the child, you should also know that we had a time set up for children to exercise their right to rest, play and leisure." (IKS3)

As indicated by the participants' quotes, the Vatsonga people do not use age as a marker to define childhood, hence what is seen as child labour and childhood marriages under the modern law, is not seen as a transgression of child rights according to Tsonga culture and IKS. The participants' views provide a clear example of differences in constructions of childhood, in which the status of children and views about their capabilities, responsibilities, and rights will vary in different cultures and societies (Gal, 2017:62). Their views of childhood clash with the definition of childhood as a person below the age of 18, as stipulated in

documents such as the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), amongst others.

Childhood will thus have different meanings in different cultures and societies, and African societies will view children in line with their culture and history (Andrews, 2019:39; Lit & Shek, 2002:105). In many African societies and cultures, including the Vatsonga, rites of passage rather than age are determinants of childhood or adulthood (Bekker, 2008:395); a practice that is followed according to Tsonga IKS, as described in Sub-theme 4.6 (rites of passage for boys and girls). In this regard, Boakye-Boaten (2010:108) distinguishes between the conceptualisation of childhood in traditional Africa and contemporary Africa; with the former accusing the CRC of holding Western views on childhood (Burman, 2008:47). As explained by the participants, it is necessary to clarify differences in the conceptions of childhood as held by modern law and as held by Tsonga IKS, as these differences would impact on practices that according to modern law are understood as child labour and child marriage.

- **Sub-theme 10.3: Defining child maltreatment**

The participants raised their concerns that certain practices in the Tsonga culture and IKS were regarded as child maltreatment according to modern laws. They provided examples that relate to differences in perceptions of child marriages, corporal punishment and child labour, and recommended that definitions of child maltreatment should therefore be clarified.

“You should (also) ask us what we think is abuse and what we think is not abuse... So, if they (social workers) can be made aware of a Tsonga understanding of child and child welfare practices and child abuse, it would help a lot. They should understand our parenting styles because some of the things they term abuse and neglect, to us is normal; that is the way we raise our children. So, if they are exposed to how we parent our children, that would help.” (IKS2)

“I think also you need to tell them (social workers) our views on this rights and abuse thing. Some of the things they term abuse, to us is not abuse. What is abuse?” (IKS3)

Some participants referred to **child marriages** that were a contentious issue between traditional Tsonga IKS and modern laws.

“They are children in your understanding but in our culture, once initiated, the girl was ready for marriage, though now because of the law that is discouraged. But the practice is still widespread in this area as part of our tradition.” (IKS6)

“It depends on what you call early child marriage, because in this system once a girl undergoes the initiation they were now regarded as adults. However, I do agree that in instances where younger girls are initiated that poses a challenge and it explains why in this area churches and some government officials end up discouraging people from undergoing the practice. However, if you look at it from another angle, this practice actually could lead to delayed sexual debut.” (IKS23)

“The challenge where we end up fighting with government authority is that some in this village sends young girls who end up being married before the age specified by the

government. That is a challenge that needs to be addressed but in addressing that challenge female initiation should not be banned, the government should find a lasting solution to ending child marriages without banning our female initiation because that will be unfair to us as a people.” (IKS28)

“We raise awareness on child marriages and teach communities that it is illegal to perpetuate that. We seem to be winning the war. At first, there was a lot of conflict between us and the locals but once we started awareness campaigns on the definition of the child and the law that prohibits child marriages we seem to be winning.” (SWK1)

The participants furthermore recommended that there should be clarity on whether **corporal punishment** amounts to abuse or not. The participants were of the view that if corporal punishment was classified as abuse, social workers should then clarify what alternative measures parents can use to discipline their children.

“Very well, a child, if they misbehave, they are beaten but we do not beat to harm; it is just to correct any wrongdoing. If a child misbehaves, it is a sign that their parents spared the rod and spoiled the child. ... If we cannot beat them what then should we use to discipline the child? For us, a spanking is part of sound parenting (laughs).” (IKS25)

“It is important to also learn our child-rearing practices so that we do not clash on them on the use of spanking on the child. It is not abusing; it is just meant to train a child to be disciplined.” (IKS33)

“In our Tsonga culture a child if they misbehave it was our practice that the father or mother would look for an appropriate whip to discipline the child through corporal punishment but now we are told that is abuse. No wonder why our children are wild nowadays. Remember, we had control mechanisms to ensure that the child was not extremely beaten up.” (IKS2)

Another concept that the participants identified, was the need for social workers to clarify the legal definition of **child labour**.

“Labour in our fields is not outsourced. We provide that labour; I, my wife and our children and grandchildren are that labour that I need to have a bumper harvest. Then you rights people you come and say, ‘No that’s abuse’. So, what will they eat if they do not work? Who should work for them, me and my wife? And when they grow up, how will they know how to plant and weed? Heh, through some schooling? For us, the best school is doing it with your elders supervising and correcting; that way we have a guarantee that our children could do this and that.” (IKS3)

“I think you must also consider explaining what constitutes to child abuse because we are confused about what they say is abuse. How can having my child working in the field be abuse? Or fetching water or firewood? That cannot be abuse.” (IKS22)

“I cannot freely train my child on doing some work in the fields; that is said to be abuse, heh? How can they comprehend adult roles if we do not teach them? You (social workers) just want our children to play and play without responsibility. That is wrong, my son, and I think that is important for you to know.” (IKS1)

“Also, what they call abuse some of it to us is not abuse for example our children go with us and work the fields and they herd the cattle. Is that abuse? There is a need to explain that from an IKS perspective so that there is convergence on this issue.” (IKS11)

“We are also working to eliminate child labour through awareness. So, we work very hard educating communities that the law does not allow children below the age of 15 years to be employed.” (SWK4)

The research findings show that the participants, who were local Tsonga IKS experts, had a different understanding of aspects such as child marriages, corporal punishment and child labour to what modern laws state. The punishment of children, child marriages and child labour are prominent issues in discussions on children’s rights in Southern Africa (Southern Africa Conference on Child Rights, 2011). *Child labour* is a politically contested terrain with child labour being regarded as harmful to children on the one hand, and, on the other hand, perspectives that most of the household chores of children do not constitute child labour (Bourdillon et al., 2010:208; Morrow & Pells, 2012:911; Morrow & Vennam, 2012:553-554). Nhenga (2008:xvi) posits that in Africa child labour is unknown given that African children are expected to actively participate in the household economy and help to meet the basic needs of children and families. *Child marriage* is still widely practiced in Africa, with harmful effects such as high mortality rates of mothers and children, and lower levels of education of girls (Human Rights Watch, 2015:12; Mwambene & Mawodza, 2017:21; Nour, 2006:1644). *Physical punishment* of children is a point of controversy between Western and African contexts. In some cultures, it is viewed as a way of disciplining children, whilst in other cultures it is viewed as abusive (Bornstein, 2013:262; Korbin, 1987 in Robinson, 2007:163). The ACRWC (African Union, 1990), to which Zimbabwe and Mozambique are signatories (Foundation for Human Rights, 2019), state that children must be protected from child labour (Article 15), child marriage (Article 21), and inhuman or degrading punishment (Article 17).

Bernard (2019:654) argues that culture could be both a protective and risk factor in child protection, stating: “While it is true that ... cultural traditions can function as a mediating factor [in] stressful environments ... a growing body of evidence has emphasised that they can also increase the risk of distinctive forms of ill-treatment for some children.” The values, beliefs and customs within the diversity of cultures in Southern Africa can thus include practices that are either beneficial or harmful to children (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28). Being aware of this fact, many participants recommended that social workers must clarify the uncertainties over legal definitions of child maltreatment.

“You should repackage what constitutes abuse and what doesn’t constitute abuse among the Vatsonga ... because the way you have packaged abuse ummmm is creating chaos in this community.” (IKS1)

“You need to teach the social workers our Tsonga child-rearing practices as I explained earlier and our views on children, childhood, and rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. That will go a long way in assisting the social worker to have an indigenous lens of looking at child protection issues. There also need to clarify or compare what the Vatsonga, using our cultural practices, view as child abuse and what the social worker

views as child abuse. That should then assist the social worker to identify areas of convergence and divergence so that they help us better understand child abuse and also that they also understand us better; why we perpetuate some of the abuses innocently thinking we are doing fine because to us that is the way we were raised.” (IKS12)

“It is also good to let them know those practices which are harmful, that will help them to understand the practices fully so that when they come to persuade the people to shun those practices, they would do so based on true information on those practices not based on myths. ... when you come with distorted information about a certain practice people naturally become defensive, they withdraw into their cocoon and hold onto their guns and defend their practice as opposed to when you first narrate the practice and expose the good things about that practice and then expose what you think are bad things. People would listen to you because they would be saying that at least they understand our practice and they appreciate the good things, so we have to change on that identified bad thing.” (IKS9)

“It also important to take them (social workers) through all the IKS as many as you can remember and try to examine how that can contribute to the well-being and protection of our children. Where culture is oppressive there is no harm in pointing it out so that it can be corrected. If you also point out harmful practices it equips them to deal with us better because they will be having facts, not myths and some misinformation. I think they have a lot of misinformation especially on issues of ‘Khomba’. This is made worse because our culture is a bit closed, it does not allow us to fully disclose everything that entails the ‘Khomba’ so outsiders end up forming their views and treat that as true.” (IKS7)

In the views of the participants, obtaining clarity on what is regarded as child maltreatment would avoid uncertainty and confusion in terms of Tsonga cultural practices that could be regarded as abuse. However, it could also help social workers to look at child protection issues through an indigenous lens. Social constructionism explains that definitions of child maltreatment may differ as people’s realities and perspectives of social issues may differ between social and cultural contexts (Andrews, 2012:39; Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71). In this way, child maltreatment is a culturally defined construction (Conley, 2010:32). The ecological systems theory also sheds light on the influence of Tsonga culture and IKS, situated in the macro system, on the different levels in the environment in which children are raised (Churchill, 2011:19; Keenan & Evans, 2010:37; Louw et al., 2014:29-30).

The participants recommended that both beneficial and harmful practices in the Tsonga culture and IKS should be explored together to create harmony between IKS and modern laws. Social workers who know the Tsonga IKS are also likely to experience less resistance from the local people when discussing indigenous practices that could harm children. These recommendations should be heeded in the sense that certain perceptions and practices are legitimised by culture and IKS and, therefore, bringing in change from outside is likely to trigger resistance in those belonging to the culture (Gough & Lynch, 2002:342; Kaime, 2005:233). As change is more likely to be accepted when supported by internal needs (Kaime, 2005:233), collaboration with members of the community can support efforts to address Tsonga cultural practices that are harmful to children.

- **Subtheme 10.4: A clear conceptualisation of children's rights**

Many of the participants mentioned that there were differences in the understanding of children's rights between modern laws and the Tsonga culture and IKS. The participants thus recommended that there should be a clear conceptualisation of children's rights. A general notion in their views was that social workers narrowly focussed on the rights of children without equally focusing on the responsibilities of children.

"Children cannot have rights without responsibility, just rights (laughs), that is killing our children, it is making them lazy. ... those social workers who come here to tell people about child rights, they focus on rights, rights, rights, and rights. We never hear them talk of responsibilities as you are telling me here." (IKS1)

"... all we hear from them (social workers) when they visit our communities to teach us about child rights ('tifanelo tavana'), they focus on rights and rights alone. So, there is a need by some for you to teach them that there are responsibilities for the child as well, I think that would help. I do not think these social workers know that children have responsibilities because all they hammer to our children and us (is child rights). So, there is a need for them to be exposed to child responsibilities as well. I think that's the only way to produce a fully responsible citizen. ... I think these government workers working in child protection they overemphasise rights and rights alone. That is not in line with our IKS and culture. In our Tsonga culture, children are also duty bearers, they have to respect their elders and to help out in the fields and other tasks." (IKS3)

"Indeed, there is some confusion among the local people over who is a child and what are their rights but let me hasten to tell you that within Tsonga cultural practices there are a lot of positive cultural practices which enhance the realisation of children's rights. ... So, there is a need to clarify this legal position to the local communities to ensure that they align themselves to the law." (SKW5)

"I suggest that the social workers be taught about children's obligation to the family. What is happening currently is wrong; they just come here and begin to just say children have got rights and it seems children are just free to do whatever they want. That is destroying them (children) and is destroying our culture. Children ought to have respect for their elders not to just leave them as wild as they are." (IKS6)

The social constructionism theory, as discussed in the previous sub-theme, can be related to the research findings that reveal that the local Tsonga communities have their understanding of child rights which in some instances does not match the social worker's conception of child rights. Besides, the findings point to the views that social workers' concept of children's rights is not shared by the Tsonga communities who view children's rights as an obstacle to child responsibilities. As discussed in Sub-theme 3.4, the Vatsonga people place a high value on raising children to be self-reliant and assume responsibility. This "cultural model of virtue" (Levine & Norman, 2001 in Quinn & Mageo, 2013:21) manifest in childrearing practices that are geared towards raising children to achieve desired competencies in a certain cultural context and are enacted in the caregiving practices of the culture (Bornstein, 2013:260). Of interest, is that the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), Article 31, states that children have responsibilities towards their family and society, which includes to duty to respect parents,

superiors and elders. However, according to social constructionism (Schenk, 2019:71), constructions of responsibilities may also differ among different cultures.

The research findings show that the differing views on children's rights and children's responsibilities seem to cause adversity between Vatsonga elders and social workers. The conflict between social work as human rights profession and the values of different cultures place social workers in a difficult position in that they have to advocate for human rights, but must at the same time be sensitive to the specific cultural context (Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:81). Mkabela (2014:288-289) highlights a significant point in human rights education from a collectivist paradigm, namely that the interrelatedness of human rights and responsibilities should be accepted, and that individual rights must be promoted together with the harmony of the collective system. Children's rights in traditional communities should be addressed with a clear understanding of local cultural values and norms; with the recognition that international child rights norms may challenge local cultural beliefs and practices; and with the collaboration of elders and community members to find solutions that are relevant to the community (Kaime, 2005:235-237). In this regard, Kaime (2005:234) advises that it is important for social workers to collaboratively seek solutions with members of the specific community, as was also advised by the participants.

- **Subtheme 10.5: Collaboration based on respect and harmony**

Some participants recommended that social workers should be respectful to the local people and their culture when working in indigenous communities.

"They (social workers) have their own culture in which they are entitled to practice it, but as people who work with us, it is good for them to know our systems ('nawu') and cultural practices so that there is unity between us and them. ... they must know what we think works on child rights. They should know that we have our traditional 'social workers' embedded in our kinship system and they can utilise that system for the better of the children." (IKS10)

"I think they should also allow us to continue to initiate our children because it is important to us and they should be following our cultural practices, and respect those cultural practices, so they need to be taught a bit about Tsonga cultural practices." (IKS19)

"I have also noted that when they come here to our communities they come here with their pre-conceived perceptions that we abuse children, we make children work and that we cause child marriages among many things they accuse us. They do so without an understanding of Tsonga culture, tradition, beliefs and justice systems. If they have an appreciation of these things it would be easier for them to work with us to address some of the challenges our culture pose to children because our culture was not made in heaven, it was made here on earth by people. So, there are bad things as well which need attention but there are also good things which need acknowledgment and consolidation by the government, otherwise, we will be a people without culture very soon. If we continue to shun our culture and IKS, I tell you just some few years to come, Vatsonga people and other African ethnic groups will be a people without any culture and knowledge of their own." (IKS38)

“You should teach them (social workers) that we have our child protection systems. They should know them and be able to compare them with the modern child protection system.”
(IKS22)

As observed in the above quotes, the participants had strong views on the need for social workers to show respect for the Tsonga culture and IKS and to work collaboratively on identifying aspects of their culture that could be beneficial or harmful to children. Although African culture and IKS contain some harmful practices (*cf.* Kreitzer, 2019:41; Luwangula et al., 2019:136, Mukushi et al., 2019b:104-105), the literature also provides evidence of effective indigenous social systems that were in place before colonisation to support and protect vulnerable members of society (*cf.* Kreitzer, 2019:40; Mupedziswa et al., 2019:25). The negative reaction of the participants who perceived social workers to be disrespectful of the traditional Tsonga culture and IKS, could be explained by the statement by Makhubele (2011:162) that a respectful attitude by social workers is particularly important in communities whose culture and IKS have previously been met by degradation and marginalisation.

A social work participant raised the importance of social workers' duty to challenge harmful cultural practices:

“I have no problem with social workers collaborating with indigenous people and embrace positive cultural practices. However, as social workers we should not glorify harmful cultural practices, we should expose them. We should build on positive cultural practices and even thrive to see a merger of positive cultural practices with our formal child protection system.”
(SWK6)

The participant's views reflect concerns over harmful practices of African IKS (*cf.* Kreitzer, 2019:40; Nwoye, 2017:50; Ramphabana et al., 2019:174; Sewpaul, 2016a:34; UNICEF, 2017:1). Amidst valid arguments for embracing indigenous knowledge in social work training and practice (*cf.* Lombard, 2019b:406; Patel, 2015:138), Briggs (2005:107) cautions against over-idealising indigenous knowledge in practice. The integration of indigenous knowledge in social work should thus involve a critical consideration of and frank discussions on the advantages and the limitations of traditionalism (Midgley, 2017 in Lombard, 2019b:403; Twokerize, 2019:52).

The ecological systems perspective explains that the exchange of information that allow systems to evaluate and make changes (i.e., feedback), may be met by efforts in the community or system to maintain homeostasis (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61; Mbedzi, 2019:84). To this end, interventions of persons outside the culture, may be met with resistance (Gough & Lynch, 2002:342; Kaime, 2005:233). It is thus important to base discourse on a clear understanding of and respect for the local cultural values and the meaning ascribed to them, to consult village elders and involve community members, and to avoid an elitist, top-down

approach that is likely to be rejected by the community (Kaime, 2005:234-237; Makhubele (2011:162; Mtetwa & Muchacha, 2017:126).

- **Subtheme 10.6: Raising community awareness of modern laws**

Most of the participants in Mozambique and Zimbabwe were of the view that local communities were not aware of modern child protection laws. Examples of specific practices in the Tsonga culture that were regarded as harmful to children included child marriages, the use of girls in reparations, and prioritising children's chores over their school attendance. Although these practices seemed to decline because of modern law, the local communities were not always aware of the modern laws.

"An awareness programme I think should include what IKS says on certain rights and compared to what the law says. It could also include what could be recommended to ensure that there is harmony between IKS and the modern laws in our country because some of our practices clash with the law or the law clashes with our IKS. It is important to identify those areas and share them with the social workers." (IKS22)

"You have seen that we have a different view on who a child is as compared to what the law says, although we are not against the law. But I think it is important for them to know our understanding of childhood so that we can meet halfway on things like child labour and what they call child marriages." (IKS30)

"... to make our communities aware that even if a child has gone through initiation and are now adults, 'adults' below the age of eighteen are just treated as children and enjoy the protection. That way it's easy to convince our people than to simply say all these are children. No, to us some children are adults whilst some adults are children (participant laughs)." (IKS7)

"We also have instances where a family could marry off a child at a very young age. The child was supposed to grow up in that family until such a time that she was initiated, then that family would take her as a wife. All this happened through culture and IKS although some of these negative practices are now being shunned as government amounts pressure on us." (IKS27)

"I think, what is a bad practice, is the use of girls in reparations over issues which they do not know about. But I am happy that this practice has faded away over time." (IKS39)

"I think the cases of child marriages are going down because people now know that it is not allowed under the new government laws." (IKS21)

Social work participants explained that discrepancies between traditional Tsonga cultural practices and modern laws caused conflict between them and local community members.

"We seem to clash with local people because they are not aware of the country's child protection laws. Although, with the advent of community-based child protection structures such as the National Case Management System people are slowly grasping it. Though, there is still a big need to raise awareness of local communities on child protection laws." (SWK11).

"You see, the biggest threat to child protection among the Vatsonga are some negative cultural practices like their obsession with wealth through livestock and crop production. During school calendar children are made to attend to domestic chores including herding cattle and working the fields. This is a direct violation of children's rights which we continue

to confront on daily basis. We will not win this war using a fist approach but through educating the communities on what the law says and the implications of their practices on the children's future. (SWK10)

The participants, both IKS experts and social workers, suggested that there was therefore a need for social workers to raise awareness of these laws in communities. Zimbabwe and Mozambique are both signatories to the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990), with relevant domestic legislation for the protection of children, as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.7. The option to educate community members on current legislation was viewed as the only way through which the uncertainties over legal definitions and modern child protection practices could be clarified. The participants suggested that, at the same time, the process should also show an understanding of their local culture.

UNICEF (2010b:27) is of the view that there is a need to make child protection culturally relevant to local communities through the incorporation of IKS into modern child protection laws and systems. There is also a need to ensure that modern child protection laws co-exist with traditional laws or at least show some respect to traditional systems (Mkabela, 2014:287). In the suggestions by Kaime (2005:235-237) on discourse with traditional communities on children's rights, the author makes the comment that change cannot be achieved by legislation (only) without discussions on local values and practices. Mkabela (2014:287) proposes that *ubuntu* can serve as an ethical framework for discourse around human rights, including harmful cultural practices and modern law. In terms of change, it should be noted that culture and IKS is non-static, and changes over time to respond to new ideas and needs (Kaime, 2005:233; Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:85; Meko, 2018:12).

- **Sub-theme 10.7: Utilise the strengths of the culture**

The participants were aware that IKS was not spared by acculturation but were eager for some of the beneficial practices based on the Tsonga culture and IKS to be revived so that they are utilised for the betterment of children. They recommended that social workers utilise the strengths of the culture in child protection, including the traditional socialisation methods of the Vatsonga people.

"For me, I think (social workers) should capture all the IKS of the Vatsonga and how that is helping or can help in the well-being of children. I say, 'or can help' because in some instances the practices are dying, so they need revival." (IKS26)

"I think you need to teach them to know various IKS which corresponds to certain rights of children. Let them know both good and bad of our practices so that they also help us to package our good IKS in a way which can be acceptable to this modern generation which thinks that everything Tsonga is violating the rights of the child." (IKS10)

"Our songs, dance and games, 'mbale-mbale, xinyambela, xisveru, tigava, malembetsu, mandlozi' and 'machomani' all those games and their related songs, this made up our lives and the lives of the children, so it's important. They should know that our children were

treated with a variety of songs, games, and stories during their leisure and playtime. Their games and songs were not only meant to entertain but it educated our children on an array of issues ... always touch on our rites of passage, the 'khomba' system.” (IKS29)

“Tsonga culture is rich. We need to capitalise on its positive practices whilst working to eliminate the negative practices. Things like child marriages have to stop whereas good things like community care, kinship care, and siblings care and even their mentoring by aunts and uncles should be embraced. We do not have adequate formal platforms for girls and boys to access information such as on sex, sexuality and reproductive health, hence the aunts and uncles can play a big role.” (SWK9)

“Social workers have contributed to the decimation of local cultures through campaigning against them without applying critical thinking. It is high time that as practitioners we embrace positive cultural practices for the benefit of the child. Among the Vatsonga, practices such as kinship care need to be revived and consolidated. Things like children’s games, songs, dances, poetry and fantasy plays need to be revived as powerful tools for socialisation.” (SWK7)

In contrast to the above views that the Tsonga IKS could support child well-being and child protection, some of the social work participants that worked in child protection within the research sites only mentioned aspects of Tsonga IKS that were at variance with the law. Hence, these participants seemed to have little awareness of strengths of the Tsonga IKS that they could accommodate in their practice, and shared the following views:

“Tsonga culture is oppressive to the child in some instances, for example as I have already shared, they are a patriarchal society just as many ethnic groups in Zimbabwe; so children are just supposed to be seen but not heard” (SWK1)

“Another practice which I think is also a fertile breeding ground for child rights violation is polygamy. So polygamous families are more likely to suffer from poverty and we end up having a vicious cycle of poverty” (SWK2)

“Our challenge with IKS and cultural practices is the 'khomba' system for girls where girls are initiated into womanhood at an early age, and that are driving child marriages” (SWK4)

In light of the limited resources to deal with the extensive protection needs of children in Sub-Saharan Africa (Davis et al., 2012:31), the use of the inherent strengths in traditional cultures and IKS, as suggested by most of the participants, could create resources that can be utilised in the protection of children. In situations where social work resources are limited, Hepworth et al. (2017:433) point to the role of social workers to seek resources within the ecological systems of the local communities. Additional advantages to this approach, is that the incorporation of local knowledge and experiences can enhance the sustainability of interventions (Mtetwa & Muchacha, 2017:126), and that community-based child protection initiatives will support the local relevance of work (Wessels, 2015:8). When taking the responses by the participants into account, it appears that not all social workers are aware of potential strengths in IKS; an aspect that support the development of an awareness programme for social workers, as was the goal of this study.

- **Sub-theme 10.8 Obtain a basic knowledge of local language**

Several participants recommended that social workers must have a basic knowledge of the local language of service users.

“Then, language, language, language is very important. Social workers should have a basic understanding of the Tsonga words especially those related to their work like ‘child’, ‘parent’, ‘right’, and so on.” (IKS9)

“I agree in total, social workers should strive to have some basic understanding of the local language of their clients. It is not good that we have to speak through interpreters or forcing clients to speak in exotic languages so that we can understand their story. It would be good for schools of social work to ensure that they add some modules on local languages. These can be borrowed from the linguistics department.” (SWK8)

“The challenge we then face with the government social workers is that they cannot communicate in Xitsonga. Most of them communicate in Portuguese and that is a challenge. Given this challenge, I would recommend that at least they have basic Xitsonga language to allow them to converse with us.” (IKS14)

“As social workers, we are in trouble when we fail to speak the local language. This means that we are likely to misinterpret our clients. You cannot be an effective helper when you do not understand the language of your clients. So, there is need for social workers to learn vernacular languages for effective assistance to its clients.” (SWK6)

“My recommendations are that they should learn the Xitsonga language; not what is currently happening where we have to struggle to speak in Shona only to be heard by them. They should also learn the Xitsonga language just as we thrive to learn Shona language to facilitate communication.” (IKS14)

As shown in the above quotes, language was an aspect that hampered clear communication between social workers and the local Xitsonga people in the areas where the research was conducted. The participants from the sample of IKS experts expressed displeasure in the use of Portuguese, English or the social worker’s language to communicate with them as this led to exclusion of most of the people who may only understand Xitsonga. They recommended that it would benefit social workers to learn the basics of their service users’ language; a view that was supported by some of the participants in the sample of social workers.

For social workers, language barriers often pose challenges for child protection in host communities (O’Leary et al., 2018:4-5). In addition, language is a significant element in African IKS (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:14). The lyrics of songs contain idioms and expressions in the local language, from which children can learn and confirm their ethnic identity (Madalane, 2014:40, 52; Nompula, 2011:92). The significance of language in culture makes it important for social workers to obtain some competency in the language in the cultural context in which they work (Shokane & Masoga, 2018:14). Language is thus an important element of social work practice in diverse cultures (Robinson, 2007:111).

- **Subtheme: 10.9: Introduce social work to local people**

It became clear from the research findings that the role of social workers was not widely known in the local communities where the research was conducted. Some of the participants therefore recommended that social workers must make social work known to local people.

“I am not well versed with what social workers do, so it will be difficult for me to make any recommendations.” (IKS25)

“I do not know these people (social workers) you are talking about.” (IKS31)

“The major challenge in our work in these communities is that social work is not known to them. They just know us as those people who give them relief during droughts and disasters, beyond that nothing.” (SWK3)

“In Mozambique, social work is not only unknown by locals, it is also unappreciated by the central authorities. As such there is a mix-up; any person of any qualification in this country can find themselves performing social work roles. It is worse when it comes to locals; they do not know what a social worker does.” (SWK2)

The lack of knowledge about social work in local communities, as expressed by the participants, was experienced by the researcher when the local IKS experts did not know what the profession of social work is all about as they were only introduced to it upon the researcher having explained what the social worker does. Social workers who participated in the study also professed that members of their local communities did not know about the social work profession. The participants' perceptions buttress views that social work in Africa is largely alien to its people due to its Western orientation and its foreign genesis traced back to Europe and America (Kreitzer, 2019:39, 41; Mwansa, 2011:4-6).

The research findings discussed in Theme 10 highlight elements of the two theoretical frameworks of the study. Aspects such as cultural practices that are seen as being in conflict with modern laws and with social work practice based on Western theories, show the influence of culture and IKS (the macrosystem) on the entire ecological environment, as described in the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (Louw et al., 2014:29-30). Differences in the understanding of concepts such as childhood, children's rights, and harmful versus beneficial cultural practices reflect the notion that social phenomena are socially constructed, as explained by social constructionism theory (Moore, 2016:473-474; Schenk, 2019:71). Social workers working with diverse groups must therefore familiarise themselves with and be sensitive to cultural values, norms and nuances, the extent of acculturation as well as social and political structures in the community (Hepworth et al., 2017:433). As evident in the research findings, heed can also be taken of the authors' advice on the value of learning from the members of the group, when they propose that “[r]elying on the group or community as key informants and cultural interpreters and positioning yourself as a learner, you gain an understanding of the community or group resource needs” (Hepworth et al., 2017:433).

7.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher presented the empirical findings of the first phase data collection of the study, which was a qualitative study involving a sample of 40 Tsonga IKS experts and a second sample consisting of 14 child protection social workers in the Chiredzi and Chokwe districts of Zimbabwe and Mozambique respectively. A total of ten themes were identified during data analysis, which focused on aspects such as the Tsonga IKS, conceptualisations of childhood, child well-being and children's rights, practices related to child-rearing and the socialisation of children, and dealing with social problems. Although some cultural practices were seen to be harmful to children, it was emphasised that many of the traditional practices could be relevant to the protection of children. However, the integration of IKS and social work practice would require knowledge and clarification of concepts related to both IKS and social work. The research findings presented in this chapter were used to develop an awareness programme for social workers on the potential use of IKS in child protection services. A prototype of the programme was pilot tested. Information on the programme and the empirical findings of the pilot test will be presented in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8

DEVELOPMENT AND PILOT TESTING OF AN AWARENESS PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL WORKERS ON THE ROLE OF IKS IN CHILD PROTECTION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Findings from the study of literature indicated that not sufficient social work resources to deal with the extensive instances of child maltreatment experienced on the African continent (Davis et al., 2012:31; Kirst-Ashman, 2013:295). Although child abuse on other continents is also problematic and child protection in Western contexts also experience challenges, in Africa there are cultural aspects which also influence conceptualisations of social life and social problems (Hepworth et al., 2017:206; Wilson et al., 2008:468). In Chapter 7, the empirical findings on Tsonga IKS and its influence on perceptions and practices that could compromise but also uphold the protection rights of children were presented. Based on that information, an awareness programme for social workers on the possible use of IKS in child protection was developed, based on Tsonga IKS as a case study.

In this chapter, the researcher describes the development and pilot testing of the awareness programme. The programme was developed following the process of intervention research as posited by Rothman and Thomas (1994:28) as well as Fraser et al. (2009:37) and is a direct output of the earlier phases of the study. This chapter focuses on the third and fourth phases of the intervention research process. Phase Three entailed the design of the planned intervention and, concurrently, the development of a measurement instrument to gain feedback on the intervention (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:482-483; Fraser et al., 2009:30-31). Phase Four involved the pilot testing of a prototype of the intervention in a real-world setting (Fraser et al., 2009:31).

The content of the chapter addresses the fourth objective of the study, namely, to develop and pilot-test an awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection. The researcher will utilise the pilot testing of the awareness programme to ultimately inform the advanced development and dissemination of the programme (Fraser et al., 2009:32-33). These last two stages of the intervention research process do not form part of this study and will be completed at a later stage.

8.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AWARENESS PROGRAMME

In this section, the researcher will describe the rationale for the development of the awareness programme on the use of IKS in child protection, the goal and objectives of the programme,

as well as the key components that were considered in the development of the programme. Subsequently, an outline of the programme will be presented.

8.2.1 Rationale for the awareness programme

The awareness programme was developed to fulfil the goal of the study, which was to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS. As discussed in earlier chapters, Sub-Saharan Africa lacks effective child protection systems, and existing child protection systems are characterised by a litany of challenges in delivering child protection services due to factors such as a lack of resources and services (Atilola, 2014:1; Conley, 2010:40; Davis et al., 2012:13; Kirst-Ashman, 2013:295; Watkins & Quattri, 2016:20). Hepworth et al. (2017:431) recommend mobilising natural resources in communities that lack social work services. The notion that the region had effective child protection systems in place in pre-colonial times (Mushunje, 2006:16), led the researcher to an exploration of indigenous knowledge that may shed light on natural ecological resources in traditional communities that could enhance the protection of children. The study focused on the culture and IKS of the Xitsonga people.

Cultural factors are said to be mediating or risk factors within the field of child protection. In this sense, the literature review for this study showed that conceptualisations of child well-being and child protection may differ in different societies, based on cultural beliefs and practices (refer to Chapter 5). Child protection strategies are often developed in Western countries, where constructions of child well-being and child rights may differ from those in non-Western contexts (Conley, 2010:31; D'cruz, 2004:99-101, O'Leary et al., 2018:7). With reference to the African continent, Ross (2008:368) argues that the social work profession needs to develop its own indigenous African social work intervention models exclusively from within Africa. The rationale behind this argument is that child rights, childhood, child protection, and child well-being are social constructs, hence Africa ought to make its contribution to intervention strategies (Bekker, 2008:395; Giesinger, 2017:202; Pupavac, 2011:287). However, the recognition of IKS is a neglected area in social work (Patel, 2015:138).

8.2.2 Goal and objectives of the awareness programme

The goal of the awareness programme was to raise awareness among child protection social workers on IKS and how elements of IKS could be used in social work interventions for child protection, with Tsonga IKS as a case study.

To achieve the above goal, the following objectives were set for the programme:

- To introduce social workers to the concept of IKS.
- To make social workers aware of the manifestation of IKS in everyday life.
- To sensitise social workers to variations in constructions of children's rights and child protection based on IKS and its related cultural beliefs and practices.
- To reflect on the interplay between IKS and legislation, with reference to the Zimbabwean legal framework for child protection.
- To raise awareness of potential positive and/or harmful elements of IKS related to the protection of children
- To sensitise social workers in terms of factors that can influence their involvement in child protection in traditional communities from the perspectives of Tsonga IKS experts.

The above objectives were considered in the development of the awareness programme. A key task of the researcher in this phase was to convert the information obtained from theory and the empirical study into programme theory and programme materials (Fraser et al., 2009:31).

8.2.3 Programme development

The development of the programme started with the identification of a practice-related problem, which was related to the rationale for the study (Fraser et al., 2009:29; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:463). The awareness programme for social workers on the role of IKS in child protection was developed based on the literature review for the study as well as on the research findings of phase one of data collection. Programme content based on the literature chapters on children's rights, child protection, and IKS were included as background for the content on Tsonga IKS as a case study and the potential use of IKS in child protection, which were based on the data collected in the earlier phase of the study. The interpretation of the research findings was guided by theoretical frameworks for the study, namely the ecological systems theory and social constructionism. The ecological systems theory emphasises the all-encompassing influence of culture, as situated in the macro system, on people's lives (Louw et al., 2014:29-30), while social constructionism recognises that people make meaning of their world based on their personal experiences and belief systems, including their cultural, religious and spiritual beliefs (Schenk, 2019:68-69). As such, the programme was designed based on the views and lived experiences of the participants in the first phase of the study.

The programme for social workers was designed to raise their awareness of ways in which culture and IKS, based on a Tsonga case study, influence the norms, values, and practices that could be relevant to the protection of children. A central tenet underlying the programme was that social workers working in diverse settings should familiarise themselves with the local

social and cultural values and norms (Hepworth et al., 2017:433). Interventions are often aimed at changing knowledge, skills, and opportunities (Fraser et al., 2009:31). The goal of the intervention for this research was to provide the participants with knowledge and insights that could raise their awareness of the possible use of IKS in their work as social workers in the field of child protection. A key task of the researcher was thus to convert the theoretical components and empirical findings of the first stage of data collection into programmatic descriptions, which would include the objectives, inputs or content, and activities to promote the outcomes of the programme (Fraser et al., 2009:31, 56). The procedural elements in the programme should be described in sufficient detail so that it can be replicated (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:483). In the following section, the researcher provides a detailed overview of the contents of the programme, followed by a summary of the programme in Table 8.5.

The programme was developed for a one-day group-based presentation and included relevant content as well as activities that could reinforce the content of the programme (Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:463). Seven central themes or sections were identified and were presented as different modules in the programme. Each participant received a training manual with an overview of the contents of the programme as well as the seven identified modules.

- **Introduction to the programme**

Before the presentation of the programme commenced, the researcher restated the goal of the programme and provided an overview of the programme's objectives and content themes. The participants' role in the pilot testing of the prototype of the programme was explained and general group norms were agreed upon. Informed consent letters were distributed to participants who had to sign the letters to grant the researcher permission to involve them in the study and explaining aspects such as confidentiality and the use of the data collected.

8.2.3.1 Module 1: Indigenous Knowledge Systems, culture and acculturation

The rationale of this module was to provide participants with a uniform background knowledge on the **concept of IKS**. The intention was to allow the participants and the researcher/presenter to share a common understanding of concepts related to IKS. The module focused on what IKS is composed of and, in particular, the following concepts: that IKS is embedded in culture, a definition of culture, and the role of acculturation. The concept of IKS is understood as referring to a unique body of knowledge inherent in most African societies which they use to solve some of their local problems and needs (Ossai, 2010:2). Numerous terms are used to refer to IKS and some of these terms include 'African Indigenous Knowledge' (AIKS), 'Local Knowledge' (LK), and 'Traditional Knowledge' (TK). A host of literature posits that IKS is unique to a particular culture and that it is informed and related to

almost all life domains embedded in local people's customs, cultural practices, rituals, and oral stories, with African IKS having its roots in the traditions of Africa (Bitzer & Menkveld, 2004:227; Castiano & Mkabela, 2012:v; Dondolo, 2005:110; Magid, 2011:138). Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) is age-old knowledge passed through oral traditions from one generation to another. This oral tradition includes poetry, totem recitals, storytelling, myths, legends, and genealogy, among many oral tradition methods. IKS is closely linked to its culture of origin (Dondolo, 2005:114; Magid, 2011:137; Ossai, 2010:2-4; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1).

Culture is a complex term and hard to define and needs to be understood by social workers as culture influences people's worldview and lived experiences. People construct and conceive their understanding of culture through a process of social construction (García Coll & Magnuson, 2009:97). Culture is associated with people's beliefs, norms, attitudes, practices, standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, art and skills, which are transmitted from one generation to another (Gough & Lynch, 2002:341; Kreitzer, 2019:42; Sue & Sue, 2008:140). In this way, culture influences social practices within a given community hence it is central in guiding how professionals and service users behave. Culture in relation to child protection could be understood more holistically through associating it with people's worldview, food, dress code, language, child-rearing practices, healing techniques, notions of wellness, and self-identity, amongst others (Gough & Lynch, 2002:341).

The pervasive influence of culture is described in the ecological systems theory, where culture forms part of the macro system as the system that influences human functioning in the micro, meso, and exosystems (Louw et al., 2014:29-30). There are slight differences within cultures of Sub-Saharan Africa, however, the majority of practices are fundamentally the same. In sub-Saharan Africa, the Afrocentric worldview is grounded in the cultural traditions of the African people, with shared cultural beliefs and practices, for example, those revolving around traditional healing, spirituality, the belief in a Supreme Being and the ancestors, the spirit of *ubuntu*, and rites such as puberty rites of passage, birth rites, and death rites (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:13-14; Nwoye, 2017:38, 46-48; Thabede, 2008:233). Culture is both learned and shared through people's interactions (Korbin, 2002:637; Sue & Sue, 2008:140). No culture is static but changes over time; however, certain elements of culture endures in perpetuity (Korbin, 2002:637-644; Thabede, 2008:238).

Knowledge of the phenomenon of acculturation prevents social workers from adopting a generalised view of people belonging to a certain cultural group. Acculturation could be understood as the extent to which a person maintains his or her culture of origin or adapt to another culture (García Coll & Magnuson, 2009:99). Acculturation occurs when people are

exposed to other cultures due to factors such as urbanisation, industrialisation, and colonialism (Maluleke, 2012:3; Magezi, 2018:2). The impact of acculturation may not be uniform across all individuals of the same cultural group (Korbin, 2002:637, 641). Acculturation can have a bigger impact on the younger generation due to the influence of the media, education, and western religious faith such as Christianity. In addition, rural people are less affected by acculturation as compared to urban dwellers. As culture is a source of a person's identity, many Africans living in urban areas still resort to some traditional practices such as processes and rituals related to marriage, death, burial, and initiation. As an example, the research findings showed that the rural areas in Zimbabwe and Mozambique are still regarded as a haven of IKS and culture, hence people who would have migrated from their rural areas of origin still find time to reconnect with their rural areas to practice their culture which may not be practiced in urban areas.

ACTIVITY 1: In two groups discuss and share incidences when you have to go back to the rural areas to practice some of IKS within your culture of origin, if relevant. Appoint a representative to give feedback on your discussion.

8.2.3.2 Module 2: The Vatsonga people as a case study for understanding IKS

This section offered a brief overview of the history of the Vatsonga people, which was used as a background to the examples of how IKS influence the social context of communities. The information was meant to provide context to the concrete examples of the influence of IKS on people's everyday lives as well as to highlight how IKS relates to social constructions within the ecological environment, which could influence the work of social workers who deliver child protection services. However, participants should keep in mind that other cultures will have different beliefs and practices. Central aspects of the history and cultural norms, beliefs, and practices of the Vatsonga people were highlighted.

A brief historical account of the Vatsonga people described them as having a complex and confusing history which is difficult to track given that they are made up of multiple tribes that make up the Tsonga ethnic group. Their history is scarcely documented in a few Dutch and Portuguese documents (Levine, 2005:210; South African History Online, 2016) but the majority of historians posit that Tsonga ethnic group is originally comprised of two groups, namely the Rhonga (meaning people of the East) and the Shangani (meaning followers of Soshangage) (Malaza, 2012:7). They originally inhabited communities that stretched from St Lucia Bay in Northern Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa up to the Save River in Mozambique, South-Eastern Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and Mpumalanga and the Kruger National Park in South Africa (Mathebula et al., 2007:1). Recent statistics estimate the Tsonga population to

amount to about six million people living in four countries which are South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Joshua Project, 2017:1).

The Tsonga ethnic group is regarded as one of the traditional African groups who adopt an Afrocentric worldview (Thabede, 2008:233). These cultural groups believe in the power of the ancestors (*swikwembu*) and their role in the lives of the living (Thabede, 2008:239). They do not worship their ancestors but honour them through rituals and libations. When faced by a crisis they enlist the services of a *nyanga*(diviner) to lead in the performance of rituals or to establish the root cause of the problem, and these family rituals are done at a family place of worship (*ganzelo*) (Thabede, 2008:240). The ethnic groups who adopt an Afrocentric worldview have a special relationship with nature (*ntumbuluko*) which is linked to the impersonal power of heaven (*tilo*). They believe in witchcraft, rites of passage, and traditional healing; hence, calamities such as death, divorce, illness, and accidents are viewed as linked to witchcraft (Thabede, 2008:241). The Tsonga initiation practice is not divorced from what the Xhosa and Zulu ethnic groups do where the initiates withdraw from the society to a place of seclusion in the forests to receive teachings on the requirements of adulthood (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:128-129). The worldview of the Vatsonga people informs their perceptions and meanings assigned to events, as explained by the theory of social constructionism (Schenk, 2019:68-69).

8.2.3.3 Module 3: The manifestation of IKS in everyday life

The rationale behind this section was to ensure that participants understand the different ways in which IKS would influence people's everyday life. Using Tsonga IKS as a case study, the section provided an overview of various practices through which IKS manifests itself in daily life. IKS manifests through all aspects of life; beliefs, values, rituals, and practices including, but not limited to dance, music and songs, traditional medicine, arts and crafts, reverence of ancestors, agricultural practices, burial ceremonies, proverbs, sayings, idioms, traditional legal systems, traditional systems of governance among other aspects of life (Mapara, 2009:140-143; Ossai, 2010:1-5; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1).

The empirical findings of the first phase of data collection of the study (see Chapter 7) confirmed that the Vatsonga people view many cultural practices which they practice as constituting IKS in their area. IKS was viewed as part of culture preservation that has stood the test of time and it was tied to their local environment, the resources, and the weather as well as to their beliefs, values, spirituality, and many cultural practices. Table 8.1 shows examples of IKS of the Vatsonga people that were highlighted in the programme to enhance social workers' understanding of the practical manifestation of IKS.

Table 8.1: Manifestation of IKS

HOW IKS MANIFEST IN EVERYDAY LIFE	
Culture	Culture is a broad and all-encompassing term that includes beliefs, rituals, values, traditions, and most practices under IKS. This is the people’s way of life and IKS is embedded in cultural practices.
Values	The Vatsonga uphold values of respect for and generosity towards others. Values include the following: privacy, unity, self-reliance, integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, and love and care for one another.
Beliefs	Beliefs include beliefs in traditional healing, sacrifice to ancestors, and the belief in heaven (<i>tilo</i>), among others.
Spirituality	Spirituality entails all the beliefs in the supernatural world. In the case of the Vatsonga, their spirituality is tied to aspects such as the land, ancestors, heaven (<i>tilo</i>), and belief in traditional healers. Everything that happens is regarded as having a supernatural explanation.
Reverence of ancestors	Among the Africans, adults who pass away are revered as beings closer to the spiritual world, and that they have a role to protect the surviving family members. Ancestors receive some sacrifices and libations through the pouring of beer and tobacco at a tree of worship (<i>Ganzilo</i>) or a family temple (<i>ntapela</i> or <i>ntumba</i>).
Rituals	Various rituals among the Vatsonga such as naming rituals, birth rituals, death and burial rituals, and rites of passage are practised as part of IKS.
Puberty initiation ceremonies	These ceremonies are part of the numerous rituals done by most African ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. Among the Vatsonga this is practised through the <i>Khomba</i> system through which boys and girls are initiated into adulthood.
Burial ceremonies	Their burial ceremony is unique to the Vatsonga people, whilst some of the practices are shared by many other ethnic groups in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The ceremony is conducted according to guidelines for how the grave is prepared, who is supposed to attend, the application of traditional herbs to the mourners, a ceremony of bringing the spirit of the dead back to the homestead, amongst others.
Traditional medicine	Traditional medicine is part of the spirituality and belief system of the Vatsonga people and includes the consultation of a traditional healer (<i>nyanga</i>) who then prescribes herbs, roots, and barks to be used to treat

	various ailments including dehydration in children known as <i>xipande</i> .
Child-rearing practices	Child-rearing includes parenting practices such as the use of corporal punishment to instil discipline into the child as well as children's responsibilities for household chores and the care of younger siblings.
Family life and relationships	Relationships are based on respect for one another and form a basis for the apportionment of privileges and assistance. There is a close involvement of the extended family and the practice of communal and kinship care is based on existing relationships
Lifestyle	The lifestyle is an all-encompassing term made up of the socio-economic and cultural life of the people. The Tsonga lifestyle includes their survival strategies such as agriculture and land, food preparation, fruits gathering, the use of grinding stones, as well as their arts and crafts and the use of stories, songs, and dance.
Dress code	The way the Xitsonga-speaking people dress and often the choice of colours form part of their IKS.
Heritage sites, names of mountains and rivers	Heritage sites, rivers, and mountains play a central role among the Vatsonga. Their worship is tied to these features; hence heritage sites, rivers, and mountains are linked to Tsonga spirituality.
Language	Language and dialects are part of the manifestation of IKS. Language is a medium through which IKS is passed from one generation to another.

Literature findings and actual data findings from the interviews done with community IKS experts reveal that there are similarities in Tsonga IKS in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The similarities mainly centre on language, the culture, and belief system as well as in aspects such as their rights of passage, spirituality, reverence for agriculture and cattle, and their totems, dances, songs, games, and storytelling. This gives testimony that the Vatsonga people are naturally one ethnic group despite them inhabiting different countries. However, acculturation in view of the Tsonga case study has taken its toll on various IKS elements such as storytelling, songs, dances, and games, which are practices that are regarded as beneficial to child-rearing among the local people in rural Sub-Saharan Africa.

8.2.3.4 Module 4: Children's rights

A section on child rights - the human rights for children – was considered as a relevant background for the discussion on IKS and child protection and constituted a fundamental

element of the programme. Child rights are not divorced from the fundamental rights entitled to humanity in the bill of rights as contained in the Universal Declaration for Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and, like any other rights, are universal, inalienable, and indivisible entitlements (Collins, 2017:18; Memzur, 2008:25). They are universal in the sense that they apply to every child irrespective of their area of origin, colour, or creed; inalienable in the sense that they cannot be separated or taken away from the child whatsoever, and indivisible, meaning that child rights are not and should not be granted *in silo*. All the rights should be treated as important although, in face of resource constraints, life-threatening rights can be prioritised without completely forgetting other rights. Therefore, social workers in the field of child protection must have knowledge of all categories of children's rights, as discussed later in this section.

A brief overview of the history of child rights was provided as a background to the discussion of two key policies on child rights relevant to children on the African continent, namely the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (OHCHR, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (African Union, 1990). Historically, at a global level, the development of rights is associated with the advent of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1924 by the then League of Nations. In 1959, the United Nations promulgated the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, also known as the Geneva Declaration. These two declarations had been discredited of being non-binding on member states and for viewing children as welfare cases rather than rights holders (Mandlate, 2012:37). The most celebrated contemporary *international law* on children's rights is the CRC (OHCHR, 1989). This document was ratified by all states except the United States of America given that Somalia and Sudan recently joined the other countries on the list (Conley, 2010:41; OHCHR, 2015a; OHCHR, 2015b). On the *African continent*, children's rights are being upheld by the ACRWC (African Union, 1990). The rights stated in the ACRWC mostly correspond with the child rights stated in the CRC (Memzur, 2008:6; WHO, [sa]:1), however the former places more emphasis on the responsibilities of the child, which is seen as unique to the ACRWC (Memzur, 2008:6).

The child rights contained in the CRC can be grouped into three sections or categories: the rights to life, survival, and development (provision rights), protection rights, and participation rights. Provision rights are the bundle of rights which guarantee the basic needs of the child, participation rights give a child a voice whilst protection rights are about safeguarding children against harm (UNICEF, 2014c; UNICEF, 2014d; UNICEF, 2014e). Examples of rights corresponding to each group of rights are given below in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: Categories of children’s rights

GROUP OF RIGHTS	EXAMPLES OF CORRESPONDING RIGHTS
Life, Survival & Development (provision rights)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • right to life • right to adequate health care • right to food • right to clean water • right to security • right to shelter • right to physical care • right to family • right to play • right to recreation • right to culture • right to leisure • right to education • right to identity
Protection rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • right to protection against physical, emotional, and sexual abuse • right to protection against neglect • right to protection against exploitation • right to be protected against discrimination • right to be safe from substance abuse • right to be safe from injustice and conflict • rights of children outside their own families • rights of refugee children • rights of children in conflict with the law
Participation rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • right to express own views and be heard • right to freedom of expression • right to access to information • right to privacy • freedom of thought, conscience, and religion • right to be consulted and taken account of • right to challenge any decisions made on matters affecting them

As the focus of the programme was on **children’s rights to protection**, it was key to isolate these rights for purpose of emphasis. The section on children’s protection rights was therefore the main focus of the discussion on child rights. However, the nexus between the categories of rights was highlighted in that children’s’ participation and provision rights strongly influence their protection rights (*cf.* Collins, 2017:15, 20; Masuka, 2013:82-83; Morrow & Pells, 2012:906; Segura-April, 2016:174).

In the context of this programme, it was important to highlight that individuals, groups, and communities have different constructions of phenomena and problems, as described by social constructionism theory (Schenk, 2019:68-69). This aspect could thus influence perceptions of

children's rights. Culture is seen as one of the factors that affect the implementation of children's rights in the Sub-Saharan region, with some cultural practices being beneficial and others harmful to children (Davis et al., 2012:3; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28; UNICEF, 2017:17) Children's rights to protection are enshrined in various articles of the CRC and the ACRWC, and countries are urged to adequately take measures which ensure that all child rights are protected, respected and fulfilled (African Union, 1990; OHCHR, 1989). The UNICEF report on child protection points out that violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children often emanate from social norms condoning harmful practices, economic and social inequality (UNICEF, 2015c:3). The all-encompassing influence of culture on all systems in which children live (Louw et al., 2014:30) requires that social workers take heed of the cultural context in which they work (Hepworth et al., 2017:433) and, of the African worldview when dealing with African service users (Thabede, 2008:234).

8.2.3.5 Module 5: Child protection

Although the participants who attended the awareness programme were all social workers working in the field of child protection, a section on child protection was included to provide uniform child protection information that served as background for further modules in the programme. The module contained an overview of child protection and child maltreatment, which was contextualised within the Zimbabwean legal framework for child protection as the programme was pilot tested with social workers who worked in the field of child protection in Zimbabwe. The information, which largely relied on the review of literature, provided a context that was used to give illustrative examples to comprehend child protection concepts through a culturally sensitive lens.

Child protection was discussed as a set of coordinated formal and informal elements that work together towards the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children (David & MacCaffery, 2012:6; Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2016). Child protection services entail the services, programmes, measures, and interventions tailor-made to protect and promote the fulfilment of children's rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence (Kirst-Ashman, 2013:286, UNICEF, 2013a:7). UNICEF (2013:7) posits that child protection intervention needs to focus on strengthening protective capacities at family and community levels and to ensure that there is an enhanced collaboration among child protection systems and other role players.

The definition provided by the World Health Organization (2020:1) indicates that **child maltreatment** is an encompassing term that includes different forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation that can cause harm to the child:

Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence, and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

However, child protection and its most associated terms such as child abuse, child neglect, and child maltreatment may be interpreted differently in different contexts as the terms are often social constructions related to the norms of a particular society (Bornstein, 2013:261; North, 2018:3). Child maltreatment is therefore culturally defined, and the values and norms of a people influence what is then regarded as child abuse (Parton, Thorpe & Wattam, 1997 in Conley, 2010:468). Knowledge of different constructions of child maltreatment was an important element in the programme to create an awareness of **different constructions** of problems and phenomena and the role of culture, thus IKS, in this regard (Louw et al., 2014:30; Schenk, 2019:68-69). Thus, in understanding the meaning of child abuse, one has to understand the constructions of childhood among the people to whom the meaning of child abuse is applied (Wilson et al., 2010:468). Child maltreatment amounts to a serious violation of children's rights to protection. These violations are spurred by a perennial shortage of resources, inadequate key child protection staff, and a disconnection between the informal and formal child protection systems (Davis et al., 2012:13).

ACTIVITY 2

Group 1: Discuss and identify examples of abuse, neglect and exploitation typical in your area of work.

Group 2: Discuss and identify what your organisational policies and the laws of the country classify as child abuse.

Social workers are assigned statutory power to investigate cases of child abuse, child neglect, and child maltreatment (North, 2018:3). Seeing that the programme was presented to child protection workers in Zimbabwe, it was imperative that the **Zimbabwean legal framework for child protection** be addressed in the programme. Although most of the participants in the programme would have been familiar with the legislation, the researcher deemed it important that an overview of legislation would provide a common framework from which participants could understand and discuss the possible use of IKS in a later module. The information also reflected the work context of the participants.

An overview was given of the major laws guiding child rights in Zimbabwe, namely the Constitution of Zimbabwe of 2013 (amendment number 20), Children's Act (2004) chapter 5:06, the National Orphan Care Policy. The CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and ACRWC (African Union,

1990) also have a great influence on Zimbabwe's child rights legal context given that Zimbabwe has ratified both the CRC and the ACRWC. These laws and policies are then transmitted into tangible goods and services through various programmes being run by the state, corporate society, and NGOs under the guidance of the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children III. The Constitution of Zimbabwe in section [6.3i] provides children's rights as one of the national ethos and founding values. In section 19 of the Constitution, Zimbabwe commits to child rights by stating that the state must adopt policies that ensure children's best interests as the guiding principle. The Constitution upholds children's rights such as the rights to family, care, food, health, education, social services, education, and citizenship among other rights. However, the Zimbabwean constitution is framed in a way that makes claiming rights from the state very difficult given the existence of a clause which states that the rights shall be protected within the limits of available resources.

Legislation concerned with the care and protection of children was discussed in more detail as it linked with the central theme of the programme. The Children's Act [Chapter 5:06], is the most comprehensive piece of legislation that protects children from abuse, neglect, and all forms of exploitation. The law provides for the appointment of a social worker as a probation officer by the Minister and states categories for children who require care and protection as follows:

- children who are destitute or have been abandoned,
- children who are denied proper health care,
- children whose parents are dead or cannot be traced,
- children whose parents do not or are unfit to exercise proper care over them,
- children whose parents give them up in settlement of disputes or for cultural beliefs.

This law has been criticised for being too protectionist at the expense of other rights, namely provision and participation rights, and that it is insufficient in conforming to the CRC and ACWRC provisions (Bhaiseni, 2016:4). In addition, the genesis of the law can be traced back to British and South African legislation although it has been amended in recent years. Various other laws deal with particular individual rights and these include the Births and Deaths Registration Act [Chapter 5:02], Education Act [Chapter 25:04], Public Health Act [Chapter 15:09], Marriages Act [Chapter 5:11], Sexual Offences Act [Chapter 9:21], amongst other laws which are in place to enforce certain child rights. The Social Workers Act [Chapter 27:21] is also important to mention as it regulates the conduct of the social worker, hence also ensuring that child molesters do not easily find their way in working with children.

At the policy level, the Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy (ZNOCP) of 1999 stands out among other policies within the child protection field. This policy provides the general guiding

principles and objectives on how services targeting orphans and vulnerable children can be delivered. The policy is touted for recognising the role of the traditional practices such as the Chief's granary (*Zunderamambo/Isiphalasenkosi*) and the role of the elderly and traditional leaders in child protection. The ZNOCP's primary objective is to reorient the activities of government and all other development partners, including the Child Welfare Forums (CWF) to address the particular needs of orphans. As such the policy has the following sub-objectives:

- Supporting existing family and community-based coping mechanisms in the area of orphan care.
- Sensitising all communities in Zimbabwe to develop orphan support strategies and interventions.
- Promoting the ability of orphans to access public and private resources.
- Promoting continuous research into issues pertaining to children and the inclusion of orphans in all activities by children and for children, particularly in the areas of health care and education.
- The provision of legal assistance and support to orphaned children.
- Protection of orphans from abuse, neglect, and all forms of exploitation, including sexual and economic exploitation.

The policy is further touted for its six-tier system which provides layers of care, with the first layer being the nuclear family, followed by the extended family as the second preferred option if the family cannot care. If this option is not feasible, then the community at large is expected to provide another resource as the third option. Foster care is the fourth option, adoption the fifth option and the last option is residential care (institutionalisation).

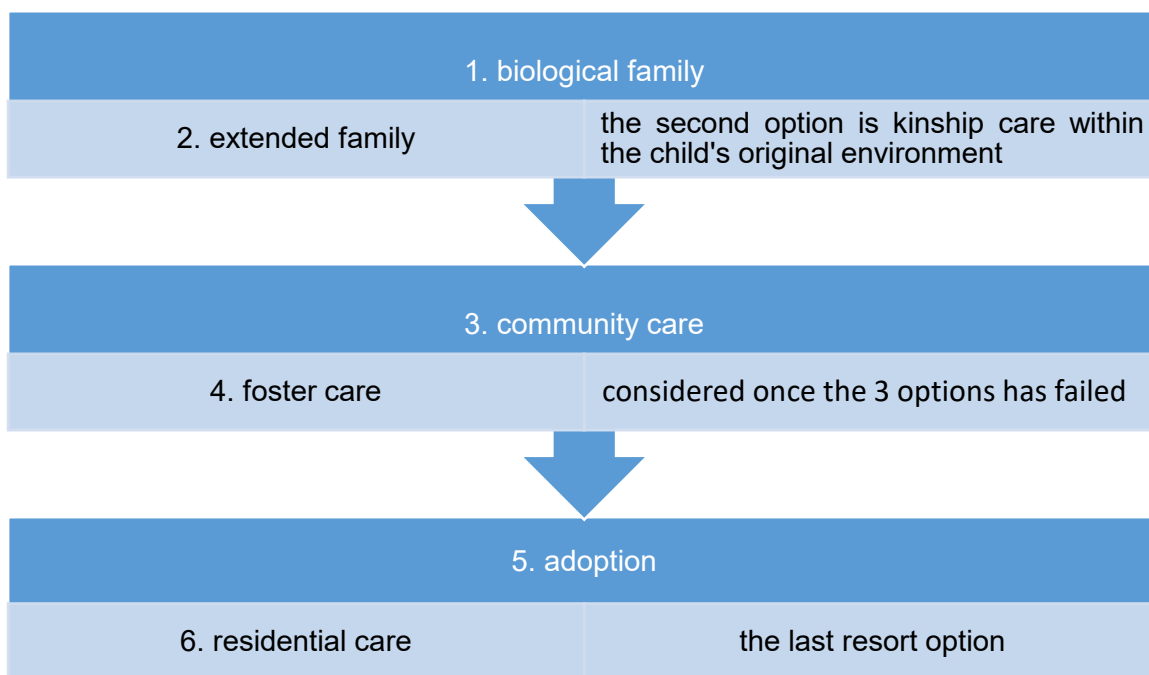


Figure 8.1: The six-tier system of care

(Source: Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy of 1999)

Currently, the Ministry of Labour & Social Welfare has the statutory mandate to coordinate child protection services whilst they have a sole responsibility for statutory child protection cases that involve child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and children in conflict with the law. However, the Ministry of Health & Child Care, Ministry of Primary & Secondary Education and Ministry of Woman Affairs, Gender & Community Development, among other government ministries, have a stake in the well-being of children. The ministry that deals with primary and secondary education having children as their clients makes it a critical player in child protection besides just offering education.

Schools on its own provide some safety notwithstanding that some abuses are reported emanating from the very institutions. Initiatives such as Boys Empowerment Movement (BEM) and Girls Empowerment Movement (GEM) clubs and the school-based Child-Led Child Protection Committees are an indicator that other ministries also play a critical role in child protection in Zimbabwe. The Ministry of Woman Affairs, Gender & Community Development is also a key player when it comes to issues of childhood marriages in taking the lead in raising awareness against childhood marriages. The Ministry of Health & Child Care also plays a significant role in ensuring that children access health and this ministry presents the Zimbabwean report to the CRC Committee of Experts (Zimbabwean Report to the CRC Committee of Experts, 2016). The Ministry of Justice also plays a part in dealing with issues of custody in face of divorce or separation of parents and they also deal with children in conflict with the law. Thus, child protection services are not centralised in one ministry; a situation

which is seen by some as a weakness as the nature of child rights and the multiplicity of needs of children could benefit from a one-stop-service for child rights (Mushongera, 2015:59).

The **best interests of the child principle** is a fundamental guiding principle to the implementation of children's rights, as spelled out in Article 3 of the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and Article 4 of the ACRWC (African Union, 1990). In particular, Article 3 of the CRC states the following:

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private, social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. State Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

In addition, the CRC, in article 18, calls upon parents and legal guardians to always be guided by the best interests of the child (Children's Rights Knowledge Centre, 2014). The Constitution of Zimbabwe, in article 81, underscores the significance of the best interests of the child as the primary consideration when dealing with matters affecting children (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, Amendment number 20). The UNHCR (2008) guidelines on the best interests of the child stipulates that the best interests of the child are closely associated with or applied to the following scenarios:

- family reunification
- temporary care arrangements
- separated children
- unaccompanied children
- experiencing severe harm from parents or legal guardians
- parental separation
- custody rights cases.

However, it is suggested that the meaning and content of the best interests of the child principle remain vague, making it difficult to implement and apply it in the daily practice of childcare and protection (Child Rights Knowledge Centre, 2014:2). Social workers must be aware that contextual factors can influence the understanding of and adherence to the principle. In collectivist African societies, the best interests of the child in some instances are subordinate to the interests of the collective, including those of the child's parents. As children are not treated as an individual but rather treated as a member of the larger group, their interests are subordinate to the interests of the family, extended family and the community at

large (Robinson, 2007:143; Sue & Sue, 2008:43; Thabede, 2008:233). This situation may lead to the abuse of children, for example in the form of childhood responsibility and child labour, or the voice of the child being muted. Thus, a balance must be struck between the best interests of the child and the interests of others, including the interests of the community (UNHCR, 2008).

8.2.3.6 Module 6: IKS in child protection: a Tsonga case study

This section formed the largest part of the programme as it linked directly with the main goal of the awareness programme. The information is based on the findings of the researcher's study in terms of Tsonga IKS relevant to child protection. The rationale for this module was to expose social workers to examples where IKS could influence child protection either negatively or positively. The ultimate aim was to have social workers become aware of positive practices that could be embraced and utilised in child protection services, while being aware of possible practices that could be harmful to children. Tsonga IKS was used as a case study to provide examples and to stimulate reflection and discussions, bearing in mind Zimbabwe's diverse cultures and heritage. However, it was also acknowledged that some of the cultural practices of black Africans are shared (Thabede, 2008:233).

The module was introduced by providing an overview of the research methods, with the rationale of informing the participants how and where the knowledge on IKS was obtained to give credibility to the programme. Furthermore, a summarised version of research methods that were used grounded the participants in the research journey which was embarked on to arrive at the programme design and piloting phase in which they played a central role. A brief explanation was given of the usefulness of the qualitative research approach in investigating under-researched phenomena (Henn et al., 2008:171) and the constructivist research paradigm which ensured that individual research participants play an active role in the formulation of the research problem formulation and input into the contents of the awareness programme for social workers (De Vos et al., 2011:7-8). Furthermore, the research findings would be utilised to put forward practical suggestions to tackle some of the problems being faced by the community and social workers, which could benefit African children, families, and communities (Bless et al., 2013:59; Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:17). The research sites in Mozambique and Zimbabwe and the sample of IKS experts and social workers, methods of data collection, and ethical principles were also briefly explained.

From the research findings of the first phase of data collection in the study, the researcher identified certain Tsonga IKS values, beliefs, and practices that could have implications for child protection (refer Table 8.3 below). These aspects were presented in the programme (refer to column 1 in Table 8.3) and served as a platform for discussion of the use of IKS in

child protection (refer Activity 3). The discussion was facilitated by the researcher and was highlighted with the use of practical examples (refer to column 2 in Table 8.3).

Table 8.3: Tsonga IKS: Implications for child protection

TSONGA IKS	IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD PROTECTION
<p>1. IKS values Tsonga values revolve around the concept of humanness (<i>ubuntu</i>). Particular values and principles that underpin the Tsonga culture include generosity, love for one another, respect, relatedness, privacy, unity, integrity, honesty, and self-reliance. As a result, IKS plays a protective role as it prohibits people from harming children. Harming a child, especially sexual abuse, is not condoned in Tsonga culture and punitive measures involve not only the perpetrator but the entire nuclear and extended family as well.</p>	<p>From a strengths perspective, social workers could capitalise on Tsonga values to campaign against child maltreatment in the communities. Awareness campaigns against child abuse would resonate well with the principle of <i>Ubuntu</i>.</p>
<p>2. Perception of children The Vatsonga people place value on children. Children play an important role in the Tsonga spiritual world as they are regarded as ancestors incarnate. Children with names of the ancestors are not harmed as harming them is regarded as tantamount to harming their ancestors. Girls are a source of wealth through the lobola practice whilst boys are highly regarded as the family's posterity.</p>	<p>Social workers could use the value placed on children in interventions to advocate for the rights of children in the community.</p>
<p>3. The child's right to belong to a family and the involvement of the extended family Tsonga IKS regard highly the child's right to a family; hence, no child is left to be without a family even in event of the death of parents.</p>	<p>Social workers could involve the extended family members as resources when child protection is required. From a developmental perspective to social work, priority is placed on caring for children in their community, with residential care as the last resort. However, social workers deliver supportive and supervisory services where the extended family lacks the capacity to fully care for the child to prevent possible abuse of the child by some elements within the extended family.</p>
<p>4. The child belongs to the community The child in the Tsonga community belongs to the whole community, not to an individual nuclear family. The community plays a central role in mentoring, therefore there is an active involvement of every adult in raising a Xitsonga-speaking child.</p>	<p>The social worker can utilise the ecological resources provided by the community to create protective environments for children (Child Frontiers, 2012:5). Community members can keep 'an eye on the child' in the same manner that the Zimbabwean government has rolled out training of community members to be Child Care</p>

	Workers (CCW) under the National Case Management System (NCMS) (Ministry of Public Service Labour & Social Welfare, UNICEF & World Education International, 2017:34).
<p>5. Conceptualisation of childhood</p> <p>Childhood among the Vatsonga is not related to chronological age but is determined by social markers such as rites of passage, marriage, or exhibition of maturity such as the ability to do adult chores such as construction of a hut.</p>	<p>The conceptualisation of childhood could lead to conflict with the legal definition of childhood and adulthood, which rely on chronological age. This conceptualisation has legal implications in terms of uncertainties on issues such as childhood marriages, child labour, and defining abuse. The ACRWC, article 2, defines a child as a person below the age of 18 and in article 21, specifies the minimum age of marriage as 18 years.</p>
<p>6. Conceptualisation of child well-being</p> <p>The Tsonga conceptualisation of child wellbeing narrowly focuses on physical care and provision rights.</p>	<p>This view of child well-being poses a danger to the likelihood of overlooking the socio-emotional health of the child. In terms of child protection, the emotional effects of aspects such as emotional abuse or child marriages may be overlooked.</p>
<p>7. Perceptions of the rights of children</p> <p>As with the concept of child well-being, the Tsonga perception of child rights narrowly focuses on provision rights. It seems that there is a conflict about adult rights versus children's rights, with adult's rights being prioritised above those of the child. This aspect is seen in practices such as reparations for transgressions and children's household chores which sometimes interfere with schooling.</p>	<p>The narrow focus on provision rights especially the right to food and shelter, might lead to other rights being ignored. Social workers, when working with such communities, must raise awareness on protection and participation rights which seem to be least appreciated.</p>
<p>8. Status of boys versus girls</p> <p>Boys are elevated to a higher status in society and are given preference on land rights, inheritance rights, and property rights, among other key rights. Girls occupy a lower ranking on the status ladder of society.</p>	<p>The higher status assigned to boys might lead to overlooking the best interests of the girl child in decisions made by the family and the community at large. As an example, the girl child may be excluded when it comes to accessing the right to education in face of limited resources. The social worker, when raising awareness on child rights, must make a deliberate effort in terms of emphasising the rights of the girl child.</p>
<p>9. Rites of passage for boys</p> <p>Boys graduate into adulthood through an initiation process known by several names such as <i>khomba</i>, <i>murundu</i> or <i>kuchina ngoma</i>. The process includes circumcision, seclusion of the boys into a forest area, mentoring them on Tsonga values, norms, and mores combined as Tsonga law (<i>nawu</i>),</p>	<p>The initiation ritual is the preparation of the boys to be responsible adults and make the boys gain status in the community which enhances their chances to actively participate in that community's socio-economic fabric. The Ministry of Health & Child Care has successfully gained entry</p>

<p>giving of a circumcision name, and then the return of the boys to the community through festivals, including food and beer.</p>	<p>into the system to offer modern circumcision to the initiates. Social workers must respect that only males can be involved in this initiation and could lobby for the inclusion of child rights into the initiation 'curriculum'.</p>
<p>10. Rites of passage for girls Like that of the boys, this rite is also known as <i>khomba</i> though in particular it is known as <i>tikhombatababasathi</i> (women's initiation). The process includes the retreat of the girls into a secluded area where a mentor (<i>mudzabhis</i>) mentors them on various Tsonga values. The girl gets a new name as an initiate and then returns to the community, with community festivals celebrating their return as new initiates.</p>	<p>This ritual contributes to the mentoring of girls to become responsible wives and mothers. It could provide a platform through which adolescent sexual and reproductive health information could be shared. However, as childhood is not determined by chronological age, this practice when unchecked, proliferate child marriage which is against the laws of Zimbabwe.</p>
<p>11. Childhood responsibilities Responsibilities are assigned to children based on gender lines. Thus, boys have their own set of chores they are expected to do, and so do girls. Boys are given tasks considered masculine whilst girls are given tasks considered as feminine.</p>	<p>The Vatsonga practice of exposing the child to some responsibilities follows the Tsonga principle of self-reliance. This aspect is critical for one's survival and prepares children as productive individuals to work and look after themselves and their families. However, when unchecked, this practice could end up keeping children away from school and infringe on their right to education. The Vatsonga people cherish material-based participation through the child's involvement in the household economy by doing various chores, with some of the chores qualifying to be regarded as child labour under modern law Social workers should clarify what constitutes as child labour and what are acceptable chores as part of children's socialisation.</p>
<p>12. The role of the family/traditional conference to deal with problems The family in the Tsonga culture wields power and influence to deal with problems including child rights violations such as child abuse in all its forms. The perpetrators and their family engage with the family of the child whose rights were violated for mediation and normally some damages are paid to the family if a solution is found. In case of a deadlock, the matter is referred to the traditional leader. This is an all-adult affair and no child is involved.</p>	<p>Whereas this practice shows that local people have problem-solving systems in place, it might lead to interventions that are contradictory to legal requirements. More so, some families may conceal the problem when the perpetrator is a close family member, hence the child might not receive justice. In addition, this practice has possible effects on children's right to participation as described in the CRC and ACRWC. Social workers must promote the participation of children in having the child's voice heard when investigating cases of alleged child sexual abuse (CSA). The child has to be included and be heard in the whole</p>

	process because of the Tsonga practice that focuses on the family but excludes the child.
<p>13. The role of traditional leaders in dealing with social problems</p> <p>Among the Vatsonga, the traditional leaders play a critical role in dealing with social problems, including CSA. Problems are dealt with by a traditional council, which is composed of persons from the level of the village headmen up to the level of the paramount chief. The perpetrator is fined, which consists of livestock given to the chief, the chief's council, community members, and the wronged family, as opposed to modern justice where all fines are paid to the state.</p>	<p>The traditional council plays an important role in addressing problems experienced in families and communities. However, the functioning of the traditional council poses a challenge in cases of child maltreatment as the laws of the country consider child abuse and neglect as a statutory case with the social worker being one of the professionals mandated to deal with such cases. Social workers may need to educate traditional leadership on the legal processes involved in dealing with child maltreatment to avoid a situation whereby cases end up being concluded in the village with the child not receiving adequate services as required by law. Interventions include the much-needed Pre-Phylaxis Exposure (PEP) which is supposed to be given to survivors of CSA presenting themselves within 72 hours after the incident.</p>
<p>14. Girls' involvement in the process of reparations</p> <p>The practice of the payment of reparations is on the decline and in most instances, it has been ended. Reparations is a process whereby the girl child is given to a wronged family as a form of payment for a wrongdoing normally committed by an adult in the girl's family.</p>	<p>Social workers must remain alert to some of these harmful practices. Although almost extinct, vigilance is required to ensure that the practice does not resurface and undermine the girl child's rights.</p>
<p>15. Storytelling</p> <p>Storytelling is a powerful educational and socialisation tool, which is under threat of extinction due to the advent of modern media and schooling systems that limits the time which families spend together with the child. The major role of telling stories to children is traditionally bestowed on grandparents.</p>	<p>Storytelling can be used by social workers for education of children on child protection, e.g., in awareness programmes in schools.</p>
<p>16. Totem and genealogy recitals</p> <p>This practice is part of children's socialisation and is intended for Vatsonga children to grasp their family history and heritage. Children are taken through the recitals by an adult over and over again until they can do it on their own.</p>	<p>Totem and genealogy recitals enhance the child's sense of belonging and identity, which is a key aspect in child rights and child well-being. Social workers who make themselves aware this practice could use it to establish the origin of the child during family tracing of unaccompanied children by identifying the child's clan and extended family. Local IKS experts and community members can render their services in duly utilising totem and genealogy recitals to instil</p>

	a sense of belonging and trace the origin of the child.
<p>17. Songs and dance</p> <p>Various songs and dance are used by the Vatsonga people for educational and entertainment purposes. The most popular songs are the <i>xinombela</i>, <i>muchongoyo</i> and <i>kukadhasongs</i>. These songs and dances were normally done at night under moonlight by older children whilst younger children would enjoy their songs and dance during the day during their role plays.</p>	This practice accords a child their right to rest, play, leisure and recreation as enshrined in the CRC, article 31. In addition, lyrics of songs is a way to transmit the value system of the Vatsonga people to the child.
<p>18. Children's games</p> <p>Various games are available to Vatsonga children, among them <i>tigava</i>, <i>mbale- mbale</i> and <i>xisveru</i>. Many games are used to enhance children's learning. <i>Tigava</i>, for example, enhances mathematical skills. Some games involve physical activity, which is good for the physical and motor development for the child.</p>	Social workers who work with children can familiarise themselves with indigenous local children's games which they can use for teaching children socio-emotional and other skills. Games offer age-appropriate and locally relevant ways for socialising and educating children.
<p>19. Role play (<i>madzumba</i>)</p> <p>Role play is a common play form of Xitsonga-speaking children and is a powerful tool that is used to socialise children into societal expectations.</p>	Social workers use role plays or dramatic enactment to teach children about aspects such as personal safety and their right to protection. In addition, social workers can implement parent training programmes that make parents aware of the importance of role play for children in a safe environment where they can be supervised by parents and/or caregivers.
<p>20. Naming of children</p> <p>As part of birth rituals Vatsonga people traditionally hold a ceremony to introduce the child to the ancestors. The child's name carries a significant meaning, and it is closely related to the aspirations, troubles and joys of the family. The name gives the child a sense of identity and a status that comes with the name.</p>	Social workers must be aware of the status implied in a child's name as it provides checks and balances in terms of treating the child. If a child has a name of an ancestor, it could guide the caregivers in 'better caregiving' as they fear retribution from the ancestor for harsh treatment of the child. On the other hand, a name not representing an ancestor, might imply a lower status for the child.
<p>21. Mentoring and counselling of children</p> <p>Mentoring and counselling of children are the everyday tasks of the child's aunts and uncles. The aunts and uncles play an important role in giving guidance to the child throughout childhood, adolescence, and beyond marriage.</p>	The positive involvement of aunts and uncles could provide socio-emotional support to children as well as aid in creating a protective environment for children in the community. Social workers can involve aunts and uncles as support systems when working with children. Despite the value of mentoring and counselling, it might lead to covering up child abuse if the matter is seen as dealt with

	during counselling within the family or if the perpetrator is a family member. The aunts and uncles may use mentoring and counselling to silence the child exposed to maltreatment, either by coercion or intimidation.
<p>22. Burial rituals</p> <p>The Tsonga culture has certain guidelines for children's involvement in burial rituals. Children are, for example, not allowed to witness the burial process or participate in viewing the body of the deceased. After the burial, children are taken to the grave for rituals believed to cleanse them so that they are not haunted by the spirit of the deceased.</p>	Prescriptions for children's involvement in the burial ritual are intended to ensure that children are not exposed to terrifying experiences. Social workers who work with children of whom a parent or family member passed away, must be well aware of these prescriptions.
<p>23. Traditional medicine</p> <p>Traditional medicine is used by the Vatsonga to cure almost every disease. The Vatsonga people believe that fate and diseases are not natural but have a supernatural explanation. That explanation is found in Tsonga spirituality which includes a belief in traditional healers known as <i>tinyanga</i>.</p>	The practice of traditional medicine may at times clash with conventional medical practices. As an example, dehydration in children in modern medicine focuses on re-hydration, whereas the Vatsonga people believe that certain traditional medicine and charms must be used to treat the condition. Social workers must be aware of the health practices informed by the IKS of local communities.
<p>24. Child-rearing practices</p> <p>Parenting among the Vatsonga is not the sole responsibility of the biological parents, but the extended family and the whole community play a role. Within the immediate family, the father, the mother, and the siblings all play a role in giving care to the child.</p>	<p>The extended family and community members can serve as a natural safety net for children. The involvement of members of the extended family and community can be used in awareness programmes for child protection to highlight the responsibility of all people for 'keeping an eye on the child' to curb child maltreatment.</p> <p>Sometimes the involvement of siblings in caregiving may result in absenteeism from school whilst the child takes care of a younger sibling. This practice can infringe on the older sibling's right to education.</p>
<p>25. Discipline</p> <p>The Vatsonga people believe in corporal punishment as a way of disciplining children.</p>	The use of corporal punishment contravenes the CRC, article 37, which makes inferences to cruel and inhumane treatment of children illegal. In the ACRWC, article 20, it is stated that parents must ensure that "domestic discipline is administered with humanity and in a manner consistent with the inherent dignity of the child."
<p>26. Wealth creation</p> <p>Vatsonga people place a high value on cattle, other livestock, and crop production. For someone to be regarded as a complete</p>	This practice tends to interfere with the schooling of children who are sometimes absent from school to herd cattle or work in

man, let alone a wealthy one, the person ought to have a herd of cattle. The boy child plays an important part in herding cattle and attending to the land.	the fields. If children are absent from school for extended periods, this practice infringes on their right to education.
27. Wife and children inheritance Under Tsonga tradition, women and children are regarded more as assets of the father hence when the father dies his surviving brother 'inherits' or takes responsibility for the wife and the children.	The practice of wife and child inheritance provides a social safety net to widows and orphans. However, when unchecked it can strip widows and their children of their property rights and put them in a position of vulnerability that may increase their risk of abuse and/or neglect.

ACTIVITY 3

In your groups, discuss and group the IKS practices presented into either positive or harmful practice. Provide feedback on your group opinion.

8.2.3.7 Module 7: Suggestions to social workers from IKS experts

Module 7 focused on suggestions proffered by the Tsonga IKS experts to social workers. Based on these suggestions, implications for social work practice were put forward by the researcher to stimulate debate among the programme attendees on what the community experts think the social worker must do or not do concerning working with them to deliver child protection services to Xitsonga-speaking children. The information on this aspect is summarised in Table 8.4 below.

Table 8.4: Suggestions for social workers: Implications for practice

SUGGESTIONS TO SOCIAL WORKERS	IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
1. Get to know the Tsonga culture and recognise its relevance in modern times	For social workers to collaborate with people from the Tsonga culture, it is imperative for them to take time to familiarise themselves with the culture and IKS of the local people they will be working with. Social workers could partner with cultural and heritage groups and attend cultural fairs organised locally to equip themselves with knowledge of the local culture. This suggestion resonates with the tenets of cultural competence in social work. Cultural competence will contribute to appropriate services and sustainable Interventions (Twikerize & Spitzer, 2019:1-2).
2. Clarify uncertainties over legal definitions	Social workers as well as traditional leaders and communities would benefit immensely

	<p>from the clarification of uncertainties over legal definitions. Uncertainties on aspects such as the definitions of a child, childhood, child abuse, and child labour could lead to the abuse of children under the guise of culture and purported ignorance over what the law says.</p> <p>Social workers, in their roles of advocate and social protector (Patel, 2015:145), can focus on policy level on current child protection laws, which are based on Eurocentric perspectives, to be amended to adopt an Afro-centric perspective and mainstream the strengths of culture into the laws of a given state. However, cultural practices that are harmful to children, should be challenged in collaboration with members of the community (Kaime, 2005:235-237).</p>
<p>3. Raise community awareness in terms of modern laws</p>	<p>Raising community awareness of relevant legislation could help towards ensuring that communities are fully aware of what is expected of them in terms of child protection laws. Education, as one of the social work roles (Patel, 2015:143), may take the form of awareness campaigns and meetings specifically designed for indigenous leaders, volunteers, or community platforms.</p>
<p>4. Utilise the strengths of the culture</p>	<p>Social development practice emphasises human agency and active partnerships that build on community capacities, skills, and assets (Patel, 2015:331). Including existing initiatives enhances the relevance of child protection services to local cultures as well as the acceptance of the interventions by the local people (Mtetwa & Muchaha, 2017:129; Wessels, 2015:8). The social work curriculum should be indigenised to pave way for the inclusion of an African philosophy in social work training to produce a cadre equipped to utilise the strengths of the culture in social work service delivery.</p>
<p>5. Promote clear conceptualisation of children's rights</p>	<p>There is a need for social workers to take time to understand the local people's social constructions of child, childhood, child rights, and child abuse. On the other hand, the social worker must be well versed with the child protection laws of their country so that they give a clear understanding of child rights. Understanding the local people's social constructions of child rights allows the social worker to note the gaps and address</p>

	<p>them accordingly. Kaime (2005:234-237) advises that child rights issues should be handled based on a clear understanding of local cultural values and in collaboration with village elders to prevent an elitist and top-down approach to interventions.</p>
<p>6. Utilising indigenous practices for teaching children about rights and social skills</p>	<p>Indigenous practices such as storytelling, songs, dance, poetry, totem recitals, and games are used to socialise children, instil self-knowledge and identity in children, transmit the values of <i>ubuntu</i> and promote physical fitness (Magano, 2019:236, 240; Kpanake, 2018:201; Nwoye, 2017:54-55). Social workers can use these practices as age-appropriate methods to enhance children's social skills and teach them about their rights.</p>
<p>7. Making Social Work known to local people</p>	<p>There is a need for social workers to design strategies, for example, awareness programmes and career guidance days within local schools and community settings where they can explain social work to communities and secondary school pupils. The National Association of Social Workers and regulatory bodies such as the Council of Social Workers should consider roadshows, radio shows, television programmes, and advertising in the print media as well as social media to educate the public on what the profession of social workers entails. Schools of social work can also contribute by having community outreach programmes helping those who are in need and vulnerable within communities as a strategy to raise awareness about the role of the profession. It is widely recognised that the social work profession can make significant contributions to human development on the African continent (Mwanza, 2011:22; Kreitzer, 2019:54).</p>
<p>8. Have a basic knowledge of the local language of your clients</p>	<p>Social work training institutions could develop a course in some vernacular languages, sign language, and brail training in partnership with a language department of the university in the same manner social workers are exposed to psychology, anthropology, and sociology in their undergraduate training. Social workers, once deployed, can also make their arrangements to learn the local language of their clients, which would assist</p>

	them during investigations related to alleged child maltreatment. As language is a key element of culture, a basic competency in the language of the culture is an important aspect for social workers working in diverse cultures (Robinson, 2007:111; Shokane & Masoga, 2018:14).
--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

ACTIVITY 4

Open reflection: Discuss your views on the implementation of the recommendations for social workers by the IKS experts.

8.2.4 Facilitation of the programme

The programme was presented with consideration of the ecological systems theory and the constructivist theory, which formed the theoretical frameworks for the study. The researcher showed sensitivity to the influence of culture, an aspect of the macro-system in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (Berns, 2013:22; Henderson & Thompson, 2016:46). The information on Tsonga IKS was presented in a way that showed respect and non-judgement with regards to the influence of culture on the interactions, beliefs, and practices in the child’s immediate environment (microsystem); the linkages between settings such as the home and school (mesosystem); and interactions, perceptions and practices in terms of the supportive services of both formal systems, such as the availability and use of health and social work services, and informal systems such as the extended family and neighbourhoods (Mwakikagile, 2008:193; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2010:216). In addition to culture, other elements within the macrosystem, such as the economic, political, and legal environment could not be ignored (Churchill, 2011:19).

At the same time, the researcher was cognisant of the fact that the ecological environment would also influence the programme attendees in their role as child protection workers. Social workers working in different cultural contexts often find themselves in a controversial situation as they are ethically obliged to advocate for human rights while at the same time being sensitive to cultural contexts where different human rights standards could apply (Ife, 2016:4; Katiuzhinsky & Okech, 2014:81; Sewpaul, 2016a:30). This situation also applies to social workers in the field of child welfare and child protection, where they have a responsibility to advocate for and uphold children’s rights. An ecological systems approach can alert social workers that transactions between human services can be experienced as either positive or negative (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61; Mbedzi, 2019:91). Furthermore, service users’

involvement may depend on the nature of feedback, which entails the process in which information is transferred (DuBois & Miley, 2014:61) and their openness to change in their efforts to maintain homeostasis of the system (Besthorn, 2013:178; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010:10; Mbedzi, 2019:94).

The theory of social constructionism was often highlighted during the programme, as it is relevant to the understanding of the influence of culture on the construction of aspects such as childhood, child responsibilities, and children's rights (Smith et al., 2011:71), as was clear in the information of IKS. It is important that social workers recognise that the cultural context influences constructions of childhood and child well-being, as well as constructions and perceptions of problems, illness, and help-seeking (Hepworth et al., 2017:366; Moletsane, 2012:250). Of importance, is that child maltreatment is also a social construct (Conley, 2010:32). Thus, the construction of childhood and child maltreatment will not be uniform globally and is related to the socio-political, economic, and cultural context (Knapp van Bogaert, 2012:17). Therefore, the information on Tsonga IKS was used as a platform for discussion and, although it may have shown similarities to other African cultures (Thabede, 2008:233), the attendees could find variations in the specific contexts in which they worked.

Furthermore, characteristics of social systems, such as the role of stability, boundaries, and feedback needed to be considered by social workers working within a certain niche or setting where a unique physical and social environment, child-rearing beliefs and practices and the beliefs, values, and ethnic orientation of the parents applied (Kagitcibasi, 207:37-38). Ryke, Strydom and Botha (2008:22) explain how the niche or experienced environment entails the different ways in which individuals construct their experienced world. This aspect closely relates to the consideration of the theory of constructivism in the presentation of the programme.

Table 8.5 presents a summary of the awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection. The programme was presented during a one-day training session, therefore the inputs (Fraser et al., 2009:56) were similar for all the modules and included a suitable venue, an attendance register, a participant manual, the researcher as the facilitator, and materials for the presentation such as PowerPoint presentations and pin charts.

Table 8.5: Summary of the awareness programme for social workers

Module 1: IKS, culture and acculturation		
Objectives	Content	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To familiarise participants with the concept of IKS To gain an understanding that IKS and culture change over time and cannot be generalised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is IKS IKS is based on culture The effect of acculturation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductions Ice breaker Presentation and discussion Small group discussions
Module 2: The Vatsonga people as a case study for understanding IKS		
Objectives	Content	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain background knowledge on the Vatsonga as a case study for the presentation of the programme To gain an understanding of the Afrocentric worldview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of the Vatsonga people The Afrocentric worldview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation and discussion
Module 3: The manifestation of IKS in everyday life		
Objectives	Content	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain an understanding of the holistic influence of IKS on people's lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of the influence of IKS with reference to the life of the Vatsonga people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation and discussion
Module 4: Children's rights		
Objectives	Content	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To recap on children's rights as a fundamental element of the programme To promote an understanding of the interrelatedness of all children's rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The universal nature of children's rights The key child rights policies: international and the African continent Provision rights Protection rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation and discussion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation rights • The nexus between categories of rights 	
Module 5: Child protection		
Objectives	Content	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide uniform content on child protection as a background to the discussion of the influence of IKS on child protection • To contextualise child protection in the local Zimbabwean context • To raise awareness of differences in constructions of child maltreatment and the best interests of the child principle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of child protection • Definition of child maltreatment • Variances in constructions of child maltreatment • An overview of the Zimbabwean legal framework for child protection • Best interest of the child principle • Variances construction of the best interests of the child principle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and discussion • Small group discussion
Module 6: IKS in child protection: a Tsonga case study		
Objectives	Content	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain knowledge and insight into the ways that IKS can relate to child protection • To identify positive and/or negative effects of IKS on child protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of IKS that can relate to child protection in either positive or negative ways, based on the Vatsonga as a case study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation • Discussion of practical aspects of IKS and child protection • Small group discussion
Module 7: Suggestions for social workers from IKS experts		
Objectives	Content	Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain insight into aspects that can influence social workers' entry into and interventions in different cultural contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for social workers based on the Vatsonga case study • Information from the literature on cultural competence in social work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and discussion • Small group discussion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore and debate aspects that can promote or hamper social work interventions in different cultural contexts • To become aware of aspects that can support cultural competence in social workers 		
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--

The next phase in the process of intervention research entailed the pilot testing of the prototype of the above awareness programme. The research findings related to the pilot testing are described in the next section.

8.3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: PILOT TESTING OF THE PROGRAMME

The pilot testing of the prototype of the awareness programme that was developed for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection entailed the testing of the intervention for the first time (Fraser et al., 2009:31). This phase in the research process involved the second stage of data collection in the study. Pilot-testing of the programme is key in assessing the possible function of the newly designed intervention as it tests and assesses the possible effects of the programme, and unmask possible threats and weaknesses as a precursor to a more refined and full-scale programme implementation (Melnyk, Morrison-Breedy & Moore, 2012:3). Fraser et al. (2009:32) highlight that the early development and pilot testing focus on programme processes, rather than programme outcomes, and is used to identify programme content that can be enhanced for evaluation and advanced development.

The awareness programme was designed to proffer knowledge and insights that can guide practical strategies for implementing child protection in indigenous settings (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:475; Fraser et al., 2009:9; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:459). The pilot testing provided the researcher to test the implementation of the programme in a real-world setting with a sample of social workers working in child protection, focussing on the processes rather than the outcomes of the programme (Fraser et al., 2009:31; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010:464). In this section, a short overview of research methodology will be provided, followed by the presentation of the biographical profile of the participants and the research findings related to their feedback on the programme.

8.3.1 Summary of the research methodology

The awareness programme was pilot tested with a total of 22 social workers working in the field of child protection. As in the first stage of data collection in the study, the pilot study was based on a qualitative research approach, according to which the participants could share their perspectives of the developed awareness programme (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:64). In addition, the constructivist research paradigm allowed the participants to share their views on how the programme could inform their work in the field of child protection (De Vos et al., 2011:7). The researcher could thus capture child protection social workers' (participants) personal responses with regards to the programme and their understanding of the use of IKS in child protection (Bless et al., 2013:58). The case study design, as a design often used in pilot testing, applied to the pilot study (Fraser et al., 2009:32; Maree, 2016:36). For practical reasons, the pilot study was conducted in Harare, Zimbabwe, as the area in which the researcher lived and worked.

Non-probability **sampling** procedures were employed, in particular purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was appropriate as the researcher wished to select the participants based on their expertise in the field of child protection (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). Child protection workers would be able to compare their knowledge and insights into their field of practice with the information on IKS presented in the awareness programme. The selection criteria for the sample were thus as follows:

- Social workers working in the field of child protection in the greater Harare area,
- Social workers with at least two years' work experience in child protection,
- Participants able to converse in English,
- Participants who were able to attend the programme developed by the researcher,
- Participants were either male or female.

The researcher personally contacted two social work colleagues who worked in the field of child protection, who assisted him to recruit other social workers through the process of snowball sampling (Babbie, 2013:129). The researcher contacted these persons personally to explain the purpose of the programme and their involvement. The participants were informed about the arrangements for the programme presentation such as the time and venue. Through this indirect way of sampling, only the details of those who were willing to participate in the study were forwarded to the researcher. Snowball sampling thereby ensured that all the participants voluntarily participated in the research (Strydom, 2011:116). The researcher provided the participants with detailed information on the study and what would be expected from them as participants. The researcher considered this aspect as important so that the participants would participate willingly, knowing that they would be asked to provide feedback

on the programme. All the participants that were recruited by means of snowball sampling agreed to participate in the study.

The programme was presented to the social workers in a group setting, in one session of four hours. The day was planned so that the presentation of the programme, would be followed by the focus group interviews for data collection. Due to its size, the group was divided into two groups comprising eleven social workers each and they attended the programme on different days. The first group attended the programme on a Thursday whereas those who could not get permission from their employers to participate during the week attended the programme on a Saturday. In this way, the researcher adapted the presentation of the programme to the participants and environment needs (Fraser et al., 2009:18). The implementation of the programme was, however, not immune to constraints of time, participants' attitude, late coming by some of the participants, participants being given limited off from work, and the natural constraints such as the hot temperatures which prevailed during the days of the presentation of the programme. In view of these conditions, the researcher had to adjust the time allocated for module presentation, reflective discussions, and group discussions to ensure that the identified challenges did not hinder the successful implementation of the programme.

Data collection was conducted by means of focus group interviews guided by a set of questions formulated by the researcher to solicit participants' views on and experiences of the designed programme. The focus groups were adopted as a method of data collection because they are known for their effectiveness in the exploration of different perspectives which people hold on an aspect and, in addition, are effective for pilot-testing, be it materials or policies (Greeff, 2011:362). The research questions allowed for the generation of information related to participants' experiences and views on the programme (Greeff, 2011:369). In addition, focus group discussions are touted for having an advantage that many African cultures are familiar with small group discussions and were therefore appropriate for the study (Bless et al., 2013:217; Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:19). Rich information was also obtained during the reflective discussions that were conducted during and at the end of each module of the presentation of the programme. The researcher found it important to include this information in the empirical findings on the pilot-testing of the programme. The participants' verbatim quotes were either captured by audio recording with the permission of the participants or by detailed field notes.

For practical reasons, the programme was presented on two separate days. The 22 participants were divided into two groups and each focus group thus consisted of 11 participants, which were within the suggested size for focus groups (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:96).

A too large focus group could hinder the effectiveness of focus group interviews as some participants may feel intimidated in larger groups (Bless et al., 2013:217). Data collection focused on themes related to the content and the presentation of the programme (Fraser et al., 2009:32). The focus group interviews were guided by the following open questions:

- What is your opinion on the relevance or applicability of IKS in child protection?
 - (a) from a systemic perspective
 - (b) from a social constructivism perspective
- What recommendations do you have for the refinement of the programme?
 - (a) In terms of the information/content
 - (b) In terms of the presentation
- In your opinion, how can this programme be replicated to other countries besides Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe?
- What recommendations do you have for further research in this area?

The researcher made sure that the terminology in the questions were clear to all the participants, so that they could fully understand of the meaning involved. The researcher created an atmosphere conducive for diverse perspectives to be embraced in an open and transparent manner (Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2012:229). The researcher furthermore recognised that the research principle of beneficence was equally important in this stage of data collection than in the first stage, as the knowledge gained from the participants could contribute to the acknowledgement of African indigenous knowledge (Mabvurira & Makhubele, 2018a:17). Based on the testimonies of some of the participants in the focus group discussions, the use of focus group discussions empowered them as social workers to gain an understanding of IKS and child protection, hence becoming more sensitive to the needs of minorities.

English was used as the language to collect data, however, some of the participants conversed in a mixture of English and their vernacular language (Shona) and were translated into English for the presentation of the research findings. Whereas the bulk of the data was collected through focus group discussions, field notes were jotted by the researcher of reflective discussions and of group discussions in-between module presentations, in which participants were accorded an opportunity to interact with each other, share personal views and report back whatever views they have generated to the bigger group.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. This qualitative approach to data analysis allowed the researcher to filter multiple views of the participants into salient ideas by organising them into themes (Greeff, 2011:373). The research findings will be presented after the presentation of the demographic details of the research participants.

8.3.2 Biographical details and research site

The research site for the pilot testing of the programme was the Greater Harare province. The site was selected given its high population of child protection social workers when compared with other provinces which had less than 10 social workers each, as indicated by the National Association of Social Workers of Zimbabwe (NASW Zimbabwe, 2018). Harare is home to more than two hundred child protection social workers; hence it was ideal for the study. In addition, Harare as the capital city of the country is resident to people of multiple cultures, hence making it important to pilot test an awareness programme on the possible contribution of IKS to child protection. All the participants were from African cultures. A total of 22 child protection social workers from Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), and the United Nations Office participated in the programme. Their demographic details are presented in Table 8.6 below, with the first 11 participants who attended the first presentation and the 11 participants attending the second presentation.

Table 8.6: Biographical details of participants in focus groups

Participant Code	Sex	Work Experience	Sector	Modules Attended
P1	Male	9 years	Government	All modules
P2	Male	2 years	NGO	All modules
P3	Female	4 years	NGO	All modules
P4	Female	2 years	Government	All modules
P5	Male	5 years	NGO	All modules
P6	Female	7 years	Government	All modules
P7	Female	9 years	Government	All modules
P8	Female	26 years	Government	All modules
P9	Female	9 years	Government	All modules
P10	Male	16 years	UN Office	All modules
P11	Female	3 years	Government	All modules
P12	Female	5 years	NGO	All modules
P13	Female	5 years	NGO	All modules
P14	Female	6 years	Government	All modules
P15	Female	3 years	NGO	All modules
P16	Female	8 years	FBO	All modules
P17	Male	6 years	Government	All modules
P18	Female	4 years	NGO	All modules
P19	Male	4 years	NGO	All modules
P20	Male	4 years	NGO	All modules
P21	Male	11 years	NGO	All modules
P22	Male	8 years	FBO	All modules

Of the total of 22 social workers who participated in the study, nine (9) were male and 13 were female. Most of the participants (9) were child protection social workers within the Government of Zimbabwe child protection system. One participant was from the United Nations Office working in the field of child protection in Zimbabwe, whereas 10 participants were from Non-

Governmental Organisations and two (2) from Faith-based Organisations. The participants could thus provide their perspectives on the awareness programme from different practice settings, mostly divided between government and non-government settings.

The participants had different levels of experience in the field of child protection, with the most experienced participant within the study sample having 26 years of experience and the least experienced participants having two (2) years of social work experience within the child protection sector. A closer look indicates that most of the participants (11) had between five years' and nine years' work experience, with less (3 participants) having more than 11 years' work experience. Eight (8) participants had between two (2) and four (4) years' work experience. Thus, the participants could provide their perspectives on the awareness programme based on differing levels of experience in the field of child protection. All the participants were from Greater Harare and they attended all the modules and availed themselves for the focus group interviews.

8.3.3 Research findings from the pilot test

In this section, the researcher presents and discusses the findings obtained from the focus group interviews with the participants. Data obtained by means of the researcher's field notes are included as relevant in the presentation of the research findings. The themes and sub-themes identified during data analysis are summarised in Table 8.7 below.

Table 8.7: Themes and sub-themes: Pilot test of the programme

Theme 1: Programme presentation	1.1 Duration of the programme 1.2 The use of media 1.3 Enhancing the participation of participants 1.4 Distributing the programme to participants before the presentation
Theme 2: Programme content	2.1 Clarify the concepts 'child protection' and 'child safeguarding' 2.2 Amplify the voices of social workers in the programme 2.3 The programme raises awareness of different constructions of social problems 2.4 The programme contains rich information on IKS 2.5 The programme empowers social workers to adopt a strengths perspective
Theme 3: Programme replication	3.1 Replication of the programme in other socio-cultural contexts 3.2 The programme as a tool to protect minority rights 3.3 The programme can encourage debates around IKS and child protection issues

Theme 4: The importance of understanding IKS	4.1 IKS promotes an empowering approach to child protection 4.2 The unwitting use of IKS by social workers 4.3 Change in IKS over time 4.4 Tsonga IKS being intact and relevant
Theme 5: Understanding of child protection and children's rights	5.1 The conflict between legislation and culture 5.2 A culture of silence 5.3 Tsonga constructions of childhood likely to cause abuse 5.4 Understanding a constructionism perspective on child and childhood 5.5 IKS in raising community awareness of child rights and child protection 5.6 The convergence between IKS and the modern justice system 5.7 The state of children in Southern Africa
Theme 6: Recommendations for further research	6.1 An in-depth study and documentation of IKS 6.2 Research on the use of IKS with different groups of service users 6.3 Tsonga IKS in terms of the male child 6.4 Social workers' familiarity with IKS 6.5 The influence of IKS on policy formulation 6.6 Research on urban IKS

In line with the tenets of a qualitative research approach, the participants' direct quotes are used in the discussion of the findings to ensure that the views of the participants are not lost.

8.3.3.1 Theme 1: Programme presentation

The nature of the programme presentation emerged as a central theme during the focus group discussions. The participants were asked to share their honest views about the programme presentation and their responses gravitated around programme duration, the use of inclusive media, the need to condense the programme to take less time, and the need to enhance participation of the attendees of the programme. The empirical findings related to these aspects are discussed in the following sub-themes with the aid of participants' verbatim quotes, where appropriate.

Sub-theme 1.1: Duration of the programme

There was no consensus on the programme duration. Some participants felt that the programme needed to be shortened whilst most of the participants were of the view that the time allocated was sufficient and, if anything, they thought the programme may need to have an extra hour added to allow adequate time for reflective discussions in-between modules. Some participants who wanted the programme to be shorter, mentioned the following:

"I think it is good, though it may be shortened a bit because it took us about four hours." (P13)

"Time, time, I think it is too long. We started at quarter past nine, but we are finishing now around one o'clock." (P5)

"It was OK, but you can do well to condense it and take less time." (P10)

On the other hand, most of the participants approved of the time allocated for the programme (four hours) and some suggested that more time be added. They suggested that, to allow ample time for reflective discussions, an hour more could be added to the programme. Some of these participants suggested the following:

"As for me, I think the time is OK because the programme is comprehensive. Hence, the time we took, it is unfortunate that it is hot today hence people get tired easily." (P1)

"For me the programme needs to be a bit longer, say 5 hours, so that we have ample time for discussions." (P20)

"In terms of the presentation, I think the time was fine. I think you did well by taking us through by way of power-point. Because some of us are seeing these things for the first time so I think it was very useful." (P11)

"...but looking at the subject we had here; the Vatsonga, how many people were knowledgeable so that we could discuss. I think you did well by first taking us through especially in the first two modules and then you gave us more time in the later modules like the child protection ones which we are familiar but on IKS how many people knew that before we came here, so you did well by taking us through. ... He was talking of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the other country. So, really, how many were going to discuss meaningfully without being taken through [the information] first. So, he did well to take us through so that later on we were to give input relevantly to the subject as we did; so really for me it was good." (P8)

From the participants' comments, the researcher concluded that the participants had different preferences in terms of the duration of the programme, which could be due to different styles in processing information as well as time constraints experienced by some participants. The researcher believes that sufficient time should be allocated for programme attendees to integrate information. As mentioned by some participants, there should be enough time for the presentation of information, especially new information, to promote meaningful discussion by the participants. On the other hand, long hours would also be difficult to sustain given that the majority of social workers experience high workloads and tight schedules hence would find it challenging to accommodate a full-day programme. Work overload is one of the challenges that seem to affect social workers worldwide (Truter & Fouché, 2015:222). The duration of the programme therefore needs to be evaluated in the refinement of the programme.

Sub-theme 1.2: The use of media

In general, the participants were content with the use of media in the programme presentation. They expressed satisfaction with the use of power point, the use of photos, and the use of pin

charts for participants to write on and pin it to the wall during small group discussions. Some participants raised concerns over the use of non-inclusive media as the media used could only benefit participants if they did not have visual challenges. Therefore, some participants recommended that the programme include other forms of media such as audio media so that people with visual impairments could also benefit from the programme. Some participants suggested that the programme may need to include a gallery walk and more pictures as part of the presentation. The participants' views are represented by the following feedback on the presentation:

"Ahh, mine is a recommendation on the presentation if you can add the gallery walk, people walk from one station to another and the like. ... When you were presenting you were saying as you can see but you may have those who do not see. So, as a recommendation, make sure you check the list of your participants to cater to their special needs but as for this group, everyone could see (laughter). But you just need to check that." (P7)

"You did well to use PowerPoint and those colourful slides, but you can include pictures, if you can, and other forms of media to make it more interesting." (P19)

As indicated by the participants, the presentation of the programme content could be strengthened through the use of more media tools such as music, videos, and pictures. The use of media would likely enhance participant's attention for longer throughout the programme. In addition, audio-visual materials could make the programme more accessible to people with visual or hearing challenges.

Sub-theme 1.3: Enhancing the participation of participants

Whilst there was time allocated for reflective discussions, some participants recommended that the programme must be made more participatory, as indicated in the following quote:

"I think she said what I wanted to say. The programme was good but for that aspect of participation." (P3)

However, other participants felt that sufficient opportunities for participation within the programme were given and that shorter discussions would save time so that participants could finish the programme and still have time to do other tasks within the day. However, the value of reflective discussions in enhancing insight cannot be understated as it allows a group to ponder on their practices and processes (Sutherland, 2013:37-38). Reflection also allows people to clarify meaning and to engage in critical thinking (Epstein & Hundert, 2002:226; Sutherland, 2013:37-38). Reflective discussions are part of critical social work, in which epistemology is one of the assumptions emphasising exploration of knowledge, what people know, and how they come to know (Campbell & Baikie, 2012:71).

Sub-theme 1.4: Distributing the programme to participants before the presentation

Some participants recommended that the programme must be shared prior to its presentation, as summed up by the following participant's view:

"I think it would be better if you could send the programme content earlier before we come here so that we could make meaningful contributions." (P15)

The researcher clarified with the participants that whilst their recommendation would be considered in future presentations of the awareness programme; not doing so was in line with the pilot test of the programme. The researcher would also consider their recommendations for the content of the programme. These recommendations are presented in Theme 2.

8.3.3.2 Theme 2: Programme content

The participants made recommendations in terms of the content of the programme, which in their views would improve the programme. These recommendations included suggestions on definitions of some concepts and including the voices of the social work practitioners who participated in the first phase of the study. However, the programme was mostly commended for its content and its capacity to achieve the following: understanding of social problems, understanding of IKS, understanding of harmful cultural practices, and understanding of the strengths perspective of social work within the child protection field. The participants' recommendations are presented in the sub-themes in this section.

Sub-theme 2.1: Clarify the concepts 'child protection' and 'child safeguarding'

Some participants gave feedback on the need to clarify the relationship or lack of it between the terms 'child protection' and 'child safeguarding'. There were divergent views from the participants during reflective discussions on Module 3 and Module 4 on child rights and child protection respectively, with some saying child safeguarding is more concerned with upholding children's protection rights such as protecting them from harm, abuse, and neglect. Safeguarding refers to either responding to cases of abuse or prevention programmes to ensure that children do not become victims of abuse. Most of the participants who were government social workers were of the view that child protection is an umbrella term that encompasses child safeguarding and other measures ensuring that children realise all their rights, including provision and participation rights. The researcher found the following definitions of child safeguarding and child protection: Safeguarding means the protection of children from abuse and maltreatment and prevention of harm to their development or health by ensuring that they receive safe and effective care. Child protection involves the response to children who were identified as suffering or being at risk to suffer significant harm, and thus

form part of the process of safeguarding (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2019:2).

Sub-theme 2.2: Amplify the voices of social workers in the programme

Some of the participants suggested that the awareness programme would be enriched by amplifying the voices of the social workers who were interviewed during the first phase of the study. The participants felt that the programme largely captured the perceptions of community IKS experts and did not do much to represent the voices of the social workers. In particular, one of the participants suggested that the voices of the social work academia should also be included:

“I think, the voices of the (social work) practitioners and the voices of the social work academia if they can be amplified in this programme, that would also help.” (P12)

What was amplified in the programme was the voice of the IKS experts as gaining information on the Tsonga IKS was the main focus of the study. Thus, the views of the social workers in the first stage of data collection can be included together with the views expressed by the social work participants during the pilot testing of the programme when refining the programme. The advanced development and evaluation of the programme will be done in phase five of the process of intervention research, which is beyond the scope of the current study.

Sub-theme 2.3: The programme raises awareness of different constructions of social problems

Some of the participants mentioned that the programme made them aware that social problems are viewed differently by different people.

“For me, it has helped me understand IKS and other concepts in child protection. You know some of these IKS are harmful, just to support her [another participant] point but you know what Paulo Freire says: you cannot change people from nowhere; you need to engage in a dialogue with them in order to understand where they are coming from and then change them. So, this programme gives us a good understanding of the whole range of practice which we can then use to engage in a dialogue with communities. ... I think the programme also does justice to make us understand the local people’s understanding of issues of child and childhood, which we should take seriously because that is our challenge. Currently, we are reactionary; we just go when an abuse has happened we do not prevent abuse, so when there is an abuse we then go there and say you have broken the rules and we try to interpret the law which they do not know.” (P18)

“So, this study makes it easy for us to have an understanding of the local people’s take on child protection issues. So even if you go there as a social worker and impose (your views), whilst you are still there, they will say ‘yes’ but once you leave, they go back to their ways.” (P13)

“For example, when I was working for another NGO in [a region in Zimbabwe], there was this issue of child marriages; so, the locals did not see that as a problem. So, if we report

such cases to the police and the matter could go to the court the child could go and deny the allegations. Some of them do not have birth certificates so they would go there and lie that they were over 18 and everything would fall apart.” (P16)

The above quotes from the focus group discussions indicate that participants viewed the programme as helpful for social workers to understand social problems from the local people’s point of view. Their views relate to the theory of social constructionism that describes variations in people’s perceptions of situations and events through interactions within their social systems (Schenk, 2019:73). In addition, the views of the participants corroborate the findings from literature which points to the importance of using cultural and social construction lenses to understand views about problems associated with children, childhood, and families (Wilson et al., 2010:468). More so, one participant indicated that the programme evokes Paulo Freire’s model of conscientisation (Ledwith, 2015:2-3), according to which social workers should engage in a dialogue to understand the people’s local problems and make them aware of some of their harmful cultural practices as opposed to approaching them with a regime of child protection laws without prior engagement. Schenk (2019:79, 81) proposes that social constructionism, in which clients are active participants through dialogue, enables social workers to embrace and respect different cultures and belief systems in multicultural contexts.

Sub-theme 2.4: The programme contains rich information on IKS

The participants commended the programme as being rich in information relating to the definition and characteristics of IKS and the examples taken from the Tsonga IKS. They stated that the programme made them more knowledgeable about IKS and its potential to contribution to their work especially in the field of child protection.

“That was the rich bit of the presentation. When I heard the term IKS I knew it was about local people. But now I am clearer. So, that was the richest part of your presentation and it comes out well. So, it was pregnant with substance.” (P10)

“This will help me. It has helped actually, because I work with girls, the teenagers. The things which we discussed here, the issue of IKS, culture, and acculturation it was so helpful. This will not only benefit you as a researcher but has empowered me as a practitioner. When I then go back to my workplace, I will be in a better position to understand the girls and their families better.” (P16)

The comments of the participants concerning their ignorance of what IKS entails is testimony that IKS is an under-researched topic in the social sciences, yet it can have a significant impact on the work of social workers (Hove, 2012:6; Manganye, 2011:5). Despite IKS having claimed its space as a source of knowledge which can be applied as a solution to some of Africa’s development challenges, it is still not recognised (Magid, 2011:136; Patel, 2015:138). As mentioned by Participant 16, knowledge of IKS can empower practitioners to understand their clients better.

Sub-theme 2.5: The programme empowers social workers to adopt a strengths perspective

The participants were of the view that the programme empowers the social worker to utilise a strengths perspective as opposed to pathologising the people's situation. Their awareness of IKS as a result of attending the programme was instrumental in empowering them to utilise local resources found in their ecological systems.

“This programme is so helpful. I like its strengths perspective aspect which enables us to approach communities with respect, knowing that they have something already which they know as opposed to approach them with finished products dictating to them.” (P14)

“The use of IKS would show our clients that we respect them, and we acknowledge their capabilities. This allows the local people to be open to us, they would tell us everything we would like to know as what they did to you during your research process.” (P20)

“What it did to me is to empower me to find out what works from the client's perspective rather than for me to prescribe solutions as a practitioner.” (P15)

The above quotes corroborate the findings from literature whereby Hepworth et al. (2017:431) call on social workers to utilise natural ecological structures existent in the communities where they practice. In addition, Ross (2008:368) posits that social work in Africa needs to formulate local models for intervention rather than exclusively relying on Western models. The development of local resources and interventions is critical given that child protection has been conceived traditionally from a Western perspective, ignoring the fact that there are different constructions of child and childhood (Smith et al., 2011:71) and in the light of sub-Saharan Africa experiencing a dearth of child protection resources (Davis et al., 2012:31).

The participants also viewed the use of IKS in social work practice as a good way of demonstrating unconditional acceptance of their clients as well as demonstrating the principle of non-judgement. They expressed the opinion that the local culture is mostly dismissed as harmful; hence, the IKS of the local people is judged as a threat to child well-being and protection. Thus, social workers approach a community with negative stereotypes. Mabvurira (2016:38) calls on social workers to view communities from a resilience perspective as part of practising from an ecological perspective. This view is corroborated by Patel and Hochfeld (2012:694) who advocates for the application of the principles of developmental social work, which include the strengths perspective, empowerment and people participation.

8.3.3.3 Theme 3: Programme replication

In a discussion of the relevance of the designed programme to other socio-cultural contexts outside the original research sites (Zimbabwe and Mozambique), the participants gave rich feedback on how the programme could be replicated. Three main suggestions were identified:

direct replication in other socio-cultural contexts; replication to protect minority rights, and that the programme could be replicated to encourage debates on child protection issues.

Sub-theme 3.1: Replication of the programmes in other socio-cultural contexts

The participants were of the view that the designed programme could be directly replicated with Vatsonga people living in other countries. They argued that the Vatsonga people are dotted all over Southern Africa, hence their practices are the same and they could relate to the programme even though it was developed based on research done in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. In addition, there was a consensus that there are many common IKS features within the African culture; therefore, the programme could be replicated with other ethnic groups to benefit children. Some of the participants highlighted the following:

“I think for me replication is ideal because, as I said, this study was done with the Vatsonga in these countries, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, but the Vatsonga people are not only found in these countries alone. The Vatsonga people are also found in the southern part of Zambia and you rightfully mentioned that their practices are generally the same, so it would be ideal to replicate this to other countries. ... African culture in general has many things in common which makes replicating this programme doable. The child here in Zimbabwe is the same child to the child in Mozambique, Zambia, or anywhere in Africa, so replication to me is ideal.” (P8)

“In my opinion, I think it is replicable. Yes, you studied the Vatsonga but what I learnt today showed me that they are many common practices with the Manyika, the Ndau and other ethnic groups.” (P10)

The participants backed their argument by referring to commonalities between African ethnic groups which would enable them to relate to the programme, hence claiming that the programme is replicable in other African settings. Thabede (2008:233) also points to similarities between African ethnic groups, arguing that although minor differences could be observed from one ethnic group to another, many common features exist among African cultures.

Sub-theme 3.2: The programme as a tool to protect minority rights

Some of the participants in the focus group discussions suggested that the programme could be replicated as a tool to protect minority rights. The participants viewed the programme as a powerful strategy to ensure that ethnic minority groups gain a voice and that their rights are protected. In this respect, they saw the replication of the programme as an intervention to protect minority rights across Southern Africa. Some participants also noted that studies on European, Asian, and American indigenous peoples had been generalised to Africa and the findings had been consumed in Africa through social work education and training.

“Ok, so it is possible to do that. You can replicate (the programme) because to protect the minority is key as a milestone to achieve equity. Our services tend to focus on the majority and ignore the minority.” (P22)

“I can say it is replicable because I know many studies done in Europe regarding the ethnic minority groups. So, I think it is replicable and it is also of value to use to protect the rights and interests of other ethnic groups besides those tied to the countries involved in the study” (P13)

“In fact, the rights of the minorities have to be protected and I think this is part of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that the rights of the minorities have to be protected.” (P1)

The views of the participants that much of the literature on minority groups are from the studies in the USA, Canada, and Australia were also the case encountered by the researcher in reviewing literature. It is important that social workers are competent to work with indigenous groups on the African continent similar to that being championed for in Australia, Canada, and New-Zealand when working with children from the indigenous peoples such as the Aboriginal people of Australia, the Maori of New Zealand, and the Native American people living in the USA (Dumbrill & Green, 2008:489-491). Cultural competence and embracing diversity are fundamental in upholding the social work values of social justice, equality, and non-judgemental attitude (Laitinen & Vayrynen, 2016:583-584). With regards to social work training, Dumbrill and Green (2008:490) note that “despite a commitment to diversity and inclusion, most social work academies continue to teach from a Eurocentric perspective.”

Sub-theme 3.3: The programme can encourage debates on IKS and child protection issues

Some participants also suggested that the programme in its current format could be replicated to encourage debate around IKS and child protection issues in other countries on the African continent and in other parts of the world. These participants felt that context was not an issue as replication could serve to initiate debate and to exchange knowledge and experiences on IKS, as mentioned by the following participant:

“So, for that reason I think it can be replicated. Even if you take it outside the country, they can use it to discuss how IKS can contribute to child protection within their context.” (P17)

The views of the participants centred on expressing that knowledge building and change in social work is an ongoing process that can benefit from scholarly debates. This sub-theme also evokes the notion that human rights discourse in social work has been dominated by Eurocentric views as opposed to Afrocentric worldviews (Sewpaul, 2016a:33; Le Grange, 2012:56). The use of the awareness programme to encourage dialogue on the topic can serve as a post-colonial debate on indigenisation of the social work profession in Africa (Gray et al., 2014:102).

8.3.3.4 Theme 4: The importance of understanding IKS

The fourth theme to emerge from the focus group discussions centred on views that the awareness programme enhances social workers' understanding of IKS and the use thereof in social work. Several sub-themes were identified: the use of a restorative approach to child protection; IKS enhances the developmental approach to social work; IKS change over time; the unwitting use of IKS by social workers; and that Tsonga IKS are still relevant and intact.

Sub-theme 4.1: IKS promotes a preventive, legal, and restorative approach to child protection

The participants viewed the awareness as useful in helping them appreciate the role that could be played by IKS in implementing child protection interventions from a restorative, preventive, and a legal approach. They valued the programme as having made them aware that IKS could be used as a way of ensuring that social workers employ a developmental approach to child protection. The programme highlighted for them that their current practice is inclined towards making the local people abandon their cultural practices without giving them a replacement to those cultural practices that are seen as harmful or undesirable for the protection of children. One of the participants highlighted that not understanding IKS and its related beliefs and practices could even confuse and suggested that social workers should focus more on preventive measures in dealing with such situations.

"I think we discussed that earlier in our group during the break away session. We said what works in Africa is the restorative approach. How do we make of what is lost than to just define it as abuse? What do we have to replace those practices which we would have condemned? That, for me, is important." (P3)

"Let us say child labour for example. You cannot just stop the child from working without giving them an alternative so as practitioners this programme reminds us that we should take the restorative approach." (P19)

"So, you cannot just go around defining other people's culture as illegal without giving them a replacement to that, to me that is important, and the programme is useful." (P10)

"So as I am sitting here I am saying let us understand the triggers of these abuses as you were saying that some of these are camouflaged in IKS so we need to understand these triggers from an IKS perspective and this programme gives that." (P5)

"Your programme is going to be very useful, because during reflective discussions in my group I also raised issues of organisations who just open a can of worms and leave it there, but when it comes to preventive measures they do nothing on that front." (P8)

The above findings point to the fact that many Tsonga IKS principles and practices that were presented in the programme can be linked to the principles of developmental social work such as empowerment of communities, partnerships with service users, and prioritising preventive strategies (Patel, 2015:124-125, 127). In the field of child protection, developmental social work promotes principles of keeping children within their communities as well as family

strengthening to ensure that parents are empowered to provide and care for their children and protect them against harm (Conley, 2010:31; Kirst-Ashman, 2013:286). These views are corroborated by Zastrow (2013:405) who posits that child protection and social work practice in general has shifted towards a strengths perspective and empowerment. The integration of IKS into child protection could be an example of strategies that support the development of unique African social work interventions (Ross, 2008:368).

Sub-theme 4.2: The unwitting use of IKS by social workers

During the reflective discussions in the presentation of the programme, some participants noted that social workers were already utilising IKS, either unwittingly or due to circumstances such as inadequate resources within the formal child protection system.

“I have always used IKS in my practice in social work. I adapt social work when it suits the case I am dealing with. For example, at one point I was speaking to some community members on the issue of the girl child ... I encouraged them to send their girls to school, to empower their girls in all respects so that they can have groceries when their girls are grown up and become gainfully employed. ... I know that as social workers we are utilising IKS but the only problem which I see is that we have not been vigilant enough to document our practices of IKS. But I know that at an individual level some are doing studies, but we are not going further to publish in this area.” (P19)

“Then my general comment on IKS is that we use IKS ... when things are bad then we look for our aunties to give us counselling.” (P14)

The findings generally point to the idea that some IKS practices seem to be used by social workers, however unwittingly as the IKS practices were similar to their cultural practices or because they advocated for the rights of children. The views of Participant 19 reflect the purpose of the development of the awareness programme, namely to document IKS beliefs and practices that could relate to child protection. This aspect is important as African IKS is mostly transmitted orally and is not systematically documented (Chauke, 2018:1; Magano, 2018:236; Ossai, 2010:3). Furthermore, documentation is important as social work education has been pre-dominantly Eurocentric and thus largely excluded education on IKS (Kreitzer, 2012:147), whereas the Afrocentric worldview is markedly different from the Eurocentric worldview (Mupedziswe et al., 2019:21).

Sub-theme 4.3: Change in IKS over time

Some of the participants observed that whilst the programme was useful, its relevance may be time bound if the researcher does not periodically update it by going back to the same ethnic group to observe any changes within their IKS.

“When studying IKS, we must take into consideration the issue of time, the chrono system. IKS would change over time; you go back after five years you will find something different.

So, it would be interesting to go back there after five years and research again and see if there would be any changes.” (P22)

The findings that culture, and thus IKS, should be understood in the context of the chronosystem is corroborated with literature on Bronfenbrenner’s view on the chronosystem which reflects change over time (Louw et al., 2014:30). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory posits that children develop in an environment where socio-cultural norms and values are not static but change over time (Keenan & Evans, 2009:37; Lewis & Greene, 2009:233). These changes are also linked to the effects of acculturation which manifests in dissolution of traditional cultures as a result of urbanisation, Westernisation, and media influences (Bornstein, 2013:260; Johnston, 2015:385; Mkabela, 2015:285).

Sub-theme 4.4: Tsonga IKS being intact and relevant

Some participants also made a general observation and comment about the Tsonga IKS that seemed intact despite changes over time, and relevant to social work practice in the field of child protection. This view was, in particular, represented by the following feedback from one of the participants:

“From the rich IKS you have presented to us it seems most practices of the Vatsonga are still intact in comparison to other ethnic groups.” (P20)

The participants’ feedback corroborates the views of Thabede (2008:238) that many elements of African cultures are still present, intact, and relevant, and that it will be so in future. In addition, findings from a study of the literature revealed that although culture is not static certain cultural practices endures over time from one generation to another (Korbin, 2002:641; Thabede, 2008:238). Boakye-Boaten (2010:104) views the rigorous socialisation techniques within African culture as one of the reasons why the culture prevails over time. Therefore, the influence of African worldviews cannot be ignored (Makhubele et al., 2018:97).

8.3.3.5 Theme 5: Understanding of child protection and children’s rights

This theme emerged from both the focus group discussions and the reflective and group discussions in-between presentation of the modules of the programme. The participants mentioned several aspects related to the laws of the country, child abuse, and the construction of childhood, and possible measures for social work intervention with consideration of IKS. These aspects will be discussed in the sub-themes of this section.

Sub-theme 5.1: The conflict between legislation and culture

Participants raised a concern that the current laws operational in Zimbabwe could be said to be ‘anti-culture.’ This situation was causing a misunderstanding between the social worker and the local communities. As indicated in the programme presentation, the local people have

their understanding of who a child is and what constitutes child abuse, which in most instances does not speak to what the law stipulates. Thus, there is the need to re-examine legislation and its relation to local cultures and, where possible, initiate efforts for a more culturally sensitive implementation of legislation that will still ensure maximum protection of children, especially those in rural, poor communities.

“When you talk about the laws, there is a challenge because it is like you are applying foreign laws to the communities, and this clash with the culture. ... (laws)that come from foreign countries like Britain.” (P17)

“The programme highlighted issues of child marriages which is linked to the confusion over the definition of a child with local people defining the child using their indicators whilst the law uses the age of majority. So, for them [indigenous communities] it is normal, no one will come and arrest them because they protect the child. But the laws we have, speak to the contrary, so we need to consult the communities when we are designing the laws.”(P3)

The concerns raised by the participants provide tangible examples of how different constructions of childhood and child abuse can be in conflict with the law and can cause problems in social work practice. In relation to child protection, this sub-theme reiterates the statement that child maltreatment is a social construct (Conley, 2010:32). In the African context, some cultural practices have become controversial issues in debates on children’s rights, including their right to protection. Cultural practices that are considered harmful to children include the notions of child labour, child marriage, virginity testing, and female genital mutilation (Bourdillon et al., 2010:208; Kaime, 2005:229-230; Laird, 2016:308; Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014:28; Mwambene & Mawodza, 2017:21; Morrow & Vennam, 2012:553-554; Mtetwa & Muchaha, 2017:129; Nhenga, 2008:XVI; UNICEF, 2006:1). To address this situation, social work and social work education should collaborate with indigenous experts to construct knowledge and practice that are culturally appropriate and ethical (Dumbrill & Green, 2008:500; Gray et al., 2014:112).

Sub-theme 5.2: A culture of silence

Some participants observed that, based on the Tsonga case study presented to them, child abuse could be fuelled by a culture of silence within the local communities under the guise of culture. Participants shared their work experiences in various instances where cases of abuse were not reported due to the culture of silence to the detriment of the child’s safety. They shared the following during the focus group discussions:

“As for me, I want to react to his point (pointing at another participant), my sixth sense is telling me to disagree and to agree with him on the issue of confidentiality which he raised. He said the traditional practices are not far divorced from modern practices where he said even the law does not disclose carelessly about the child who have been abused. But the motive behind their [family] keeping quiet; why are they keeping quiet, is it to protect the child or to protect themselves?” (P18)

“I respect the principle of non-judgemental attitude, but maybe I may judge them and say they do not do it [reporting child abuse] and protect the child, whilst they[believe that they] are doing it [not reporting abuse] to protect the child.” (P19)

“They do it to protect themselves, the whole family, not necessarily the child. You know that case of [case details]; he was rich and was a resource to the whole clan, so everybody wanted to protect a single individual for their sake at the expense of the child. So, there are so many reasons which are related to the concealing of the cases, but economic benefits are also at play. So, I agree with her that the motive is not entirely to protect the child; it is to protect the welfare of the whole family and the family name.” (P14)

The feedback given by participants echoes the research findings in the first stage of data collection (Chapter 7) in which principles underlying IKS could lead to non-reporting of child maltreatment. Some practices in collectivist African cultures, such as communal interests superseding individual interests, patriarchal practices and taboos around sexual topics may lead to silence on matters related to child maltreatment (Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29-30; Magano, 2018:239; Mkabela, 2014:285; Ramphabana et al., 2019:183).

Sub-theme 5.3: Tsonga constructions of childhood likely to cause abuse

The participants, when commenting on the programme content on child protection and IKS, observed that the Tsonga construction of childhood has the potential to fan child abuse. They presented their views on the age-associated with childhood and noted that child marriages are bound to be rife due to such constructions of childhood. Practices related to the initiation of the girl child were also cited as infringing upon children’s rights and their right to protection.

“This programme exposed us to childhood controversies where the Vatsonga you said do not base their definition of child and childhood on chronological age but social markers, so this obviously would lead to issues of child labour and child marriages because there is confusion on who is a child and who is not.” (P12)

“... as social workers, naturally we would not agree with the Vatsonga on issues of [harmful practices] ... because that violates the law of the land.” (P7)

The views of the participants on Tsonga cultural practices and constructions confirm that concepts as well as social problems can be perceived differently based on people’s interactions in a specific social environment (Schenk, 2019:73). These constructions involve the perceptions, belief systems, and cultural values and practices of families, groups, and communities, as influenced by the all-encompassing historical and cultural norms relevant in the macro system (Louw et al., 2014:29-30; Schenk, 2019:77). Therefore, constructions and practices that are part of the culture and IKS of a group may be regarded as harmful by others, as was highlighted by the participants who viewed certain elements of the Tsonga IKS as potential causes of abuse. UNICEF (2017:17) emphasised the need for countries to protect children from potentially harmful social norms, values, and cultural practices as these were said to undermine children’s safety and well-being. Mathews and Benvenuti (2014:28) also

express some reservations on culture, positing that some cultural practices such as forced marriages, virginity testing, and circumcision for both girls and boys may infringe on children's rights to protection. In the African context, the ACRWC, article 21 (African Union, 1990), specifically instructs State parties to protect children against harmful cultural practices.

Sub-theme 5.4: Understanding a social constructionism perspective on child and childhood

The participants highlighted that the programme was helpful in making them understand the concept of constructionism in terms of the child and childhood issues and how it could create challenges for them in their work in child protection. They further noted during the focus group discussions that IKS could help the social worker to analyse social problems.

"The programme ... has enlightened us and I hope this can help us tackle some of the challenges and formulate laws and policies to tackle some of the challenges which are laid bare by the programme. For example, this idea that the child by the law is defined as someone under the age of eighteen but if you go into the local communities, they define a child through the child's physical and social development." (P12)

"I dealt with another matter where a child was molested, and I asked the volunteers why they did not report the matter and they said they do not want to cause disharmony in the community. So, IKS is so loaded and can help the social worker analyse some of the challenges in service delivery in the child protection field." (P9)

"So, on issues of childhood, it means they are issues there because they do not use the numerical age to define childhood." (P11).

The feedback given by the participants corroborated constructionism as one of the study's theoretical framework and how it relates to the people's perceptions and definitions of social problems. African constructions of childhood differs from Eurocentric views of childhood and this is aptly captured by various authors (*cf.* Boakye-Boaten, 2010:104; Hall, 2005:2; Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2014:232; Stam, 2001:291; Wyness, 2013:341). Consequently, the terms 'child' and 'childhood' have different meanings for different people (Lit & Shek, 2002:105). As indicated by Participant 12, social workers should be enlightened and be sensitive to the Afrocentric worldview when seeking to understand African people's interpretation of child and childhood (Thabede, 2008:234). The researcher regards social constructionism as an important element in the programme as societal customs, attitudes, traditions, and practices not only relate to harmful practices, but also play a significant role in the creation of protective environments for children (Child Frontiers, 2012:6-7). Protective environments refer to conditions in which risks to child protection are reduced or removed; amongst others, through societal attitudes that respect children's rights, enhancing parental capacity, and encouraging all community members, including children, to speak up about issues related to child protection (Child Frontiers, 2012:3, 6-7; UNICEF, 2019:11).

Sub-theme 5.5: IKS in raising community awareness of child rights and child protection

In the face of the clash between IKS and child protection laws, the participants recommended that the awareness programme should also emphasise the role of social workers in raising awareness in communities about child protection, child rights, child abuse, and child protection laws to ensure that the child is safe in communities.

“There is need for government or us as social workers to reach out to these communities and educate them.” (P18)

“There is this incident which happened whilst I was working in South Africa. You know this thing, ubuntu, there was a child who was molested at home, and nothing was done about the child, the matter was not reported because the family said that would bring disgrace and shame to the family. So, she did not find support in the family, yet they say charity begins at home. She then went to school and she was sexually abused again, this time by her teacher. She stabbed the teacher to death ... so she ended up killing somebody because nothing was done when she was abused. So, maybe government can talk to community leaders and see what can be done.” (P21)

The participants confirmed that child abuse is underreported on the African continent, as also found internationally (Nareadi, 2013:625). Their views that communities need to be educated on how IKS beliefs and practices may be in conflict with the laws of the country are appropriate in that culture can be harmful and threaten the well-being of children (UNICEF, 2017:17). Raising awareness of children’s rights and involving families, groups, and communities in child protection strategies, align with the African principle of *ubuntu* (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:34; Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019:6). Social workers can implement the social work roles of educator and advocate to ensure that communities are aware of child rights and of local norms and practices that may infringe on children’s rights and their right to protection (Patel, 2015:145).

Developmental social work adopts a rights-based approach, which asks of social workers to promote the rights of service users, including children (Patel, 2015:82-83). However, the systems theory indicates that new information must be presented with sensitivity to aspects such as boundaries, open and closed systems, and feedback (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013:101; Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010:24). These aspects are important given the history of resistance on the African continent to Eurocentric conceptions of human rights (Mkabela, 2014:283; Sewpaul, 2016a:33). Training on human and child rights should therefore be respectful to Afrocentric values and indigenous understandings of human rights as, historically, indigenous practices formed the basis for informal child protection systems in traditional societies (Atwool, 2006:324; Mkabela, 2014:287; Mushunje, 2006:16).

Sub-theme 5.6: The convergence between IKS and the modern justice system

The participants noted that there were areas of convergence between IKS and modern child protection practices. Some participants pointed out that similar challenges were also

experienced in the modern justice system in that adults' interests were put ahead of the best interests of the child.

"I want to follow up on what she said earlier on [pointing to an earlier contribution], she mentioned the challenges we have with our legal system and you mentioned that the traditional systems could also be hiding some cases under a carpet to protect family reputation. But at the same time the modern justice system is prolonging the process to the extent that when you are dealing with cases of child abuse the child ends up saying she does not want the matter to go the legal way, so what should we do now? ... I do not think these IKS practices you have shared are that much divorced from the modern law. I am looking at this issue of the family being secretive, the legal system also prohibits issues of child abuse and the ensuing court process tries to protect the identity of the child." (P17)

"If I may comment on what she said about the child who ended up killing her teacher because she was told to be secretive, if you look at it, it was meant to protect the child's future. The idea is that if people know that she was abused, who will then marry her? So, we are speaking the same language and maybe to the same tune. I have dealt with child sexual abuse cases where I do not know who the perpetrator was, but the child received all the services like health care, education, temporary place of safety, amongst others. So, we should just teach our communities that the law is meant to protect the child not that the law is an end in itself, it is just a means to an end." (P16)

"We at our workplace, we have dealt with cases where we have empowered the child and give them enough psycho-social support and empowered the child to move on. Maybe we need to move away from the legalistic approach. It is a matter of time, we need to ensure that as we interact with communities, we make them aware that whilst our intervention may include health and legal services that is not the end, the end is to end child abuse." (P20)

Although the clash between modern law and indigenous practices is evident and emanate from constructions of childhood and social problems, as discussed in earlier sub-themes, some participants pointed to a convergence between IKS and the modern justice system. The United Nations (2016:17) describes the unique features of traditional justice systems as, amongst others, a process facilitated by community leaders with the aim of reconciliation and harmony. In this regard, the principles underlying *ubuntu* is seen as relevant to the legal system in Africa (Mupedziswa et al., 2019:32). Banks (2011:169) relates the aspect of reconciliation to the practice of restorative justice in Western societies. Family group conferences, which are part of traditional ways of conflict resolution, are practiced in countries such as New Zealand as an empowerment model of child welfare services (Conley, 2010:45), as well as in South Africa as stipulated in the country's Children's Act 38 of 2005. The awareness programme may thus promote social workers' awareness of the importance to enhance existing indigenous practices that can support child protection interventions and police. Considering legislation as well as IKS could contribute towards creating child protection systems that are suitable to the local culture and context (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2019:245; Wessels, 2015:8).

Sub-theme 5.7: The state of children in Southern Africa

Ecological systems theory focuses on the development of children in the environment, ranging from the microsystem as the immediate environment of the child to the macrosystem, which relates to the significant influence of culture on all the systems in the child's environment (Louw et al., 2014:29-30). The participants expressed concern about the state of children in Southern Africa and the effects of aspects such as poverty, the lack of resources, and different perspectives on child maltreatment and legislation.

"Our children are in danger in Africa given the poverty we are experiencing." (P22)

"Child protection in Southern Africa is based on emergency services like responding to child sexual abuse which does not work well to address the root causes of the problem." (P3)

"The other problem like in Zimbabwe is lack of resources. There is no political will, for example, if you look at the Department of Social Welfare which is a major player; they are under-funded and are suffering a serious brain drain as people are flocking out to the UK and our neighbouring countries for better working conditions. They do not have enough vehicles to do case follow-ups and also they lack skills because those with experience and skills are pushed out of Zimbabwe and Africa to Europe where they have better working conditions." (P11)

"So, the child protection system is weak given the lack of resources which are cited by others." (P15)

"Child protection in Southern Africa is also a challenge because we are using colonial pieces of legislation as for us you know that we are heavily relying on Britain for the child protection." (P22)

In the reflective discussions during the programme presentation, the participants identified the following examples of abuse, neglect, and exploitation typical in their work context:

- Physical abuse, such as the excessive use of corporal punishment, sexual abuse and exploitation, and emotional and verbal abuse
- Child marriages, human trafficking, and exploitation of children for economic benefit
- Child neglect, children begging on the streets, unattended and unsupervised minors, and denying children access to health and medical services
- Inappropriate responsibilities such as child labour, even hard labour, and responsibility for child minding when they are supposed to be at school.

The participants views were corroborated by information obtained during the literature review of the research study. Child protection systems in Africa face many challenges and the systems are based on foreign child protection models (UNICEF, 2014a; United Nations, 2017:16). The adverse conditions that children on the African continent and in Southern Africa are exposed to are also highlighted in many studies (United Nations, 2015:42; United Nations, 2017:51, 57). The programme may thus sensitise social workers to creatively use natural

ecological resources such as information and knowledge inherent in IKS in addressing the root cause of child maltreatment and promoting child well-being (Hepworth et al., 2017:431; Ross, 2008:368). IKS principles such as *ubuntu* can be used to involve communities in creating protective environments that could prevent child maltreatment and child protection services that would be appropriate to local contexts.

8.3.3.6 Theme 6: Recommendations for further research

Participants were asked during the focus group discussions to share their recommendations for further research in the area under study that could contribute to the refinement of the awareness programme. Various recommendations were proffered and are discussed as the sub-themes in this section. For the researcher, the recommendations suggested the participants' critical reflection on the programme content and their willingness to contribute to the pilot testing of the awareness programme.

Sub-theme 6.1: An in-depth study and documentation of IKS

Participants recommended that further research on IKS could enrich the awareness programme. Some participants supported the idea of research on IKS that is unique to the Vatsonga people whereas others suggested research on IKS of other ethnic groups. It was also recommended that further research could entail an extensive study and documentation of the IKS of the Vatsonga without limiting the study to certain areas of practice such as child protection. The purpose of such a study would be purely to build an IKS knowledge bank for reference by students and researchers from different discipline and professions.

“Ahh, I was just thinking whilst there are many practices which are generalisable to other ethnic groups, a focus on those IKS unique to the Vatsonga ... which would allow you to do justice to the Vatsonga people.” (P12)

“I think it would be good to just have study which just documents all these IKS relevant to child protection, documenting from various ethnic groups.” (P13)

The participants' recommendations would address a challenge established during the literature review that Tsonga history and IKS are not widely studied and documented (Hove, 2012:6; Levine, 2005:210; Manganye, 2011:5). In addition, existing studies on IKS seem to focus more on IKS in agriculture and medicine as compared to IKS and child protection (Briggs, 2005; Chiwanza et al., 2013; Magid, 2011:137; Makhubele, 2011; Mapara, 2009; Ossai, 2010). Since IKS is orally transmitted (Dondolo, 2005:114; Ossai, 2010:2-4; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013:1;), further research on IKS could present an Afrocentric view and clarify varying social constructions such as those on childhood and child responsibilities. In terms of the awareness programme, the researcher interprets the suggestions by the participants as a reflection of the value they assign to the knowledge and insights gained in the programme.

Sub-theme 6.2: Research on the use of IKS with different groups of service users

In addition, some participants recommended that further studies could be done to establish the contribution of IKS to social work practice with service users who present with different social problems. Their suggestions included different research studies that focus on the use of IKS in relation to persons with mental illness, and in resolving the controversies and dilemmas currently faced by societies in Zimbabwe when it comes to issues of sexual orientation and with children in conflict with the law.

“Ahhh, I would suggest IKS and mental illness, how IKS is related to mental illness or how IKS can help practitioners understand mental illness.” (P21)

“For me, I would be interested in researching how IKS could contribute to dealing with or resolving the issue of sexual orientation in this country. Yah, for me that can work, to see how we can protect their rights using IKS.” (P17)

“I would like to also add my voice to the issue of IKS in facing LGBT issues. For me, it would be interesting to research how the community would deal with cases of learning that their child is an LGBT, using IKS.” (P13)

“We can also research on the role of IKS when dealing with children in conflict with the law because the modern justice system seems to fail us. You report the case, it takes donkey years [extremely long] for the matter to be processed; hence, if we can establish the contribution of IKS in this area it would help us by giving us an alternative justice route.” (P11)

The findings from the pilot testing of the awareness programme brought important insights into issues of African spirituality. The spiritual approach in explaining and treating illness or handling social issues, including the role of the traditional healer, differs from the Western perspective followed in many modern hospitals and clinics (Masango & Nyasse, 2015:60; Ross, 2010:45). However, it is difficult to document African traditional medicine due to its strong link to spirituality, taboos, and rituals (Masango & Nyasse, 2015:60). Also important in the feedback given by the participants is the notion that the Tsonga justice system is different from the Western laws followed in the country. This point was also shared by the IKS experts during the first stage of data collection in the study.

Sub-theme 6.3: Tsonga IKS in terms of the male child

Some participants suggested that social workers could benefit from research on the male child in the Tsonga culture, specifically centred on two themes: the elevated status of the boy child versus the girl child and the content of the curriculum of the male initiation ceremony (*khombe*). Some participants recommended an investigation into the elevation of the status of boys above girls to explore whether it could lead to Xitsonga-speaking boys becoming less responsible as adult men due to the preferential treatment they get during childhood. Furthermore, it was suggested that future research could focus on studying the curriculum

content of the initiation ceremonies to ascertain what children are taught. In addition, they envisaged a situation whereby the findings of such a study would help social workers to conclude how the initiation curriculum could promote children's rights, including their right to protection.

"About the boy child, you know we can study on this practice of elevating the boys, that of looking at them as fathers of the house and giving them a big share of responsibility. I think that [elevates status] makes the boy child in future to be lazy and less responsible because they know that everything owned by the family is theirs. So, we may need to explore this area." (P13)

"I think on the issue of the rituals which you highlighted...Yes, I think there is need to have a comprehensive study on what that entails in terms of the curriculum content taught to initiates." (P9)

"So, we can study that curriculum and see how that relates to child protection or how that can be used to teach child rights issues to the initiates." (P15)

The aspects raised by the participants may influence conceptualisations of social issues and thus perceptions and practices in society. Social constructionism is focused on culture and context in understanding what happens in society in the construction of knowledge (Smith et al., 2011:71). An example of the influence such conceptions about the status of the boy child above that of the girl is that the girl child may be denied the right to education, be used in reparations, and be subjected to child marriages, as indicated by the IKS experts during stage one of data collection. Initiation ceremonies for children are markers of childhood or adulthood according to Tsonga IKS and are associated with different conceptualisations of childhood (Holden & Williamson, 2014:1138; Mafumbate & Magano, 2016:29; Statham & Chase, 2010:2). Recommendations to conduct research on initiation might be faced with some challenges given that the information of initiation ceremonies is usually held discrete and not made known to outsiders. Research will thus require close collaboration with traditional leaders, and gender-specific intervention such as ensuring that the data collection team is comprised of males since only initiated boys and men are allowed in initiation camps.

Sub-theme 6.4: Social workers' familiarity with IKS

The participants also recommended that further research could be conducted to establish social workers' familiarity with and knowledge of IKS. This recommendation was supported by participants who were convinced that social workers are already using IKS in their practice without being aware that they do.

"Ahhh, you ask me the familiarity of social workers with IKS; looking at the understanding of IKS by the social workers themselves should be a priority." (P21)

"Mine [my suggestion] would be studying the utilisation of IKS in social work practice by social worker either wittingly or unwittingly, yah (laughs)." (P17)

The findings suggest to the researcher that the participants regarded the information on IKS as an important part of the awareness programme. The participants' suggestions are also viewed in the context that social work is a profession that requires purposeful application of knowledge, thus also purposeful application of IKS (Patel, 2015:133). This means that social workers have certain responsibilities towards professional knowledge, values, skills, professional standards, ethical conduct, and professional development. Their theoretical knowledge helps social workers to organise their thinking as practitioners; however, social workers need to be mindful that their knowledge is not immune to personal bias and cultural beliefs (Patel, 2015:135). The concept of mindfulness is therefore an important principle underlying the awareness programme for social workers in the use of IKS in child protection.

Sub-theme 6.5: The influence of IKS on policy formulation

Some participants recommended that a study could be done on looking at the influence of IKS in policy formulation:

"I am interested in how IKS could contribute or influence policy formulation." (P22).

"There is a gap between what is taught in class, what is in the policy and what is done in the field; hence, there is a need for social workers to consider IKS and policy research to inform practice." (P15).

"I think it would be good to look at how IKS influence policy makers in formulating policy. One can also look at if having an IKS sensitive policy leads to success in implementation or not." (P12).

The recommendations proffered by social workers conjures up the idea that there is a discrepancy between conceptions based on IKS and those described in policy documents and legislation. As an example, a child in both the CRC and the ACWRC is regarded as a person under the age of 18 (OHCHR, 1989:1; African Union, 1990:1). However, the legal emphasis on numeric age is contrary to the African worldview that relies on rites of passages and other practices to consider one to be a child or an adult (Bekker, 2008:395). To this effect, the social worker can assume an advocacy role to collaborate with communities and formal structures in policy and legislative processes, or act as mobiliser to bring communities together to act on critical matters such as child maltreatment (Patel, 2015:142, 145). A section to clarify discrepancies between IKS conceptions and legal prescriptions can make a valuable contribution to address many of the contentious issues related to child protection, culture, and IKS, as discussed earlier.

Sub-theme 6.6: Research on urban IKS

Participants also suggested research on sprouting urban IKS. They argued that urban dwellers have also developed their own IKS over the years, hence it is important to study this recent phenomenon. One participant commented as follows:

“It resonates well with what I said earlier. Yes, some of us are part of the cattle generation who grew in the rural areas herding cattle but now there is a new crop of people who are urbanised and I am thinking of how new IKS has been generated over the years in these urban areas. So, it would be interesting to research on these newly developed or modernised IKS by those in urban areas. ... If you go to Waterfalls ... we meet various people and fraternise but if you go to Parktown, for example, you would find ... the coloureds, and they have their own culture ... so that is a developing culture there which may need to be researched on. Modern IKS, if you like.” (P20

The above suggestion can be related to the role of acculturation whereby people choose which elements of their culture to keep and what to change or give up. However, though people change and adopt a new culture, some maintain their culture despite change of location from rural to urban (Mkabela, 2015:285). As indigenous knowledge is defined as a body of knowledge that developed through the history of specific communities, inform their traditions, influence their ways of life, and reveals their cultural beliefs and practices (Dewah & Mutula, 2014:215; Ossai, 2010:2), the participant’s suggestion offers an thought-provoking angle on the concept of IKS in societies that developed in more recent times. In addition, note should be taken of acculturation as a process that will naturally occur (Ife, 2007:79).

8.3.4 Discussion of the research findings

Following a constructivist research paradigm and a qualitative research approach, the data collected during the focus group was implemented so that the research participants play an active role in the process of providing feedback in their own words on the programme, which focused on a phenomenon of which little was known (Bless et al., 2013:4; De Vos et al., 2011:7-8). The researcher emphasised the role of the participants in terms of the pilot testing of the programme during their recruitment as participants and information was also contained in the informed consent form. Furthermore, the participants were reminded of their role during the presentation of the programme, before the discussion of the influence of IKS. All the participants were present for the full duration of the programme and the focus group interviews afterwards.

The programme was presented with consideration of the theoretical frameworks of the study as the programme content had a strong focus on culture and constructions underlying IKS. The researcher was sensitive to the fact that, as with service users, social workers also have a cultural background that may influence their views and perspectives on matters related to their work. Thus, the ecological systems theory that highlights the influence of culture and

social constructionism that highlights variations in people's perceptions of events, problems, and experiences (Louw et al., 2014:29-30; Schenk, 2019:77), were also relevant to the implementation of the programme.

All the participants suggested that the programme was useful; however, the participants also made suggestions that the programme needed to be refined in terms of its content, use of media, and presentation. The researcher will carefully consider all their suggestions in the advanced development and evaluation of the programme (De Vos & Strydom, 2011a:476; Fraser et al., 2009:32-33); the next phase in the intervention research process did, however, not form part of the study. Based on the researcher's observation during the presentation of the programme, it was evident that the modules related to the influence of IKS and the use of IKS in child protection elicited an active engagement and discussion of the participants. Aspects such as these will be considered in the refinement of the content of the programme.

In general, the participants' engagement in discussions during the programme and the focus group interviews suggested that the programme, even though based on the IKS of one cultural group, could stimulate reflective discussions on the role of IKS in child protection. Including more time for reflective discussions in the programme, as suggested by most of the participants, could provide opportunities for the participants to share and consider elements of how the IKS of other cultural groups could relate to child protection.

The researcher became aware of the importance of the manner in which the programme is presented, but also of the influence of the physical environment. As suggested by the participants, more audio-visual materials can be included in the programme. Although the venue contained sufficient seating, tables, and materials for the presentation of the programme, the excessive heat on the days that the programme was presented appeared to affect the comfort of the participants during the programme and focus group interviews. The aspect of what would be considered as a suitable duration for the presentation of the programme will be assessed in future presentations of the programme.

8.4 SUMMARY

The chapter contained a description of the development and contents of the awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection. Furthermore, the qualitative research findings related to the pilot testing of the programme were presented. The programme was based on the Tsonga IKS as a case study and was pilot tested with 22 participants who were social workers working in the field of child protection. The feedback from the participants will be carefully considered in the evaluation and advanced development of the programme. In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss the key findings of the study and conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings.

CHAPTER 9

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The study was conducted to explore the potential contribution of IKS to child protection, based on a Tsonga case study. It was proposed that IKS could provide a vital ecological resource for the care and protection of children in the Southern African context, given the challenges experienced by child protection systems in the region. To understand IKS and child protection issues in local contexts, one has to learn from those who experience the phenomenon being investigated. As such, it was imperative that experts on the Tsonga IKS and social workers working in the field of child protection were involved as participants in the study. In the previous chapters the researcher presented an overview of the literature, the research methodology for the study, and the qualitative research findings obtained on IKS and its possible contribution to child protection, as well as the findings on the pilot testing of the developed awareness programme for social workers. In this chapter, the key findings, conclusions and recommendations following from the study are presented. First, the accomplishment of the goal and objectives of the study will be discussed.

9.2 ATTAINMENT OF THE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

The goal of the study was met through the pursuance of five objectives that were stated for the study, which are discussed in this section.

Objective 1: To theoretically conceptualise IKS with specific reference to children's right to protection.

The first objective of the study was achieved through a literature review on three key main themes related to the research topic. Chapter 3 contained a detailed discussion of *children's right to protection* against the background of child rights as stipulated in the key international policy and regional frameworks of the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990). It was recognised that children's rights are inseparable, thus children's right to protection cannot be viewed in isolation from their provision and participation rights. In the African context, provision rights seem to be prioritised over protection and participation rights.

The definition and aims of *child protection* and the role of *child protection systems* were discussed in Chapter 4 as the measures intended to ensure children's right to protection. The role of the social worker in child protection was highlighted with reference to the developmental approach to child welfare services. Furthermore, the discussion focused on child protection services in Sub-Saharan Africa and on differences in constructions related to children and their protection between Western and indigenous contexts that could affect the protection of children.

The concept of *IKS as an indigenous knowledge system* embedded in the local culture was discussed in Chapter 5. The influence of culture on the Afrocentric worldview as distinct from the Western worldview was highlighted. Findings in the literature review indicate that the source of IKS is the indigenous people, who are the producers and consumers of their IKS. African IKS is based on the Afrocentric worldview and manifests in all aspects of the lifestyle of the African people, including their beliefs and value systems, rituals, traditional medicine, food and agriculture, and their folklore, music, songs and dances. The Vatsonga people were described as one of the ethnic groups that adopt an Afrocentric worldview.

Objective 2: To explore and describe Tsonga IKS that could be relevant to children's right to protection from a bio-ecological and social constructionist perspective

This objective was achieved by means of the first stage of data collection in the process of intervention research that was followed in the study. To gain an understanding of and insight into Tsonga IKS and possible associations with child protection, comprehensive data were collected from a sample of Tsonga IKS experts from two districts in Zimbabwe and Mozambique as well as from social workers in the field of child protection in the districts. The empirical findings were presented in 10 themes, each with sub-themes, in Chapter 7. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and social constructionism guided the data collection and analysis and the interpretation of the empirical findings. The two theories were discussed in Chapter 2 as the theoretical frameworks for the study. The ecological system theory provided insight into the extensive influence of culture and IKS (the macrosystem) on all other ecological levels in the environment of children, families and communities, as was evident in the empirical findings. The research findings furthermore showed that social constructions of aspects such as child, childhood and child-rearing were specific to the Tsonga IKS, which could present as opportunity for protection and harm alike.

Objective 3: To identify elements in Tsonga IKS that could enhance or hamper children's right to protection.

The third objective of the study was accomplished by the discussion of the empirical findings of the first stage of data collection in Chapter 7. As evident in several of the main themes and sub-themes of the study, the participants shared information of elements in the Tsonga IKS that could enhance the protection of children, whilst other elements were highlighted as being harmful to children when compared to international, regional and national laws on children's rights and their right to protection. Empirical evidence point to IKS enhancing the right of the child to protection through the value placed on the child, the role of the extended family to care for the child, socialisation methods, the rights of passage and systems of child mentoring and counselling, and the responsibility of the wider community for the well-being of children, amongst others. However, social conceptions of childhood and childhood responsibilities as well as puberty rites of passage and the mentoring system, if unchecked, could expose children to harm. Furthermore, dealing with social adversity or problems through the traditional justice system, could subvert the interests of the child in a bid to protect the interests of the family and the adults.

Objective 4: To develop and pilot test an awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection.

Objective 4 was achieved through the development of an awareness programme for social workers based on the empirical findings of the first stage of data collection and the literature review for the study. The goal of the programme was to raise awareness among child protection social workers on IKS and how elements of IKS could be used in child protection interventions. The Tsonga IKS was used as a case study. The programme contained different modules to attain the objectives of the programme, which included knowledge of IKS and the manifestation thereof in everyday life, the influence of IKS on social constructions and how it could relate to the laws of a country, practices that could protect or harm children, and the influence of IKS on child protection interventions in local communities. The programme was pilot tested with a sample of social workers, whose feedback will be taken into consideration for the refinement of the programme. The advanced development and dissemination of the programme as the last two stages of the intervention research process were, however, not part of this study.

Objective 5: Based on the research findings, to suggest practice guidelines for relevant role players in the child protection field on the use of IKS in child protection.

This objective is achieved in this chapter and is presented in the last section of this chapter (see Section 9.4). Practice guidelines address recommendations for social work; however, also apply to other professions that form part of child protection systems and services. Recommendations are presented in terms of the developed awareness programme for social workers, for social work practice and training, for policy directives, and for future research.

9.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study was guided by the following research question:

How can Tsonga Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) contribute to child protection and inform an awareness programme for social workers?

The following sub-questions were stated for the study:

- What elements of Tsonga IKS are relevant to children's right to protection?
- What elements of Tsonga IKS could enhance or hamper children's right to protection?
- How could knowledge of IKS be utilised by social workers in the field of child protection?

In answering the research questions, the researcher will present the key findings and conclusions of the study.

9.3.1 Key findings related to the literature review

The key findings from the study of literature are summarised as follows:

- Children's rights on the African continent are guided by the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) as well as relevant legislation of the individual countries.
- The CRC (OHCHR, 1989) describes three main groups of children's rights that apply to all children, namely provision, protection and participation rights, and guiding principles for the implementation of rights. Children's rights are interrelated, and the provision, protection and participation rights of children cannot be viewed in isolation.
- Socio-economic and socio-cultural factors hamper the realisation of the rights and lead to the violation of the rights of large numbers of children living in Sub-Saharan and Southern Africa.
- Challenges experienced by child protection systems, amongst others limited resources and staff, lead to ineffective child protection services in Sub-Saharan Africa, while the

protection of children is affected by social constructions related to cultural conceptions about childhood, child well-being, equality and childrearing.

- However, it appears that Africa had intact child protection services in pre-colonial times.
- Social work is a key role player in child protection services and various social work roles can be implemented from a developmental social work perspective to empower and enhance the strengths, capacity and participation of individuals, groups and communities and support social justice and equality.
- African culture and IKS inform the worldview of the African people, which manifest in the beliefs, norms and practices that guide in entire lifestyle of the people, including their spirituality, traditional medicine and rituals, food, dress, agriculture and folklore, art, songs and dance. The culture of generosity, relatedness and respect characterise the Afrocentric worldview of the Vatsonga people. The African worldview, guided by collectivist principles of *ubuntu*, differs from the Western, individualistic worldview on which social work education and practice is generally based.
- There is an increasing call for social work in Africa to become culturally responsive by integrating indigenous knowledge into social work education and practice.

Conclusions

- Although African countries who are signatories to the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990) bind themselves to the stipulations of these documents for upholding children's rights, structural, economic and socio-cultural factors negatively affect children's rights and child protection interventions. With such challenges, the need to explore local resources becomes apparent.
- Social workers as key role players in child protection can utilise their knowledge and social work roles to enhance child protection services. The socio-cultural context must be considered if interventions are to be effective and culturally responsive.
- IKS is based on the culture of the indigenous African people and can be explored as resources in the natural environment of indigenous communities to augment scarce child protection resources.

9.3.2 Key findings related to the theoretical frameworks of the study

The key findings related to the ecological systems theory and social constructionism are summarised as follows:

- Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which stems from the general systems theory, describes the influence of the environment on children's development.

- The above theory stems from the general systems theory, which highlights features such as wholeness, boundaries, feedback and homeostasis that describe the processes involved in the functioning of systems.
- The ecological systems theory is based on the notion that children are at the centre of the process of development and that their development is influenced by the conditions within the multiple layers in their environment, namely the micro, macro, meso, exo and macrosystems. Constant changes in these systems are reflected by the chronosystem.
- Culture, which is a central concept in this study, is situated in the macrosystem, which is the outermost system and thus affects all other systems in the child's environment.
- Social constructionism proposes that the environment plays a role in people's construction of their reality. People's perceptions are formed through their experiences and interactions in their social environment; therefore, people's reality will be specific to their social environment and will differ from one context to another.
- Constructions of concepts and social issues such as 'childhood' and 'child maltreatment' will thus be influenced by a group's cultural beliefs and norms.

Conclusions

- The ecological systems theory provides insight into the encompassing role of culture on the environment in which children develop, including the environment in which children's rights to protection are implemented.
- The ecological systems theory position researchers to be sensitive to the child's context and culture.
- Social constructionism explains the prevalence of different constructions of concepts related to child protection, which may vary from the definitions and norms set by law and followed by the social work profession.
- In research on social phenomena, social constructionism raises researchers' awareness of different perceptions and interpretations of social situations and problems.

9.3.3 Key findings and conclusions: IKS and child protection

In this section, the researcher will present the key findings and conclusions of the study based on the data that were collected on the Tsonga IKS and child protection in the first stage of data collection of the study.

9.3.3.1 Theme 1: Key findings on the conceptualisation of the Tsonga IKS

The key findings associated with conceptualising Tsonga IKS are presented as follows:

- The Tsonga IKS is conceived as embedded in Tsonga culture. Their culture encompasses all aspects of the Vatsonga people's lifestyle, including their spirituality, belief in the ancestors, agriculture, food, traditional medicine, childrearing practices, hunting and traditional songs, folklore and games.
- The Tsonga culture is embedded in values that are transmitted through their IKS, including values of generosity, respect, relatedness, and integrity. These values reflect the African philosophy of *ubuntu* and the collectivist nature of society.
- The Tsonga culture is transmitted from generation to generation through their IKS. IKS involves the knowledge of the culture that is held by the elders and is transmitted to the next generations through oral traditions, socialisation and role modelling.

Conclusions

- The Tsonga culture is the source of their IKS. Being in the macrosystem as the outermost layer of the ecological systems, their culture influences all aspects of the Tsonga lifestyle.
- The Tsonga IKS aligns with the African IKS and Afrocentric worldview as describe in the literature.
- The Afrocentric worldview that is characterised by communal and collectivist principles is in contrast to the Western worldview of individualism that supports individual aspirations and personal independence.
- Social work education and practice is traditionally based on Western models, which requires of social workers to be aware of differences of the beliefs, norms and practices of service users in non-Western contexts.

9.3.3.2 Theme 2: Key findings on the manifestation of IKS

The following key findings relate to the manifestation of Tsonga IKS:

- As culture is the source of IKS, it was evident that the Tsonga IKS manifested in all aspects of the belief system and lifestyle of the people.
- The findings from literature were corroborated with empirical findings that Tsonga IKS is based on values of privacy, respect, self-reliance, love and care for one another. Their belief system and rituals include but are not limited to death and burial rituals, naming rituals, reverence of the ancestors, the use of traditional medicine and spirituality such as belief in *tilo* (heaven).
- Their socio-cultural life includes rites of passage for boys and girls, punishment of wrongdoing by the traditional leadership, heritage sites such as graves of ancestors,

recitals of totems and genealogy, culture and language, and cultural practices such as stories, songs, poetry and games.

- Tsonga IKS is also manifested through the socio-economic fabric of the society. The Tsonga socio-economic life revolves around agriculture and relationship to land, personal and family wealth and the role of girls in material wealth. If unchecked, some practices breed a ground for child abuse given that children are sometimes absent from school so as to work in the fields and herd cattle so as to build the family wealth.
- The Vatsonga people place a strong emphasis on family and community life. The extended family is closely involved in the care and well-being of children and, according to *ubuntu*, community members take responsibility for the well-being of others.

Conclusions

- The manifestation of the Tsonga IKS shows the significant influence of IKS on the lives of people traditional African communities, as also described in the literature, and should be understood from the worldview of the Vatsonga people.
- Beliefs and practices of IKS such as the importance of family and communal support can enhance the well-being and protection of children.
- Some practices based on Tsonga IKS can, however, infringe on children's rights. Although agriculture is important for food security, a too narrow focus on material wealth and provision rights could harm other rights of children, for example those related to child labour and education.

9.3.3.3 Theme 3: Key findings on the conceptualisation of childhood and child well-being

The key findings associated with conceptualising childhood and child-wellbeing are summarised as follows:

- Childhood among the Vatsonga is not determined by chronological age, but by a set of social markers. These social markers include marriage, maturity, graduating from rites of passage, and the child's personal relationship. Thus, a child who gets married is viewed as an adult, so is a child who graduates from an initiation school. This definition of childhood differs from definitions according to international, regional and domestic laws.
- The Vatsonga people highly value children, who are regarded as ancestors incarnate and as those who perpetuate the future of the family. Children are given names of the ancestors; hence they are accorded respect even by adults who transfer their reverence for the ancestors to the child.

- The Tsonga concept of child well-being is largely confined to physical well-being, although appreciation of other areas of child well-being such as emotional well-being was evident in the research findings. Child well-being is associated with meeting children's basic needs, with happiness, joy, freedom, peace and harmony, a sense of safety and the absence of emotional stress and violence.
- The Vatsonga people teach their children self-reliance and responsibilities to prepare them for adult life. Boys and girls are mentored and socialised to assume gender-based chores which they have to religiously do, which sometimes interferes with schooling. In doing so, children end up being exposed to tasks and responsibilities that modern law may view as child labour and abuse, and an infringement of children's rights.
- Boys and girls are assigned unequal status in the Tsonga culture, with girls having a lower status when compared to that of boys. The empirical findings show that the inequality is fanned by the existence of gender roles, patriarchy, male biased inheritance and property rights norms, and the practice of *lobola*. The unequal status lowers girls' access to education, inheritance and property.

Conclusions

- The constructions of child, childhood and child well-being are context-based and will differ in different socio-cultural contexts.
- These constructions can be a source of contention between indigenous people and social workers, who may relate the associated values and practices to issues such as child labour and childhood marriages.
- As proposed in the literature, child maltreatment is thus a social construct.
- The value placed on children according to Tsonga culture and IKS could be a protective factor that can be used in advocating for the protection of children. However, disparity between the status of the boy child and girl child can expose girls to harmful cultural practices, such as child marriage.

9.3.3.4 Theme 4: Key findings in terms of childrearing practices

The following key findings associated with child rearing practices are presented as follows:

- In the Tsonga culture, childrearing is characterised by the involvement of various family members, including the mother, father, siblings, grandparents and members of the extended family. The mother plays a central role in providing care and safety, especially in the formative years of the child.

- The role of the extended family and that of the community is central to the parenting and child rearing practices of the Vatsonga, thereby strengthening the mesosystem and exosystem in which children develop. As in collectivist cultures, parenting is done collectively and members of the extended family play a role in providing in the child's material and educational needs, in discipline, and enhancing a sense of belonging in children. In addition, the child is viewed as belonging to the whole community who will ensure the well-being of children.
- In this way, orphaned and vulnerable children are cared for by members of the extended family or the community. This form of care is, however, being threatened by poverty and increasing numbers of orphans due to HIV and AIDS.
- Giving a child a name is a significant part of the child rearing practices of the Vatsonga. A name to every child is a central right of a child among the Vatsonga people. Naming is linked to the Tsonga's spirituality and the name given to a child is not devoid of a meaning, but carries a message to the child, the parents, the family or the community. Children who are named after ancestors are held in high regard, which would protect them from harm by others. Naming and totem recitals are ways to instil a personal, family and cultural identity in children.
- According to Tsonga IKS, rites of passage for boys and girls is a major part of child rearing practices, where the initiations offer mentoring and life-long learning to the child on adult roles. However, when unchecked the practice has the potential to expose a child to harm and abuse.

Conclusions

- Parenting is a social construct, based on the cultural and social norms of society. Thereby, parenting practices and goals are informed by the culture and IKS of the Vatsonga and the related virtues of the culture for children.
- The collective and communal responsibilities for childrearing promote the well-being of all children and provide a safety net for orphans and vulnerable children that can be used in partnerships between social workers, families and communities for the protection of children.
- Given the role of the extended family and community in child-rearing, interventions to address parenting should not merely target the mother and father but also the families and communities to recognise the collective parenting system being practised by the Vatsonga.
- It is concluded by the study that there are many positive parenting and child rearing practices of the Vatsonga which can be tapped into by social workers to curb child abuse

in the communities. Cultural norms related to naming, instilling identity and initiation rituals, can support the optimal growth and development of children. However, some of these practices can contain elements that expose children to harm.

9.3.3.5 Theme 5: Key findings on indigenous ways of mentoring and socialising children

The key findings related to the mentoring and socialisation of children is summarised as follows:

- The total lifestyle of the Vatsonga, with their values, practices and everyday behaviour serve as an educational and socialisation system of children. Adult modelling of desired behaviours and mentoring and initiation practices are meant to prepare children for adulthood and to transfer the Tsonga IKS to the younger generations.
- Traditional mentoring systems for boys and girls, the kulaya, provided children with guidance and support and usually follow gender-based tasks. Boys and girls could approach their aunts and uncles for guidance on any matter including issues of sex and sexuality as well as general psychosocial support when needed. However, these 'closed' systems may lead to the suppression of reporting child maltreatment.
- Indigenous methods such as songs, poetry, dance, storytelling, and role play are extensively used to teach Xitsonga-speaking children educational and life skills and the norms and values of their culture. Storytelling is one of the key methods in which IKS is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Conclusion

- The Tsonga IKS and lifestyle provide a holistic environment in which children learn the values, norms and behaviours of their culture.
- The mentoring system, which is sanctioned by the community, provides opportunities for support through informal social support networks, which is a common practice in African communities. These networks can contribute to the protection and well-being of children.
- Indigenous education and socialisation methods such as storytelling, song, dance and role play, are effective and age-appropriate methods that can be used in awareness and educational campaigns aimed at children and adults in the community. The literature indicates that, although these teaching methods seem simplistic, it has many rich complexities to serve as powerful educational and socialisation tools.

9.3.3.6 Theme 6: Key findings on dealing with social adversity and problems

The key findings on measures to deal with social adversity and problems are presented below:

- Traditional justice systems consisting of traditional councils were still relevant in Tsonga communities and were used to deal with social adversity or problems such as child maltreatment. The traditional leadership plays an important role in dealing with problems that are beyond the scope of the family and have the powers to fine the perpetrator and ensure that the wronged family gets justice. The focus of interventions is on restoration and harmony.
- Judgement by the traditional council does not only involve the perpetrator, but also his/her family as well as the wronged family. When a family is wronged the perpetrator has to pay reparations, which could include payment in monetary goods, livestock or a young girl of the perpetrator's family. This practice could expose girls to forced marriages, however, it is one of the practices which have faded away due to acculturation and the advent of modern laws.
- The traditional justice system was regarded as an effective way for dealing with issues of maltreatment. The harsh punitive measures for such transgressions also served to largely prevent the abuse of children, especially sexual abuse.
- Issues such as marital problems, childcare and inheritance would be dealt with in family conferences in which problems would be solved on a family-to-family level. Failure to solve matters on this level will be referred to the traditional council.
- Not all participants, especially social work participants, were unconditionally in favour of traditional ways of dealing with adversity and problems. Their concerns included that children were excluded from all processes, reparation would not necessarily take the best interest of the child into account, and the system could lead to the under-reporting of child abuse.

Conclusions

- Traditional councils and family conferences are common practices on the African continent and can be resources that can collaborate with formal child protection services in addressing problems that affect the protection and well-being of children in local communities.
- Although traditional councils and family conferences can effectively deal with the problems in local communities, these systems can also have shortcomings of creating a culture of silence as the interests of the adults compete with the child's best interests. If the

perpetrator pays the family 'damages' and the matter would be deemed solved, it perverts the quest for child justice. As such, the system seems not to prioritise the best interests of the child as, when the two interests collide, the adults' interests are normally elevated above those of a child.

- The existing systems of dealing with adversity and problems need to be checked to ensure that the child gets justice, and the perpetrator is apprehended. The system could easily be abused in cases where the perpetrator who would pay damages to the family of the abused child continue to walk free in the society, thereby causing further trauma to the child who might not get adequate socio-emotional support from the existing system.
- There could thus be discrepancy in the handling of child abuse allegations between traditional justice systems, the child protection system and the country's courts of law.

9.3.3.7 Theme 7: Key findings on the perceptions on children's rights

The following key findings associated with the perceptions on children's rights are presented as follows:

- The study found out that Vatsonga people's perceptions of children's rights have a narrow focus on provision rights as compared to participation and protection rights. Children's rights are largely viewed in terms of the provision in their basic needs such as food, housing, and clothing. The strong focus on provision rights is found in many African societies, as described in literature.
- Xitsonga-speaking girls and boys assume responsibilities for household and agricultural chores as guided by the Tsonga childrearing norms and practices. Childhood responsibilities are a way of socialising children to become productive and responsible adults. These chores would often be prioritised over school attendance but would not be regarded as a form of child labour.
- Corporal punishment was still widely practiced as a form of discipline to achieve the socialisation goals for Xitsonga-speaking children. Physical forms of punishment such as beating a child was not regarded as abuse as it was an accepted form of discipline and systems were in place to regulate its implementation to prevent harm to the child.

Conclusions

- It is concluded from the study that Tsonga perception of children's rights are inclined towards provisions rights. This focus has a potential threat of having the other rights being violated in ignorance.

- However, child rights experts highlight that provision rights, which focus on children's rights to survival and development, is a prerequisite for the realisation of other rights, namely protection and participation rights. The focus on provision rights should thus not be uncritically considered, given the high level of child poverty and hunger on the African continent.
- Some of the practices informed by Tsonga IKS, such as childhood responsibilities and corporal punishment could infringe on children's rights and are reflected in child rights debates related to child labour, the right to education, and physical punishment of children. The indigenous social constructions may thus inadvertently violate the rights of children as stipulated in international, regional and local laws.
- There is thus a need to raise awareness on children's rights in indigenous Tsonga communities, including the protection and participation rights of children to augment the already existing awareness of elements of the life, survival and development rights (provisions rights).

9.3.3.8 Theme 8: Key findings on the influence of acculturation on Tsonga IKS

The research findings showed that acculturation had an influence on the Tsonga culture, IKS and associated practices that were described in the previous themes. The key findings on the influence of acculturation are summarised below:

- The participants expressed concerns over the effect of acculturation on the Tsonga culture and IKS. Acculturation was ascribed to factors such as colonialism, Christianity, political change and modernisation which brought the people into contact with other cultures.
- Traditional systems such as the Tsonga judicial and health care systems, that were seen to be able to contribute to modern justice systems and more affordable health care systems, were becoming less relevant because of acculturation. However, it seems that the initiation system, especially the male initiation ceremonies, withstood the influence of acculturation to some extent as it was still widely practiced in Xitsonga-speaking communities.
- Acculturation affected aspects such as the Tsonga traditional songs, dance, games and storytelling, which were seen as effective measures for the socialisation of their children and the transmission of their IKS.
- However, many of the Vatsonga people who adopted a more Western and modern way of life, were still found to abide by certain cultural traditions, thereby adopting a bi-cultural perspective.

- The Tsonga IKS was still regarded as relevant for providing communities with effective socialisation methods, justice and health care sources, and many African people still rely on IKS for their agriculture, food and medicine, amongst others. Thus, measures should be put in place to revive the culture.

Conclusions

- As with many other traditional cultures, the Tsonga culture and IKS are affected by acculturation. As a result, many indigenous practices that were relevant to the survival and well-being of the culture are faced with extinction. One of the harmful effects is that Tsonga IKS, being orally transmitted, may be lost to future generations.
- Active measures to revive the Tsonga culture are needed to prevent the extinction of the culture and IKS. The strengths of the culture can be used in modern-day times, for example in social work and developmental interventions in indigenous contexts.
- Due to the phenomenon of bi-culturalism, social workers and other professionals must familiarise themselves with the extent to which individuals, families and communities adhere to the traditional culture in the context where they provide services.

9.4.4.9 Theme 9: Key findings on the relevance of Tsonga IKS to child protection and child well-being

The key findings on how Tsonga IKS could relate to the protection and well-being of children are summarised as follows:

- Communal care practices based on the principles underlying *ubuntu* creates a safe environment that can contribute to the protection of children as all members of the community are expected to keep an eye on all children.
- The Tsonga value system, guided by *ubuntu* as a social ethic, supports child protection and child well-being. *Ubuntu* contains the central values of humanity, respect, compassion that would deter people from the maltreatment of children. However, concerns were expressed that acculturation and the demise of the Tsonga culture could cause the elements of the culture that support child protection, to fade away.
- The involvement of the members of the extended family provides a safety net for children, including orphaned and vulnerable children, who are integrated as family members with no distinction being made between biological and non-biological children.
- Orphaned and vulnerable children thus grow up in a familiar environment where they experience a sense of belonging, which is not the case with institutional care. The

principles of *ubuntu* and the overseeing role of the ancestors assure that these children as well as children with disabilities are treated with respect.

- Indigenous socialisation practices such as stories and folktales are used to teach children about risks or danger and strategies for protecting themselves. Totem recitals instil a personal and family identity in children that help lost children to be reunited with their families.
- The Tsonga mentoring system is regarded as the backbone for well-informed young people as it teaches them about issues such as sexuality, dating, courtship and marriage. In addition, the system prepares children for growing up as a moral person and for socially responsible adulthood.
- The inherent value that are placed on children and the view of children as ancestors incarnate serve as a deterrent to harmful acts towards children. In addition, the justice framework of the Vatsonga contains punitive measures that have dire consequences for transgressions of social norms. This aspect is regarded as a deterrent for the maltreatment of children.

Conclusions

- Many of the elements of Tsonga IKS can be harnessed for the protection of children and can contribute to child protection services that are locally relevant.
- The socialisation methods of the Vatsonga, for example stories and folktales, provide age-appropriate methods that can be used for teaching children about child protection in awareness programmes at schools and other community settings.
- Communal care based on *ubuntu* can create protective environments for children, which is a key focus of child protection. Furthermore, the underlying values and norms of *ubuntu* can be utilised in awareness programmes on child protection. Thereby, child protection efforts can focus more on preventive than responsive practices.

9.3.3.10 Theme 10: Key findings on participants' recommendations for social work

The participants provided recommendations for social workers who provide child protection services in local Tsonga communities. The key findings on this theme are summarised below:

- Social workers should gain knowledge of the Tsonga culture and IKS so that they can understand the local people and interact with them from an informed perspective.
- Definitions of core concepts underlying child protection, namely the concepts of childhood, child maltreatment and children's rights, must be clarified. The conceptions of these terms

according to the Tsonga culture and IKS differed in many instances with those in child protection services and laws, and lead to allegations of child abuse. Three central controversies in this regard were child marriages, child labour and corporal punishment, which are also reflected in literature.

- Therefore, efforts should be made to raise awareness of modern laws among people of local communities. Communities should also be educated on the role of the social worker in child protection.
- Social workers are often seen as disrespectful by members of the local communities. Social workers should thus be respectful to the local culture and IKS in efforts to identify points of convergence between child protection and local IKS.
- Social workers should seek out and use the strengths of the culture, rather than focussing on harmful cultural practices only. These strengths can be identified in collaboration with the elders and members of the local community.
- Social workers must gain a basic understanding of the local language to enhance communication with local community members.

Conclusions

- Based on the recommendations given to social workers by community IKS experts, it can be concluded that indigenous communities are willing to partner with social workers in child protection if the social worker in return is willing to learn the culture and IKS and acquire a basic knowledge of the language of the local people.
- Gaining knowledge of the local culture and IKS forms the foundation of cultural competence. Social workers should therefore make efforts to get acquainted with the culture of local communities, as well as levels acculturation and cultural adherence of individuals and families.
- The clash between the child protection laws and some cultural practices calls for engagement of the local people in creating laws that are more culturally sensitive whilst not compromising on the safety of the child. According to ecological theory, the interface or the actual problem or target for intervention, must be clearly identified, otherwise interventions are likely to fail.
- Limited knowledge about modern child protection laws and the role of the social worker among the community members points to the need for awareness campaigns to ensure that communities fully appreciate existing child protection laws and the role of the child protection social worker. Differences in constructions of concepts related to childhood and

child well-being must be clarified in terms of legislation on child protection to prevent unintentional transgressions against children, especially as all three the countries where the Vatsonga people mostly reside are signatories to the CRC and ACRWC and have local laws related to the protection of children.

- An ecological perspective proposes that interventions from outside of a system are more likely to be met with resistance. Harmony and respect are central African values and collaboration based on these values may lower the resistance of indigenous communities to education on child rights and child protection. However, collaboration should involve frank discussions of cultural practices that can be harmful to children.
- Social work and Tsonga IKS show many similarities in valuing the well-being of children, which can serve as common ground to ensure and enhance child protection as well as promote the sustainability of social work interventions.
- The recommendations by the participants focused specifically on social workers. Most of the recommendations apply to other role players in child protection.

9.3.4 Key findings and conclusions: Pilot testing of the awareness programme

The goal of the awareness programme was to raise awareness among child protection social workers on IKS and how elements of IKS could be used in social work interventions for child protection, with Tsonga IKS as a case study. The key findings and conclusions related to the pilot testing of the programme, thus the second phase of data collection of the study, are presented in this section.

9.3.4.1 Key findings related to the contents of the awareness programme

The following are key findings associated with the participants' feedback regarding the content of the awareness programme:

- Most of the participants were of the view that the programme satisfied their expectations in that the content of the six modules equipped them with rich information of IKS and raised their awareness on IKS and its relation to child protection.
- The participants highlighted programme contents that they found of specific value, namely gaining rich information on the definition and characteristics of IKS as well as an awareness of different constructions of social problems due to the socio-cultural context of people.
- The programme was regarded as empowering the participants to adopt a strengths perspective in their work, rather than pathologising people's situations.

- Furthermore, consideration of IKS can promote an empowering approach to child protection.
- Some participants experienced that IKS is still relevant and that it is often unwittingly used by social workers.
- The participants further agreed that the programme was useful in recapping concepts related to child protection and the Zimbabwean child protection legal framework.

Conclusions

- Based on the key findings, it can be concluded that the programme was effective in exposing participants to new knowledge, namely Tsonga IKS as it relates to their existing knowledge of child protection and child protection laws. The programme substantially succeeded in equipping participating social workers with rich information on IKS, child protection, and how IKS could be mainstreamed in child protection interventions. Awareness of IKS can prepare social workers for culturally responsive practices.
- Strengths-based interventions and empowerment are central concepts of developmental social work, and points to the potential of the integration of IKS in social work interventions in local communities. The programme thus has the potential for raising awareness and initiating discourse on integrating IKS into the practice and teaching of developmental social work.
- The use of IKS in child protection could complement the efforts to transform social work and child protection interventions from being reactive to adopting a developmental thrust which considers the use of local resources in preventing social problems.
- It can be concluded that the programme reached its goal of raising awareness of IKS on the use of IKS in child protection interventions.

9.3.4.2 Key findings related to child protection and children's rights

The key findings in terms of the programme content relating to specific issues of child protection and children's rights are summarised as follows:

- The programme raised participants' awareness of the conflict between child protection legislation and some beliefs and practices based on Tsonga IKS.
- The participants became aware of the challenges that constructs and practices of the Tsonga culture can pose for child protection due to differences in definitions of childhood and child abuse. To this end, they recommended that the awareness programme should

emphasise social worker's role in raising community awareness of children's rights and child protection.

- The participants identified a convergence between the IKS principles of the traditional justice systems and modern justice systems, which both propose a restorative justice framework.

Conclusions

- Based on the above key findings, it can be concluded that the programme made the participants aware of the challenges that can arise because of differences between conceptualisations based on IKS and those in legislation.
- The discussions, recommendations and identification of patterns between IKS and restorative justice provide evidence that the programme elicited critical reflections on the topic among the participants.

9.3.4.3 Key findings on the applicability, replicability and relevance of the programme

The key findings associated with the applicability, replicability and relevance of the programme are summarised as follows:

- Most of the participants agreed that the programme was relevant and applicable to their work context given the many challenges they experience in practice. A reflective discussion highlighted the high incidences of child maltreatment that they experienced in practice, including sexual abuse and exploitation, physical abuse and corporal punishment, child marriages, and child labour.
- The participants believed that the programme would be relevant, appropriate and replicable outside its original research setting. Their feedback suggests that the programme could be applicable and relevant to all other countries inhabited by the Vatsonga people, hence it could be directly replicated to those countries.
- Furthermore, it was suggested that the programme could be applicable and relevant to other African groups, given some common beliefs and practices found among African ethnic groups.
- It was suggested the programme could also be replicated and applied to various settings, locally and internationally, as a tool to initiate debates around IKS and child protection issues as well as on the protection of protect minority rights.

Conclusions

- The practice examples of the challenges that the participants experienced in their work correlate with practices that are described as harmful cultural practices in the literature. This correlation supports the relevance of the programme to social workers in the field of child protection.
- Based on the participants' feedback, the awareness programme may also be relevant to other African ethnic groups given commonalities in their cultural beliefs and practices.
- An awareness programme for social workers could be relevant to other countries in Southern Africa to raise awareness of IKS and child protection issues.
- The programme may have the potential for a wider application than initially intended, for example as a measure to initiate debates on IKS and child protection issues or on the rights of minority ethnic groups.

9.3.4.4 Key findings on programme presentation and facilitation

The following are key findings associated with the opinions of participants on the programme presentation and facilitation methods:

- The participants had different opinions on the duration of the programme; however, most of the participants suggested a longer duration so that sufficient time was afforded for the presentation of the contents of the programme and for reflective discussion and engagement with the programme materials.
- Some participants recommended that more time should be allocated to activities to actively engage the participants. Another way to enhance engagement of the participants were seen as making the content of the programme (training manual) available to the participants before the presentation.
- The use of media including the use of PowerPoint presentations to deliver the programme was found to be effective, however, the participants also expressed the opinion that there is a need to adopt more inclusive media such as audio-visual materials, braille and sign language so that social workers with disabilities can find it easier to participate in the programme . A wider variety of media was also suggested for more actively engaging the participants.

Conclusions

- The time allocated for the programme will be increased to six or seven hours and the time for each module will be adjusted to the new time frame. This would allow adequate

interaction of participants, provide ample time for group tasks, and enhance the integration of a large amount of information.

- The presentation mode and facilitation methods of the programme were effective in making participants comprehend key issues, however there is need for the programme in future to use more inclusive forms of media for people with visual or hearing disability.

9.3.4.5 Key findings on participants' recommendations on programme content

The following are key findings associated with recommendations made by participants on the contents of the programme:

- Most participants agreed that the contents and structuring of the programme were appropriate for them to understand IKS and how IKS could be used in social work interventions in relation to child protection.
- The participants recommended that the programme contents should amplify the voices of the social workers as opposed to the current scenario where the voices of the IKS experts were the ones amplified.
- The participants recommended that it was important that the programme content should also clarify on whether child protection is synonymous to child safeguarding.

Conclusions

- It is important to consider the feedback of the participants for the advanced development and dissemination of the programme. Regular evaluations will also be of value in future implementations of the programme.
- The programme was presented to amplify the voices of IKS experts, who are the elders in the community and the bearers of IKS that is generally undocumented. Though noble to amplify the voices of the social worker in the programme, the programme could be more appropriate to the attendees of the programme when they can reflect on their own work experiences compared to the information in the programme.

9.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings and conclusions reached, recommendations are put forward and discussed. The recommendations focus on the awareness programme, on social work practice and training, on policy change directives, and on future research.

9.4.1 Recommendations for an awareness programme for social workers

Based on the researcher's experience in the development and presentation on the awareness programme and on the findings of the pilot testing of the programme, the following recommendations are made in terms of the designed programme:

- The contents of the programme as presented during the pilot phase should remain largely unchanged as the programme appeared to provide relevant information and elicit reflective discussions on the topic. Further evaluation of the programme will form part of the subsequent steps in the intervention research process.
- More time needs to be allocated for the presentation for the programme as it would allow time for reflective discussions and for much needed participation by the programme participants, as well as for a break halfway through the programme. Six hours as opposed to the four hours used during the piloting phase will allow for more time to be allocated for each module and reflective discussions.
- The use of other media over and above the PowerPoint presentation can make the presentation of information more interesting for the participants. In addition, audio-visual media must be included to make the programme accessible to persons with hearing or visual impairment. Persons with such impairments can be consulted on the use of added media.
- The implementation of the programme with other role players in the child protection field can be explored.

9.4.2 Recommendations for practice and training

Based on the empirical study and the key findings and conclusions reached, recommendations for practice are proffered. The recommendations are largely aimed at building the capacity of child protection social workers working in indigenous communities, however, are viewed as equally relevant to other role players in the field of child protection. Although the recommendations are intended for social workers and social work training institutions, they can thus also apply to persons from other professions. The following recommendations are made to guide practice:

- As a first step in culturally responsive child protection services, social workers should acquaint themselves with the culture and IKS of the communities in which they work. A lack of knowledge could lead to misunderstanding and incorrect interpretations of the norms and practices of a specific cultural group. Social workers should also acquaint

themselves with levels of acculturation of individuals and families to avoid a generalised interpretation of culture and IKS.

- To facilitate entry into and collaboration with communities, social workers must acknowledge the traditions and structures inherent in the culture and IKS of local communities. Acknowledgement must be given to the roles of key role players in communities, such as traditional leaders and elders.
- The laws, definitions and conceptualisations related to child protection may be unknown or foreign to indigenous communities. The introduction of new knowledge into a system may be met with resistance. Therefore, social workers should adopt a collaborative approach based on harmony and respect, rather than an elitist approach to engagement. The concepts of harmony and respect are especially important in traditional African contexts.
- For effective and culturally responsive child protection systems, the strengths of local cultures and IKS must be harnessed. Many Afrocentric norms and practices such as *ubuntu*, the involvement of the extended family and community in the care and well-being of children, and the indigenous mentoring systems can complement child protection services. However, cultural practices that are regarded as harmful according to international, regional and local laws need to be openly discussed.
- Utilisation of the indigenous care systems by the extended family can keep orphans and vulnerable children in communities, as proposed by a developmental approach to child protection. These families may need social assistance measures due to the prevalence of poverty in many countries in Southern Africa. Thus, advocacy is needed for governments to commit resources to strengthen kinship care through introduction of family grants.
- The development of indigenous social work models of child protection should, however, not disregard existing social work knowledge and practice. Without existing knowledge and practice frameworks, social workers will be left without any framework to refer to as they strive to mainstream IKS.
- It appears that local communities within the rural areas have little knowledge of the social work profession, formal child protection, and child protection laws. Social workers and professional bodies such as the National Associations of Social workers, Schools of Social Work and social regulatory bodies must design a programme that can be used in awareness campaigns in communities to make the people aware about the role of the social worker, child protection and existing child protection laws.

- In African communities, the concept of *ubuntu* could be used in campaigns as a rallying point against child maltreatment and for the promotion of children's rights. Social workers can take heed of the National Case Management System in Zimbabwe which heavily borrows from the concept of *ubuntu* and the notions of collective care of children.
- The traditional methods of socialisation of children such as stories, folktales, songs, games, dance, and role play and totem recitals can be utilised to teach children about child protection and strategies to safeguard themselves. These methods have been proven to be effective for teaching children about social issues and can be used in awareness programmes at schools, religious institutions and community platforms.
- Mainstreaming IKS in social work education is regarded as a valid starting point for the integration of IKS into social work. This calls for social work educators to embrace IKS into the curriculum and in the practice training of students, which could be done through introduction of an IKS module as a compulsory module for undergraduate social work students.
- Social workers should have basic knowledge of their clients' vernacular language. Social work training institutions could play a part by allowing students to take vernacular languages courses from relevant linguistic departments within their universities to ensure that social workers have a fair understanding of the local people's language which is key in child protection work.

9.4.3 Recommendations for policy change directives

The literature review and empirical findings of the study make it imperative to recommend directives for policy change. Social workers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and state agencies are critical role players in curbing the menace of child maltreatment in societies in Southern Africa. The following recommendations for policy change are given:

- Child protection laws are based on Eurocentric views, thus there is need for reviewing existing child protection laws with the aim of accommodating IKS and positive cultural practices whilst prohibiting all harmful cultural practices. The harmonisation of the laws and IKS would foster the trust in and uptake of formal child protection systems by local communities. Child protection policies and laws should be developed in close consultation with the local communities to ensure cultural sensitivity. This process must not compromise the child's exclusive rights as enshrined in the CRC (OHCHR, 1989) and the ACRWC (African Union, 1990). Therefore, harmful cultural practices must be shunned.
- Social workers should adopt a strengths perspective and seek resources within the ecological environment of the child whilst advocating for governments to commit resources

towards strengthening community systems found in the local IKS such as kinship care and the role of the community in caring for the child.

- There is need for a shift from the traditional approach of prioritising funding of formal child protection systems at the expense of informal systems. Traditionally, informal support systems play a bigger role in ensuring that the child is safe from harm, grow up healthy and enjoy their rights in the face of adversities such as the death of parents. Therefore, it is recommended that governments, NGOs, the private sector and international development partners also focus on the funding of the informal child protection systems.
- The research findings highlighted the conflicting views on child abuse and child well-being held by the legal system and the members of the community. Consequently, there is need for social workers to devote their time to understanding the local people's constructions of child, childhood, child maltreatment, child abuse so as to effectively execute the social work role of educator in educating communities about the stipulations of the law.

9.4.4 Recommendations for future research

For future research in the field of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and child protection, the following recommendations can be considered by social workers and members of other professions involved in child protection:

- The study should be replicated in other countries inhabited by the Vatsonga people, including South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia, besides Zimbabwe and Mozambique where data for the current study were collected. Such a study or studies could give a holistic understanding of the Tsonga IKS in relation to child protection in Southern Africa as opposed to relying on data collected from study samples in two countries only.
- Studies on the possible use of IKS in child protection can be conducted with multi-ethnic groups so as to compare findings on the possible contribution of IKS in child protection based on information on the IKS of different ethnic groups. The involvement of multiple ethnic groups from various countries in Southern Africa would enhance the application of research findings to a larger spectrum and diverse contexts within the child protection social work fraternity in Southern Africa.
- To tap into the possible benefits of puberty rites of passage such as the *khomba* initiation system of the Vatsonga people, it is recommended that in-depth research be conducted on the initiation process from recruitment, initiation curriculum content up to graduation in order to reach a conclusion on whether puberty rites initiation are harmful or beneficial to the child. Such a study may create an avenue for social work to influence the direction and

curriculum content of these rites in the same manner that the health fraternity has influenced the way male circumcision is done among the Vatsonga initiates.

- The current study had a relatively wide focus on the IKS of the Vatsonga related to child protection, which could lead to a generalist approach based on limited information. It is recommended that research be conducted to focus on a single or a few elements of the Tsonga IKS to allow for a more in-depth understanding of the IKS' contribution to child protection.
- It is recommended that future studies could focus on the role of IKS in working with extremely vulnerable groups such as children with mental challenges, the sexual orientation minorities such as the Lesbian Gays Bi-gender and Trans-gender (LGBT) community, and children in conflict with the law.
- Further studies may focus on exploring whether social workers are familiar with IKS of their clients and its potential role in protecting the child. Such studies could, amongst others, explore the circumstances in which social workers utilise IKS, and whether they utilise IKS wittingly and unwittingly to address challenges such as the acute shortages of resources within the formal child protection systems.
- It is recommended that the current study be replicated in the same research sites in Zimbabwe and Mozambique after a period of time, for example after a decade from the completion of this study, to establish whether the Tsonga IKS would have changed over time. Such a study would then inform the revision of the designed awareness programme for social workers to suit the context that would be prevailing at that time.
- Given that IKS is a tacit and largely undocumented knowledge system, it is recommended that further research could focus on an extensive study or studies that document the IKS of the Vatsonga people and other ethnic groups without limiting the study to certain areas of practice such as child protection. The purpose of such a study or studies would be to build an IKS knowledge bank for reference by students and researchers from different disciplines and professions.

9.5 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

In this chapter, the researcher indicated how the goal and objectives of the study that explored the possible contribution of IKS to child protection, based on the IKS of the Vatsonga people, have been accomplished. Furthermore, the key findings and conclusions of the study were summarised, and recommendations were made in terms of the awareness programme for social workers that was developed as part of the study, for social work practice and training, for policy, and for future research. Based on the information presented in the chapter, the

researcher concludes that, through qualitative research methods and the process of intervention research, the research question and sub-questions of the study were answered.

REFERENCES

- African Union. 2019. *Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs*. Available: <https://au.int/agenda2063/sdgs> (Accessed: 2019/08/20).
- African Union. 1990. *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. Addis Ababa: African Union.
- African Union Commission. 2015. *Agenda 2063. The Africa We Want*. Available: <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063.pdf> (Accessed 2019/08/20).
- Ainsworth, F. & Hansen, P. 2014. Family Foster Care: Can it survive the evidence? *Children Australia*, 39(2):87-92.
- Ainsworth, F. & Berger, J. 2014. Family inclusive child protection practice: The history of the family inclusion network and beyond. *Children Australia*, 39(2):60-64.
- Alam, S., Klein, N. & Overland, J. 2010. Achieving Social and Environmental Justice through the Many Dimensions of Globalisation. An Exclusive or Achievable Quest? In Alam, S., Klein, N. & Overland, J. (Eds). *Globalisation and the Quest for Social and Environmental Justice. The Relevance of International Law and World Order*. New York: Routledge.
- Alderson, P. 2008. Economic alternatives and childhood poverty. *International Journal of Green Economics*, 2(1):77-94.
- Andrioti, C. 2007. *Equality- a contested concept*. Eftimie University, Resita, Available: http://www.uab.ro/reviste_recunoscute/reviste_drept/annales_10_2007/andritoi_en.pdf (Accessed 2018/08/20).
- Ansell, N. 2016. 'Once upon a time...': Orphanhood, childhood studies and the depoliticisation of childhood poverty in southern Africa. *Childhood*, 23(2):162-177.
- Ansell, N. 2010. The discursive construction of childhood and youth in AIDS interventions in Lesotho's education sector: beyond global, local dichotomies, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28:791-810.
- Anukriti, S., & Dasgupta, S. 2017. Marriage markets in developing countries. In Averett, S.L., Argys, L.M. & Hoffman, S.D. (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Women and the Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ariès, P. 1962. *Centuries of childhood*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Arlermalm-Hagser, E. & Davis, J. 2014. Examining the rhetoric: A comparison of how sustainability and young children's participation and agency are framed in Australian and Swedish early childhood education curriculum. *Journal of Early Childhood*, 15(3):231-244.

- Arnett, J.J. 2016. *Human Development. A Cultural Approach*. 2nd ed. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Arnett, J.J., 2008. 'The neglected 95%: Why American psychology needs to become less American', *American Psychologist*, 63:602-614.
- Ashraf, N., Bau, N., Nunn, N., & Voena, A. 2020. Bride price and female education. *Journal of Political Economy*, 128(2):591-641.
- Atilola, O. 2014. Where Lies the Risk? An Ecological Approach to Understanding Child Mental Health Risk and Vulnerabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Psychiatry Journal*, 4:698348:1-11. Available: <https://dx.doi.org/10.11502014/698348> (Accessed 2016/06/11).
- Atwool, N. 2006. Attachment and Resilience: Implications for Children in Care. *Child Care in Practice*, 12(4):315-330.
- Axford, N. 2009. Child well-being through different lenses: Why concept matters, *Child and Family Social Work*, 14:372-383.
- Babbie, E. 2013. *The Practice of Social Research*. 13th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Banks, C. 2011. Protecting the Rights of the Child: Regulating Restorative Justice and Indigenous Practices in Southern Sudan and East Timor. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 19:167-193.
- Barn, R. & Das, C. 2016. Family group conferences and cultural competence in social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 46:942-959.
- Barrett, D. 2017. The child's right to protection from drugs: Understanding history to move forward. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 19(1):263-268.
- Bekker, J.C, 2008. *Commentary on the impact of the Children's Act on Selected Aspects of the Custody and Care of African Children in South Africa*. Law Faculty, University of Pretoria. Obiter 2008.
- Belsey, M.A. 2005. *AIDS and the family: Policy options for a crisis in family capital*. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available: <https://www.un.org> (Accessed 2018/09/18).
- Bent-Goodley, T., Fairfax, C.N. & Carlton-LaNey, I. 2017. The significance of African-centered social work for social work practice. *Journal for Human Behaviour in the Social Environment*, 27:1-6.
- Berg, A. 2003. Ancestor reverence and mental health in South Africa. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 40(2):194-207.

- Berg, A. 2001. Neglecting culture: A case of failed parent-infant psychotherapy, *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*, 9(2):33-40.
- Berk, L.E. 2013. *Child Development*. 9th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Bernard, C. 2019. Working with Cultural and Religious Diversity. In Horwath, J. & Platt, D. (Eds). *The Child's World. The Essential Guide to Assessing Vulnerable Children, Young People and their Families*. 3rd ed. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Berns, R.M. 2013. *Child, Family, School, Community: Socialisation and Support*. 9th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Berns, R.M. 2016. *Child, Family, School, Community: Socialisation and Support*. 10th ed. Stamford: Cengage Learning.
- Bernstein, M.H., Mortimer, J.T., Lutfey, K. & Bradley, R.H. 2011. Theories and Processes of Life Span Socialisation. In Fingerman, K.L., Berg, C.A., Smith, J. & Antonucci, T.C. (Eds). *Handbook of Life Span Development*. New York: Springer.
- Besson, S. 2005. The Principle of Non-Discrimination in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 13:433-461.
- Besthorn, F.J. 2013. Ecological approach. In Gray, M. & Webb, S.A. *Social work theories and methods*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Bhaiseni, B. 2016. Zimbabwe Children's Act alignment with international and domestic legal instruments: unravelling the gaps. *African Journal of Social Work*, 6(1):1-6.
- Bitzer, E. & Menkveld, H. 2004. Drawing on Indigenous Knowledge: Students' Learning in and from a rural community. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 18(3):226-240.
- Bjorklund, D.F. & Blasi, C.H. 2012. *Child and Adolescent Development. An Integrated Approach*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Black, M.M. & Oberlander, S.E. 2011. Psychological Impact and Treatment of Neglect of Children. In Carole, J. (Ed.) *Child Abuse and Neglect: Diagnosis, Treatment and Evidence*. St Louis, Missouri: Elsevier Saunders.
- Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C. & Sithole, S.L. 2013. *Fundamentals of Social Research Methods. An African Perspective*. 5th ed. Cape Town: Juta & Company.
- Blundell, D. 2012. *Education and Constructions of Childhood: Contemporary Issues in Education Studies*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

- Bogopa, D.L. 2012. The importance of indigenous games: The selected cases of indigenous games in South Africa. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 11(2):245-256.
- Bokaye-Boaten, A. 2010. Changes in the concept of childhood: Implications on children in Ghana. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 3(10):104-115.
- Boothby, N., & Thomson, B. 2013. Child soldiers as adults: The Mozambique case study. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 22(7):735-756.
- Bornstein, M.H. 2013. Parenting and child mental health: a cross-cultural perspective. *World Psychiatry*, 12:258-265.
- Bornstein, M.H. 2002. Parenting infants. In Bornstein, M.H. (Ed.) *Handbook of parenting Volume 4: Social conditions and applied parenting*. London: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Bourdillon, M., Levison, D., Myers W. & White B. 2010. *Rights and wrongs of children's work*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Boussena, M. & Tiliouine, H. 2015 Children's rights in Algeria: History, achievements and research evidence. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 5(2):132-145.
- Boyd, M.T. 2015. *The Determinants of the Child's Best Interests in Relocation Disputes*. Western Cape: University of the Western Cape. (LLM Mini-Thesis).
- Bragin, M. 2011. Clinical social work in situations of disaster and terrorism. In Brandell, J.R. *Theory and Practice in Clinical Social Work*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Bravo, M.D.M.P., Martínez, P.A., & Ruiz, I.J. 2014. Arranged marriages: Women for sale. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 132:564-569.
- Briggs, J. 2005. The use of indigenous knowledge in development: Problems and Challenges. *Progress in Development Studies*, 5(2):99-114.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. 1994. Ecological Modes of Human Development. *Encyclopaedia of Education*, 3:1643-1647.
- Bunkers, M.K., Groza, V. & Lauer, D.A. 2009. International adoption and child protection in Guatemala, *International Social Work*, 52(5):649-660.
- Burman, E. 2008. *Developments, Child image, Nation*. London: Routledge.
- Burr, V 2003. *Social constructionism*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Groups.

- Cameroon Gender Equality Network. 2011. *Cameroonian-Women Call for Land and Inheritance Rights*. Available: <http://www.ahg.ngos.org/documents/CAMEROON/pdf> (Accessed 2018/0810).
- Campbell, C. & Baikie, G. 2012. Beginning at the beginning: An exploration of critical social work. *Critical Social Work*, 13(1):67-81.
- Cantwell, N. 2011. Are children's rights still human? In Invernizzi, A. & Williams, J. (Eds). *Human rights of children: From visions to implementation*, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Capaldi, N. 2001. *The meaning of equality*. Michigan: Hoover Press.
- Caputo, V. 2017. Children's participation and protection in a globalised world: reimagining 'too young to wed' through a cultural politics of childhood. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(1):76-88.
- Castiano, P.J. & Mkabela, Q.N. 2012. African IKS Facing the Future. *Idilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 10(2):v-xi.
- Chabalala, D.& Allen, L. 2004. Negotiating Conflict through Music: The Case of the Tsonga Tingoma Ritual, *Social Dynamics*, 30(2):64-81.
- Chauke, M.T. 2018. The demise of Xitsonga oratorical potency: Folktaling as a case in point. *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies*, 28(2):1-16.
- Chauraya, E. 2012. The African view on gender and its impact on implemented gender policies and programs in Africa. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 14(3):252-261.
- Chibvongodze, D.T. 2016. Ubuntu is Not Only about the Human! An Analysis of the Role of African Philosophy and Ethics in Environment Management. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 53(2):157-166.
- Chidozie, F.C. & Oghuvbu, A.E. 2020. Perception on Child Rights Protection and Media Performance Among Kuje Internally Displaced Persons' Camp, Abuja, Nigeria. *Media and Its Role in Protecting the Rights of Children in Africa*, IGI Global, 2020:277-294.
- Chigwata, T. 2016. The role of traditional leaders in Zimbabwe: are they still relevant? *Law, Democracy & Development*, 20:69-90.
- Child Frontiers. 2012. *Working with Community-Based Child Protection Committees and Networks. Handbook for facilitators*. Available: <https://www.reliefweb.int> (Accessed 2018/12/15).
- Children's Act Zimbabwe [Chapter 5:06]. Available: <https://www.ilo> (Accessed 2017/02/12).

Child Rights Information Network. 2009. Guide to Non-discrimination and the CRC. Available: https://www.crin.org/en/docs/CRC_Guide.pdf (Accessed 2018/09/14).

Children's Rights Knowledge Centre. 2014. Children's Best Interests between theory and practice. Available:

http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/doc/bestinterest/KeKi_report_bestinterestsofthechild.pdf
(Accessed 2018/09/14).

Chiwanza K., Musingafi, M.C.C. & Mupa, P. 2013. Challenges in Preserving Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Learning from Past Experiences. *Information & Knowledge Management*, 3(2):19-25.

Christensen, J. 2010. Proposed Enhancement of Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Model. *Education Enquiry*, 1(2):101-111.

Churchill, H. 2011. *Parental Rights and Responsibilities. Analysing Social Policy and Lived Experiences*. Portland: Policy Press.

Clark, H., Coll-Seck, A. M., Banerjee, A., Peterson, S., Dalglish, S. L., Ameratunga, S. & Claeson, M. 2020. A future for the world's children? A WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission. *The Lancet*, 395(10224):605-658.

Collins, T.M. 2017. A child's right to participate: Implications for international child protection. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(1):14-46.

Conley, A. 2010. Social Development, Social Investment and Child Welfare. In Midgley, J. & Conley, A. 2010. (Eds). *Social Work and Social Development: Theories and Skills for Developmental Social Work*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Connolly, P. & Eagle, G. 2009. *The Effects of Childhood Trauma on Child Development: Children in South Africa*. In Watts, J., Cockcroft, K. & Duncan, N. (Eds). *Developmental Psychology*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Lansdowne Press.

Coppock, V. & Phillips, L. 2013. Actualisation of children's participation rights. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 3(2):99-104.

Coyne, I., Hallstrom, I. & Soderback, M. 2016. Reframing the focus from a family-centred to a child-centred care approach for children's health care, *Journal of Child Health Care*, 20(4): 494-502.

Coyne, I. & Harder, M. 2011. Children's participation in decision making: Balancing protection with shared decision making using a situational perspective, *Journal of Child Health Care*, 15(4):312-319.

- Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Cross, S.E. & Gore, J.S. 2012. Cultural Models of Self. In Leary, M.R. & Tangney, J.P. (Eds). *Handbook of Self and Identity*. 2nd ed. New York: Guildford Press.
- Dailey, A.C. 2016. Children's transitional rights. *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 12(2):178-194.
- Darling, N. 2007. Ecological Systems Theory: The person in the centre of the circles. *Research in Human Development*, 4(3-4):203-217.
- Davis, R., McCaffery, J. & Conticini, A. 2012. *Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Working Paper*. Inter-agency Group on Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa. Available: https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening_child_protection_systems_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_-_August_2012_.pdf (Accessed 2017/05/04).
- D'cruz, H. 2004. The social construction of child maltreatment: The role of medical practitioners. *Journal of Social Work*, 4(1):99-123.
- Descartes, C. 2012. The social construction of demographic variables and parenting styles in Trinidad. *Journal of the Department of Behavioural Sciences*, 1(1):51-65.
- De Vos, A.S. & Strydom, H. 2011a. Intervention Research. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- De Vos, A.S. & Strydom, H. 2011b. Scientific theory and professional research. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Schulze, S. & Patel, L. 2011. The sciences and the professions. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Dewah, P. & Mutula, S. 2014. Ethical considerations surrounding the application of *runyoka/lunyoka* (fidelity charm) in Zimbabwe. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 13(2):215-230.
- Dillon, J. & Hills, M. 2015. Participation in child protection: A small-scale qualitative study. *Qualitative Social Work*, 15(1):70-85.
- Doherty, P. 2017. Child protection threshold ambivalent case formulations in 'borderline' care proceedings cases. *Qualitative Social Work*, 16(5):698-716.

- Dolamo, R. 2013. *Botho/ubuntu: The heart of African ethics*. *Scriptura*, 112(1):1-10.
- Dondolo, L. 2005. Intangible Heritage: The production of indigenous knowledge in various aspects of social life. *Idilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 4(1):110-126.
- Dominelli, L. 1997. Social work under globalisation. *Social Work Review*, 9:3-8.
- Doss, C.J., Kovarik, C.P., Amber, Q., Agness, R. & van den Bold, M. 2013. Inequalities in ownership and control of land in Africa: Myths versus Reality. Discussion Paper, International Policy Research Institute.
- DuBois, B. & Miley, K.K. 2014. *Social Work. An Empowering Profession*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Dumbrill, G.C. & Green, J. 2008. Indigenous Knowledge in the Social Work Academy. *Social Work Education*, 27(5):489-503.
- Dumouchel, P. [sa]. *Two concepts of equality*. Kyoto, Japan: Ritsumeikan University.
- Earle, N. 2008. *Social Work as a Scarce and Critical Profession*. Research Consortium. Research commissioned by the Department of Labour, South Africa. Available: <https://labour.gov.za> (Accessed 2015/01/12).
- Edwards, S. 2010. On Southern African indigenous healing. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 9(2):211-229.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2014. Southern Africa. Available: <https://global.britannica.com>. (Accessed 2016/12/12).
- Engel, J.R. & Schutt, R.K. 2013. *The Practice of Research in Social Work*. 3rd ed. London: SAGE Publications.
- Epstein, R. M., & Hundert, E. M. 2002. Defining and assessing professional competence. *JAMA*, 287(2):226-235.
- European Court of Human Rights. 1994. *European Convention on Human Rights*. Available: http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG. (Accessed: 2019/07/22).
- Fadel, K.S. 2016. *A holistic ethnic-centric intervention programme for the milieu disabled Sotho primary school child exposed to violence*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (DPhil Social Work).
- Falb, K.L., Asghar, K., Laird, B., Tanner, S., Graybill, E., Malinga, P. & Stark, L. 2017. Caregiver parenting and gender attitudes: Associations with violence against adolescent girls in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 69:278-284.

- Fava, A.D. & Fava, G.A. 2011. Psychotherapy and Change. In Biswas-Diener, R. (Ed.) *Positive Psychology as Social Change*. New York: Springer.
- Fayemi, A.K. 2009. Human personality and the Yoruba worldviews: An ethico-sociological interpretation. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 2(9):166-176.
- Fombad, M.C. 2014. Gender equality in African customary law: has the male ultimogeniture rule any future in Botswana? *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 52(3):475-494.
- Fouché, C.S. & Delpont, C.S.L. 2011. Introduction to the research process. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Fouché, C.S. & De Vos, A.S. 2011. Formal formulations. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Fouché, C.S. & Schurink, W. 2011. Qualitative research designs. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Fraser, M.W. & Galinsky, M.J. 2010. Steps in Intervention Research: Designing and Developing Social Programmes. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 20(5):459-466.
- Fraser, M.W., Richman, J.M., Galinsky, M.J. & Day, S.H. 2009. *Intervention Research. Developing Social Programs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Freeman, M. 2007. *A Commentary on the United Nations Convention on the Rights-Article 3: The best interests of the child*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Gal, T. 2017. An ecological model of child and youth participation. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 79:57-64.
- Garcia, V. 2012. Children malnutrition and horizontal inequalities in Sub-Saharan Africa: A focus on contrasting domestic trajectories. Working Paper, United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Africa, WP 2012-019: March 2012.
- García-Coll, C. & Magnusson, K. 2000. Cultural differences as sources of developmental vulnerabilities and resources. In Shonkoff, J.P. & Meisels, S.J. (Eds). *Handbook of early childhood intervention*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Garstang, M., Coleman, A.D. & Therrell, M. 2014. Climate and the mfecane. *South African Journal of Science*, 110(5/6):2-8.

- Gearty, C. 2011. Putting lawyers in their place: The role of human rights in the struggle against poverty. In Walker, A., Sinfield, A. & Walker, C. 2011. *Fighting poverty, inequality and injustice. A manifesto inspired by Peter Townsend*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Giesinger, J. 2017. The special goods of childhood: lessons from social constructionism. *Ethics and Education*, 12(2):201-217.
- Gillespie, J. 2012. Being and becoming: Writing children into planning theory. *Planning Theory*, 12(1):64-80.
- Gitterman, A. & Germain, C.B. 2008. *The life model of social work practice. Advances in theory and practice*. 3rd ed. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility. 2019. *Child Protection risks and needs in Mozambique*. Available: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/document/s/files/mozambique_sdr_-_21_april_2019_final.pdf (Accessed 2020/01/19).
- Goldenberg, H. & Goldenberg, I. 2013. *Family Therapy: An Overview*. 8th ed. Belmont: Brooks/Cole.
- Goldhagen, J. L., Shenoda, S., Oberg, C., Mercer, R., Kadir, A., Raman, S., ... & Spencer, N. J. 2020. Rights, justice, and equity: a global agenda for child health and wellbeing. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(1):80-90.
- Gough, D. & Lynch, M.A. 2002. Culture and Child protection. *Child Abuse Review*, 11:341-344.
- Gray, M., Agllias, K., Mupedziswa, R. & Mugumbate, J. 2017. The role of social work field education programmes in the transmission of developmental social work knowledge in Southern and Eastern Africa. *Social Work Education*, 36(6):623-635.
- Gray, M., Kreitzer, L. & Mupedziswa, R. 2014. The Enduring Relevance of Indigenisation in African Social Work: A Critical Reflection on ASWEA's Legacy, *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 8(2):101-116.
- Gray, M. & Coates, J. 2010. 'Indigenization' and knowledge development: Extending the debate. *International Social Work*, 53(5):613-627.
- Greeff, M. 2011. Information collection: interviewing. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Green, S. & Baldry, E. 2008. Building Indigenous Australian Social Work. *Australian Social Work*, 61(4):389-402.

- Greene, R.R. 2008. Ecological Perspective: An eclectic theoretical framework for social work practice. In Greene, R.R. (Ed.) *Human behaviour theory and social work practice*. 3rd ed. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers/New Brunswick.
- Grugel, J. 2013. Children's rights and children's welfare after the Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Progress in Development Studies*, 13:19-30.
- Gwandure, C. & Mayekiso, T. 2011. Promoting Children's Public Participation in South Africa: A Social Systems Control Perspective. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 19: 233-250.
- Gwirayi, P. & Shumba, A. 2011. Children's rights: How much do Zimbabwe urban secondary school pupils know? *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 19(2):195-204.
- Hall, J.C. 2005. *Social Constructionism: A Unifying meta-perspective for Social Work*. Louisville, KY: University of Louisville. (PhD Thesis).
- Hammond-Tooke, W.D. 1974. *The Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hawkins, M.F.R. 2014. Family inclusive child protection practice: The need for rigorous evaluation. *Children Australia*, 39(2):81-86.
- Healy, K. 2005. *Social Work Theories in Context. Creating Frameworks for Practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Henderson, D.A. & Thompson, C.L. 2016. *Counselling Children*. 9th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Henn, M., Weinstein, M. & Foard, N. 2008. *A Short Introduction to Social Research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Hepworth, D.H., Rooney, R.H., Dewberry Rooney, G. & Strom-Gottfried, K. 2017. *Direct Social Work Practice. Theory and Skills*. 10th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Hlavac, M. 2013. *The Political Economy of Multilateral Foreign Aid: UNICEF as a Tool of U.S. Foreign Policy*, Harvard: Harvard University. Available: https://www.peio.me/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Conf7_Hlavac-09.09.2013.pdf (Accessed 2020/05/23).
- Hlongwane, M.M., Governder, S., Makhubu, S.S., Mankhonza, L.O., Kent, D., Ochiogu, G.V., Gumede, G.V., Nzima, D.R. & Edwards, S.D. 2018. African centered investigation into ways in which *Ubuntu* can promote social coherence. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 17(1):53-66.
- Holden, G.W. & Williamson, P.A. 2014. Religion and child well-being. In Ben-Arieh, A., Casas, F., Frønes, I. & Korbin, J.E. (Eds). *Handbook of Child Well-Being*. Dordrecht, Springer.

- Holden, G. W. 2010. Childrearing and developmental trajectories: Positive pathways, off ramps, and dynamic processes. *Child Development Perspectives*, 4:197-204.
- Hove, M. 2012. War Legacy: A reflection on the effects of the Rhodesian Forces (RSF) in South Eastern Zimbabwe during Zimbabwe's War of Liberation in 1976-1980. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 4(8):193-206.
- Howe, B.R. & Covell, K. 2010. Miseducating children about their rights. *Education, Citizenship & Social Justice*, 5(2):91-102.
- Houston, S. 2002. Re-thinking a systematic approach to child welfare: A critical response to the framework for the assessment of children in need and their families. *European Journal of Social Work*, 5(3):301-312.
- Hudson, V.M., Bowen, D.L. & Nielsen, P.L. 2015. Clan governance and state stability: The relationship between female subordination and political order. *The American Political Science Review*, 109(3):535-555.
- Human Rights Watch. 2015. Ending Child Marriage in Africa: Opening the door for Girls' education, health, and freedom from violence. Available: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/ending_child_marriage_in_africa_updated_final.pdf (Accessed 2019/12/20).
- Human Rights Watch, 2014. *25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Questions and Answers*. Available: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/17/25th-anniversary-convention-rights-child> (Accessed 2018/07/03).
- Ife, J. 2016. Human Rights and Social Work: beyond conservative law. *Journal for Human Rights Social Work*, 1(1):3-8.
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). 2019. *Global Definition of Social Work*. Available: <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/> (Accessed: 2018/02/20).
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). 2017. Social Work and Sustainable Development: World Social Work Day at the UN in Geneva, 2017. https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/ifsw-cdn/assets/ifsw_101037-8.pdf (Accessed 2018/02/20).
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). 2016. *The role of social work in social protection systems: The universal right to social protection*. Available: <https://www.ifsw.org/the-role-of-social-work-in-social-protection-systems-the-universal-right-to-social-protection/> (Accessed: 2019/10/18).

- Iversen, R.R., Gergen, K.J. & Fairbanks, R.P. 2005. Assessment and social constructionism: conflict or co-creation? *British Journal of Social Work*, 35(5):689-708.
- Jacobs, J. U. 2013. Young South Africans and cultural (mal) practice: Breaking the silence in recent writing. *Literator: Journal of Literary Criticism, Comparative Linguistics and Literary Studies*, 34(1):1-9.
- James, A.L., Jenks, C. & Prout, A. 2007. *Theorising childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jayachandran, S. 2015. The roots of gender inequality in developing countries. *Economics*, 7(1):63-88.
- Jenks, C. 1996. *Childhood*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jenson, J.M. & Fraser, M.W. 2011. A risk and resilience framework for child, youth and family policy. In Jenson, J.M. & Fraser, M.W. 2011. (Eds). *Social policy for children and families. A risks and resilience perspectives*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publishers.
- Johansson, I. 2010. The multicultural paradox: The challenge of accommodating both power and trust in child protection. *International Social Work*, 54(4):535-549.
- Johnson, E.S. 2008. Ecological Systems and Complexity Theory: Towards an Alternative Model of Accountability in Education. *An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 5(1):1-10.
- Johnston, E.R. 2015. South African clinical psychology's response to cultural diversity, globalisation and multiculturalism: a review. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 45(3):374-385.
- Joshua Project. 2020. *People groups. Tsonga*. Available: <https://joshuaproject.net/people-groups> (Accessed 2020/03/01).
- Joshua Project. 2017. *People groups. Tsonga*. Available: <https://joshuaproject.net/people-groups> (Accessed 2017/02/11).
- Joyce, P. 2009. *Cultures of South Africa. A Celebration*. Cape Town: Sunbird.
- Kagitcibasi, C. 2007. *Family, Self and Human Development across Cultures. Theory and Application*. 2nd ed. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kaime, T. 2005. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the cultural legitimacy of children's rights in Africa: Some reflections. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 5:221-238.
- Kalenga, R.C. 2015. Adjusting Western research techniques to accommodate research in the indigenous realm. *Indilinga - African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 14(1):1-11.

- Kalu, F.A. & Bwalya, J.C. 2017. What makes qualitative research good research? An exploratory analysis of critical elements. *International Journal of Social Science Research*, 5(2):43-56.
- Kanjere, M.M, Thaba, L.K. & Teffo, L.J. 2011. Stereotypes against Women Principals in Rural Communities: An Individual or Cultural Issue? A synthesis into Indigenous Knowledge Systems. *Indilinga - African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 10(2):245-256.
- Kaseke, E. 2001. Social work education in Zimbabwe: strengths and weaknesses, issues and challenges. *Social Work Education*, 20(1):101-109.
- Katiuzshinsky, A. & Okech, D. 2014. Human rights, cultural practices, and state policies: Implications for global social work practice and policy. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 23:80-88.
- Kaya, H.O. & Seleti, Y.N. 2013. African indigenous knowledge systems and relevance of higher education in South Africa. *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 12(1):30-40.
- Keddel, E. 2018. The vulnerable child in neoliberal contexts: The constructions of children in the Aotearoa, New Zealand Child protection reforms. *Childhood*, 25(1):93-108.
- Keddel, E. 2011. Going home: Managing 'risk' through relationship in returning children from foster care to their families of origin. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(6):604-620.
- Keenan, T. & Evans, S. 2010. *An introduction to child development*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.
- Kemppainen, S. 2008. *Developing social work education in Mozambique in collaboration with Finnish institutions*. Tampere, Finland: University of Tampere. (Master's Dissertation).
- Khosa, A.M. 2009. *Symbolism in Xitsonga cultural ritual ceremonies*. Polokwane, South Africa: University of Limpopo. (Masters' dissertation).
- Khosla, R., Banerjee, J., Chou, D., & Fried, T.S. 2017. Gender equality and human rights approaches to female genital mutilation: A review of international human rights norms and standards. *Reproductive Health*: 14-59.
- KidsRights Foundation. 2020. *The KidsRights Index 2020 Report*. Available: <http://www.kidsrights.org/kidsrightsidex> (Accessed 2020/06/21).
- Kirst-Ashman, K.K. 2013. *Introduction to Social Work & Social Welfare: Critical Thinking Perspectives*. 4th ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage.
- Kirst-Ashman, K.K. & Hull, G.H. 2010. *Understanding Generalist Practice*. 6th ed. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

- Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A.B. 2017. Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5):26-41.
- Knapp van Bogaert, D. 2012. Overview of child abuse and ethics of child abuse management. In Pretorius, D., Mbokazi, A., Hlaise, K., & Jacklin, L. 2012. *Child abuse: Guidelines and applications for primary health care practitioners*. Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.
- Korbin, D.E. 2002. Culture and maltreatment: Cultural competences and beyond. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 26:637-644.
- Kpanake, L. 2018. Cultural concepts of the person and mental health in Africa. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 55(2):198-218.
- Kreitzer, L. 2019. Culturally relevant curriculum for social work: An ethical imperative for our time. In Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. (Eds). *Social Work Practice in Africa. Indigenous and Innovative Approaches*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
- Kreitzer, L. 2012. *Social work in Africa: exploring culturally relevant education and practice in Ghana*. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press.
- Kriel, J.D. & Hartman, J.B. 1991. *Khindlimukanivatsonga: the cultural heritage and development of the Shangana-Tsonga people*. Waltloo, RSA: Promedia Printers.
- Kruger, M.E. & Spies, G.M. 2006. The rights of the sexually abused child. In Spies, G.M. (Ed.) *Sexual abuse: Dynamics, assessment and healing*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Kurevakwesu, W. & Chizasa, S. 2020. Ubuntu and child welfare policy in Zimbabwe: a critical analysis of the national orphan care policy's six-tier system. *African Journal of Social Work*, 10(1):89-94.
- Kuusaana, D.E., Kidido, K.J. & Halidu, A.E. 2013. Customary land ownership and gender disparity: Evidence from the municipality of Ghana, *GJDS*, 10(1&2):63-80.
- Lachman, P. & Poblete, X. 2002. Challenges facing Child Protection. Overview – lessons from the “South”. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 26:587-592.
- Laird, E.S. 2016. “If parents are punished for asking their children to feed goats”: Supervisory neglect in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Social Work*, 16(3):303-321.
- Laitinen, M. & Vayrynen, S. 2016. Social work practices and research with Sami people and communities in the frame of indigenous social work. *International Social Work*, 59(5):583-586.
- Lalor, K. 2005. *Child sexual abuse in Sub-Saharan Africa: Child protection implications for development policy makers and practitioners*. Dublin: Centre for Developmental Studies at University College Dublin. Available: <https://arrow.dit.ie/aaschsslrep> (Accessed: 2018/02/20).

- Lansdown, G. 2020. Strengthening child agency to prevent and overcome maltreatment. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, February (2020): 1-9.
Available: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104398> (Accessed 2020/10/28).
- l'Anson, J. 2013. Beyond the Child's Voice: towards an ethics for children's participation rights. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 3(2):104-114.
- Larkin, H. 2006. Social Work as an Integral Profession. *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 1(2):1-30.
- Ledwith, M. 2015. *Community development in action: Putting Freire into practice*. Policy Press.
- Leon, M.A., Lawrence, A.S., Molina, O. & Toole, E. 2008. When Children Weep: Integrating Ecological Thinking into Child Welfare. *Illinois Child Welfare*, 4(1):144-165.
- Le Grange, L. 2012. *Ubuntu, Ukama and the healing of nature, self and society*. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(S2):56-67.
- Levine, L. 2005. *The Drumcafe's traditional music of South Africa*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media.
- Lewis, J.S. & Greene, R.R. 2009. Working with Natural Social Networks: An Ecological Approach. In Greene, R.R. & Kropf, N. (Eds). *Human Behaviour Theory. A Diversity Framework*. 2nd ed. New Brunswick: Aldine Transactions.
- Lewis, J.A., Packard, T.R. & Lewis, M.D. 2012. *Management of human service programs*. 5th ed. Belmont, CA: Brookes/Cole Cengage Learning.
- Lietz, C.A., Langer, C.L. & Furman, R. 2006. Establishing Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research in Social Work: Implications from a Study Regarding Spirituality. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(4):441-458.
- Lietz, C.A. & Zayas, L.E. 2010. Evaluating Qualitative Research for Social Work Practitioners. *Advances in Social Work*, 11(2):188-202.
- Lit, W.S. & Shek, D.T.L. 2002. Implications of Social Constructionism to Counselling and Social Work Practice. *Asian Journal of Counselling*, 19(12):105-130.
- Lombard, A. & Kleijn, W. 2006. Statutory social services: an integral part of developmental social welfare service delivery. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 42(3):213-233.
- Lombard, A. 2019a. Developmental social work. In Van Breda, A. & Sekudu, J. (Eds). *Theories for decolonial social work practice in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa (Pty) Limited.

- Lombard, A. 2019b. Social work and family services. In Midgley, J. & Alfery, L. (Eds). *Handbook of Social Policy and Development*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Lombe, M., Mabikke, H., Enelamah, N.V. & Chu, Y. 2019. Conceptualizing the African child as orphan and vulnerable: A label in need of definition? *International Social Work*, 62(1):62-75.
- Louw, A. & Louw, D. 2014a. Early childhood. In Louw, D. & Louw, A. *Child and adolescent development*. 2nd ed. Bloemfontein: Psychology Publications.
- Louw, D. & Louw, A. 2014b. The neonatal phase and infancy. In Louw, D. & Louw, A. *Child and adolescent development*. 2nd ed. Bloemfontein: Psychology Publications.
- Louw, A. & Louw, D. 2014c. Adolescence. In Louw, D. & Louw, A. *Child and adolescent development*. 2nd ed. Bloemfontein: Psychology Publications.
- Louw, D., Louw, A. & Kail, R. 2014. Basic concepts of child and adolescent development. In Louw, D. & Louw, A. *Child and adolescent development*. 2nd ed. Bloemfontein: Psychology Publications.
- Lucas, T., & Jongman, K. 2017. Social work and child justice: The case of Botswana. *Journal of Education. Society and Behavioural Science*, 22(3):1-11.
- Lunga, W. 2015. *The inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems into disaster risk reduction policy: The case of Zimbabwe*. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch. (DPhil Thesis).
- Luwangula, R., Twikirize, J.M., Twesigye, J. & Kitimbo, S. 2019. Culturally responsive social work practice in Uganda: A review of selected innovative and indigenous models. In Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. (Eds). *Social Work Practice in Africa. Indigenous and Innovative Approaches*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
- Mabvurira, V. 2016. *Influence of African traditional religion and spirituality in understanding chronic illnesses and its implications for social work practice: A case of Chiweshe Communal Lands in Zimbabwe*. Polokwane: University of Limpopo. (DPhil Thesis).
- Mabvurira, V. & Makhubele, J.C. 2018a. Afrocentric methodology: A missing pillar in African social work research, education and training. In Shokane, A.L., Makhubele, J.C. & Blitz, L.V. (Eds). *Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education. Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences Series Volume 1*. Cape Town: AOSIS (Pty) Ltd.

- Mabvurira, V. & Makhubele, J.C. 2018b. Influence of Shona beliefs in understanding illness: Implications for indigenous social work practice in Zimbabwe. *Theologia Viatorum*, 42(1):77-99.
- Madalane, I. 2014. Tsonga popular music: negotiating ethnic identity in 'global' music practices. *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa*, 11(1):37-54.
- Mafumbate, R. & Magano, M. D. 2016. The *Ubuntu* principle amongst the Shona speaking people in promoting the wellness of HIV and AIDS orphaned learners in Zimbabwe. *Indilinga – African Journal of indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 15(1):28-47.
- Magano, M.M. 2018. Indigenising knowledge in intervening for the excluded children. *Indilinga – African Journal of indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 17(2):234-244.
- Magezi, V. 2018. Changing family patterns from rural to urban and living in the in-between: A public practical theological responsive ministerial approach in Africa. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 74(1):5036:1-8.
- Magid, A.A. 2011. African indigenous knowledge systems – challenges and opportunities. *Africa Insight*, 40(4):136-148.
- Mahuntsa, S.L. 2015. Exploring child participation in Zimbabwe's reunification and reintegration process. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, 4(12):19-29.
- Mahuntsa, S.L. 2013. *The role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in child protection among the Shangaan of Chiredzi District*, Bulawayo: National University of Science & Technology. (Msc Development Studies Mini-Dissertation).
- Maitra, B. 2005. Culture and child protection. *Current Pediatrics*. 15(3): 253-259.
- Makhubele, J. & Nyahunda, L. 2018. The importance of oral transmission health information and knowledge for healthy ageing and high life expectancy: The case of the Mazungunye community, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies*, 28(2):1-11.
- Makhubele, J.C., Matlakala, F.K. & Mabvurira, V. 2018. Engendering values and ethics in social work education and training. In Shokane, A.L., Makhubele, J.C. & Blitz, L.V. (Eds). *Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education. Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences Series. Volume 1*. Cape Town: AOSIS.
- Makhubele, J.C. 2011. Indigenous knowledge in the context of sexual and reproductive health and rights amongst the Tsonga/Shangaan speaking people in rural community of Limpopo

Province: A Social Work perspective. *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education*, 49(4):161-169.

Makhubele, J.C. & Qualinge, L.I. 2009. The relevance of language in the process of indigenising life skills education in South Africa: A social work perspective. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 8(2):199-208.

Makhubele, J. & Qualinge, L. 2008. Integrating socio-cultural knowledge in life skills education for the prevention of health and social pathologies: A social work perspective. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 7(2):155-170.

Makhubele, J. 2008. The impact of indigenous community-based groups towards social development. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 7(1):37-46.

Makofane, M.D.M. & Shirindi, M.L. 2018. The importance of data collection for qualitative research in social work. In Shokane, A.L., Makhubele, J.C. & Blitz, L.V. (Eds). *Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education. Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences Series. Volume 1*. Cape Town: AOSIS.

Makgopa, M. & Koma, M. 2009. Figurative and poetic language in indigenous healing: An African perspective. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 8(2):147-157.

Malaza, M.T. 2012. *The development, standardisation and acceptability of the traditional Tsonga-Tsonga dishes, Xigugu and Xiendla hi vomu for use in ethnic restaurants*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (MA Dissertation).

Maluleke, V. 2019. *History of Xitsonga-Speaking Tribes. An analysis and basic history (Teaching document)*. Available: https://www.academia.edu/33977463/History_of_Xitsonga-Speaking_Tribes (Accessed: 2019/12/14).

Maluleke, V. 2018. History of Xitsonga-Speaking Tribes. The Vatsonga ethnic group: An analysis and basic history. Available: https://www.academia.edu/33977463/History_of_Xitsonga-Speaking_Tribes (Accessed: 2019/12/04).

Maluleke, M.J. 2012. Culture, tradition, custom, law and gender equality. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal/Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad*, 15(1):2-22.

Mamad, F., & Foubert, P. 2018. Access to Social Protection Minimum Floors as a tool to end early marriage in Mozambique. *The Journal of Law, Social Justice & Global Development*, (21):1-17.

- Mandlate, A.C.T.S. 2012. *Assessing the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Lusophone Africa (Angola and Mozambique)*. Cape Town: University of Western Cape. (LLD Thesis).
- Manful, E. & Manful, S.E. 2014. Child Welfare in Ghana: The relevance of Children's rights in practice, *Journal of Social Work*, 14(3):313-328.
- Manganye, N.N. 2011. *Indigenous Tsonga Children's Game Songs*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (MMus Dissertation).
- Mapara, J. 2009. Indigenous knowledge systems in Zimbabwe: Juxtaposing postcolonial theory. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3(1):139-155.
- Maree, K. 2016. Planning a research proposal. In Maree, K. (Ed.) *First steps in research*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Marsh, J. C. 2005. Social justice: Social work's organizing value. *Social Work*, 50(4):293.
- Masango, C.A. & Nyasse, B. 2015. Documenting indigenous knowledge about Africa's traditional medicine: A myth or reality? *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 14(1):52-66.
- Mashingaidze, S. 2014. Ethical intelligence: Espousing African Ubuntu philosophical approach with Jewish business ethics systems as panacea for corporate failure in Africa. *Corporate Ownership & Control*, 12(1):473-489.
- Masuka, T. 2013. Poverty and child abuse in Zimbabwe: a social work perspective. *Child Abuse Research in South Africa*, 14(1):82-88.
- Mathebula, M., Nkuna, R., Mabasa, H.& Maluleke, M. 2007. *Tsonga History Discourse*. Available: tsonga-history.blogspot.co.za (Accessed 2016/06/10).
- Mathews, S. & Benvenuti, P. 2014. Violence against children in South Africa: Developing a Prevention Agenda. In Mathews, S., Jamieson, L., Lake, L.& Smith, C. (Eds). *South African Child Gauge 2014*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.
- Mayall, B. 2000. The sociology of childhood in relation to children's rights. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 8:243-259.
- Mbedzi, P. 2019. Ecosystems. In Van Breda, A.D. & Sekudu, J. (Eds). *Theories for decolonial social work practice in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press South Africa.
- McCormack, C., Gibbons, M., & McGregor, C. 2020. An Ecological Framework for Understanding and Improving Decision Making in Child Protection and Welfare Intake (Duty) Practices in the Republic of Ireland. *Child Care in Practice*, 26(2):146-162.

- McLeod, J. 2013. *An introduction to counselling*. 5th ed. New York, NY: Open University Press. McGraw Hill Education.
- McKenna, S.A. & Main, D.S. 2013. The role and influence of key informants in community-engaged research: A critical perspective. *Action Research*, 11(2):113-124.
- Melnyk, B.M., Morrison-Beedy, D & Moore, S.M. 2012. Nuts and bolts of designing intervention studies. In Melnyk, B.M. & Morrison-Beedy, D. (Eds). *Designing, conducting, analysing and funding intervention research*. New York: Springer.
- Mekoa, I. 2018. Essentialising African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the midst of globalization and modernity. *African Renaissance*, Special Issue December, 2018:11-28.
- Memzur, B.D. 2008. The Africa Children's Charter versus the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: A zero-sum game? *South African Public Law*, 23:1-29.
- Mesman, J., Minter, T., Angged, A., Cissé, I.A.H., Deniz Salali, G. & Bamberg Migliano, A. 2018. Universality versus uniformity: A culturally inclusive approach to sensitive responsiveness in infant caregiving. *Child Development*, 89(3):837-850.
- Mhaka-Mutepfa, M., Maree, G.J. & Chiganga, G. 2014. Towards respecting children's rights, obligations and responsibilities: The Zimbabwean Case. *School Psychology International*, 35(3):241-252.
- Mhaka-Mutepfa, M., Mpofu, E. & Cumming R. 2015. Impact of protective factors on resilience of grandparent carers fostering orphans and non-orphans in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Aging Health*, 27(3):454-479.
- Michailakis, D. & Scharmer, W. 2014. Social Work and Social Problems: A Contribution from systems theory and constructionism. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 23(4):431-442.
- Midgley, J. 2017. *Social Welfare for a Global Era. International Perspectives on Policy and Practice*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Midgley, J. 2010. The Theory and Practice of Developmental Social Work. In Midgley, J. & Conley, A. (Eds). *Social Work and Social Development: Theories and Skills for Developmental Social Work*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe. 2017. *National Case Management System for the Welfare and Protection of Children in Zimbabwe*. Available: <http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/national-case-management-system-welfare-and-protection-children-zimbabwe> (Accessed: 2019/07/07)
- Mkabela, Q.N. 2015. *Ubuntu* as a foundation for researching African indigenous psychology. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 14(2):284-291.

- Mkabela, Q.N. 2014. *Ubuntu* as an axiological framework for human rights education. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 13(2):283-291.
- Moletsane, M. 2012. Children and childhood in South Africa. In Hardman, J. (Ed.) *Child and adolescent development. A South African socio-cultural perspective*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Moore, C. 2016. The ecosystemic approach. In Moore, C., Viljoen, H.G. & Meyer, W.F. *Personology. From individual to ecosystem*. 5th ed. Cape Town: Person Education South Africa.
- Moore, A. 2013a. For adults only? Young people and (Non) participation in sexual decision making, *Global Studies of Childhood*, 3(2):163-172.
- Moore, K.A. 2013b. What is child wellbeing? Does it matter how we measure it? Presented to the National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference, San Antonio, Texas, November 7, 2013.
- Morapedi, W.G. 2007-2008. Acculturation and Botswana Migrant Miners in South Africa: 1930-1980. *Afrika Zamani*, 15 & 16:42-62.
- Morgan, D.H.J. 1996. *Family connections: An introduction to family studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Morrel, R., Jewkes, R. & Lindegger, G. 2012. Hegemonic masculinity/masculinities in South Africa: Culture, power and gender politics. *Men and Masculinities*, 15(1):11-30.
- Morrow, V. & Boyden, J. 2018. *Responding to children's work. Evidence from the Young Lives study in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam*. Young Lives. Oxford Department of International Development (ODID). Available: www.younglives.org.uk (Accessed 2019/04/15).
- Morrow, V. & Pells, K. 2012. Integrating children's human rights and child poverty debates: Examples from young lives in Ethiopia and India, *Sociology*, 46(5):906-920.
- Morrow, V. & Vennam, U. 2012. Children's responses to risk in agricultural work in Andhra Pradesh, India. *Development in Practice*, 22(4):549-561.
- Morrow, V. & Mayall, B. 2009. What is wrong with children's well-being in the UK? Questions of meaning and measurement. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 31(3):217-229.
- Mozambique Constitution. 2004 (revised 2007). Available: <https://www.constituteproject.org> (Accessed 2015/12/15).
- Mtsetwa, E. & Muchacha, M. 2017. Decolonising childcare practice in rural Zimbabwe. Embracing local cultures. In Gray, M. (Ed.) *The Handbook of Social Work and Social Development in Africa*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis.

- Muchiri, S., Murekasenge J. & Nzisabina, S.C. 2019. *Ikibiriri Burundian Society: An indigenous model of solidarity and collaboration*. In Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. (Eds). *Social Work Practice in Africa. Indigenous and Innovative Approaches*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
- Mugumbate, J. & Chereni, A. 2019. Using African Ubuntu theory in social work with children in Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Social Work*, 9(1):27-34.
- Mugumbate, J. & Nyanguru, A. 2013. Exploring African philosophy: The value of ubuntu in social work. *African Journal of Social Work*, 3(1):82-100.
- Mukushi, A.T., Mabvurira, V., Makhubele, J.C. & Matlakala, F.K. 2019a. Psychosocial challenges faced by children in residential care facilities. *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, 31(2):1-18.
- Mukushi, A.T., Makhubele, J.C. & Mabvurira, V. 2019b. Cultural and religious beliefs and practices abusive to children with disabilities in Zimbabwe. *Global Journal of Health Sciences*, 11(7):103-111.
- Mulinge, M.M. 2010. Persistent socioeconomic and political dilemmas to the implementation of the 1989 United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child in sub-Saharan Africa. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34(1):10-17.
- Munro, E. 2019. *Effective child protection*. SAGE Publications.
- Mupedziswa, R., Rankopo, M. & Mwansa, L-K. 2019. *Ubuntu as a Pan-African philosophical framework for social work in Africa*. In Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. (Eds). *Social Work Practice in Africa. Indigenous and Innovative Approaches*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
- Mupedziswa, R. & Ntseane, D. 2013. The contribution of non-formal social protection to social development. *Development Southern Africa*, 30(1):84-97.
- Mushunje, M.T. 2006. Child Protection in Zimbabwe: Yesterday, today and tomorrow. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 21(1):12-34.
- Mushongera, G.R. 2015. "Hearing the voice of the child": Participatory practice in statutory child protection in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(8):56-64.
- Mutisya, P.M. & Ross, L.E. 2018. Afrocentricity and racial socialization among African American college students. *Journal of Black Studies*, 38(3):235-247.
- Mwakikagile, G. 2008. *South Africa and Its People*. Pretoria: New Africa Press.
- Mwambene, L. & Mawodza, O. 2017. Children's rights standards and child marriage in Malawi. *African Studies Quarterly*, 17(3):21-44.

- Mwansa, L.K. 2011. Social Work Education in Africa: Whence and Whither? *Social Work Education*, 30(1):4-16.
- Naidoo, J.T. & Muthukrishna, N. 2016; Child well-being in a rural context: Shifting to a social sustainability lens. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 6(2):a458:1-9.
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. 2019. *Safeguarding children and child protection*. Available: <http://www.learning.nspcc.org.uk> (Accessed 2019/07/20)
- Ndofirepi, A.P. 2013. *Philosophy for children: A quest for an African perspective*. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand. (Dphil Thesis).
- Ndofirepi, A.P. & Shumba, A. 2014. Conceptions of “child” among traditional Africans: A philosophical purview. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 45(3):233-242.
- Ndung’u, E.M. 2019. The role of mobile phones in social work service delivery: A Kenyan perspective. In Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. (Eds). *Social Work Practice in Africa. Indigenous and Innovative Approaches*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
- Newman, B.M. & Newman, P.R. 2015. *Theories of Human Development*. 2nd ed. New York, London: Psychology Press.
- Nhedzi, F. & Makofane, M. 2015. The experiences of social workers in the provision of family preservation services. *Social Work / Maatskaplike Werk*, 51(3):354-378.
- Nhenga, T.C. 2008. *Application of the international prohibition on child labour in an African context: Lesotho, Zimbabwe and South Africa*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town. (LLD Thesis).
- Nieuwenhuis, J. 2016a. Qualitative research designs and data-gathering techniques. In Maree, K. (Ed.) *First steps in research*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. 2016b. Analysing qualitative data. In Maree, K. (Ed.) *First steps in research*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Nompula, Y. 2011. The role of indigenous song: A critique of the dominant discourse in education. *Indilinga – African Journal of indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 19(1):90-97.
- North, G. 2018. ‘It was sort of a globe of abuse’: A psychosocial exploration of child protection social work with emotional abuse. *Qualitative Social Work*, 2018:1-18.
- Nour, N.M. 2006. Health consequences of child marriage in Africa. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 12(11):1644-1649.
- Nwoye, A. 2017. An Africentric theory of human personhood. *Psychology in Society*, 54:42-66.

- Nyota, S. & Mapara, J. 2008. Shona Traditional Children's Games and Play: Songs as Indigenous Ways of Knowing. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 2(4):189-202.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR]. 1989. *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations. Available: <https://www.ohchr.org> (Accessed 2016/04/14).
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR]. 2015a. *UN Committee hails South Sudan's ratification of Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations. Available: <https://www.ohchr.org> (Accessed 2017/02/12).
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR]. 2015b. *UN Committee hails Somalia's ratification of Convention on the Rights of the Child*. United Nations. Available: <https://www.ohchr.org> (Accessed 2017/02/12).
- Ogungbure, A.A. 2013. African indigenous knowledge: scientific or unscientific? *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(1):12-20.
- Olatunji, C.M. 2013. An argument for gender equality in Africa. *CLL-Web: Comparative Literature & Culture*, 15(1):1-6.
- Olatunji, A., Issah, M., Noah, Y., Muhammed, A.Y. & Sulaiman, A-R. 2015. Personal name as a reality of everyday life: Naming dynamics in select African societies. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 8(3):72-90.
- Olojede, F. 2014. Storytelling as an indigenous resource in the interpretation of Old Testament ethics and religion. *Scriptura*, 113(1):1-9.
- O'Leary, P.J., Young, A., McAuliffe, D. & Wismayanti, Y. 2018. Developing the social work role in the Indonesia child protection system. *International Social Work*, 2018:1-15.
- O'Leary, P., Hutchinson, A. & Squire, J. 2015. Community based child protection with Palestinian refugees in South Lebanon: Engendering hope and safety. *International Social Work*, 58(5):717-731.
- Ombati, V. & Ombati, M. 2012. Gender inequality in education in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education*, 3-4:114-136.
- Organization of African Unity. 1986. *African Charter on Human and People's Rights*. Available: <https://www.au.int/sites.pdf> (Accessed: 2019/07/22).
- Osei-Hwedie, K. & Rankopo, M.J. 2010. Developing Culturally Relevant Social Work Education in Africa: The case of Botswana. In Grey, M., Coates, J. & Yellow Bird, M. (Eds). *Indigenous Social Work Around the World: Towards Culturally Relevant Information and Practice*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Ossai, N.B. 2010. African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS). *Symbiosis*, 7(2):1-13.

- Owusu-Ansah, F.E. & Mji, G. 2013. African indigenous knowledge and research. *African Journal of Disability*, 2(1):1-5.
- Patel, L. 2015. *Social Welfare and Social Development*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Patel, S., Chambo, G & Tembe, F.F. ([sa]). Bilingual education in Mozambique: Nowadays situation. Maputo: Eduardo Mondlane University. Available: <https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/Legacy/sitefiles/file/46/10824/mozambiquepresentation.pdf> (Accessed 2020/06/15).
- Patel, L. & Hochfeld, T. 2012. Developmental social work in South Africa: translating policy into practice. *International Social Work*, 56(5):690-704.
- Pereira, P.A. 2013. The concept of equality and well-being in Marx. Essay, R Kalal. *Floriapolis*, 16(1):47-56.
- Permunta, V.N. 2017. When 'property cannot own property': Women's lack of property rights in Cameroon. *African Journal of Economic & Sustainable Development*, 6(1): 67-85.
- Phiri, A.D.K. 2008. *Exploring the Integration of Indigenous Science in the Primary School Science Curriculum in Malawi*. Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. (DPhil Thesis).
- Phillips, L. & Coppok, 2014. Actualisation of children's participation rights: Part 2, *Global Studies of Childhood*, 4(2):59-63.
- Pollard, E, & Lee, P. 2003. Child well-being: a systematic review of the literature. *Social Indicators Research*, 61(1):9-78.
- Population Reference Bureau & African Population and Health Research Centre (2008). *2008 Africa Population Data Sheet*. Available: <https://www.prb.org> (Accessed 2016/09/13).
- Powell, G., Chinake, T., Mudzingo, D., Maambira, W. & Mukutiri, S. 2004. *Children in residential care: The Zimbabwe experience*. Harare: Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.
- Powell, M.A., Taylor, N. & Smith, A.B. 2013. Constructions of rural childhood: challenging dominant perspectives. *Children's Geographies*, 11(1):117-131.
- Prout, A. 2011. Taking a step away from modernity: Reconsidering the new sociology of childhood. *Global studies of childhood*, 1(1):4-14.
- Prout, A. & James, A. 1997. A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood? Provenance, promise and problems. In James, A. & Prout A. (Eds). *Constructing and reconstructing*

childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood. New York, NY: Routledge Falmer Taylor & Francis Group.

Punch, F.K. 2005. *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.

Pupavac, V. 2011. Punishing Childhoods: Contradictions in Children's Rights and Global Governance. *Journal of Intervention and State Building*, 5(3):285-312.

Quentin, W., Abosedo, O., Aka, J., Akweongo, P., Dinard, K., Ezeh, A., ... & Te Bonle, M. 2014. Inequalities in child mortality in ten major African cities. *BMC medicine*, 12(1):1-11.

Quinn, N. & Mageo, J.M. 2013. Attachment and culture: An introduction. In Quinn, N. & Mageo, J.M. (Eds). *Attachment reconsidered. Cultural perspectives on a Western theory*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ramphabana, L.B., Rapholo, S.F. & Makhubele, J.C. 2019. The influence of familial factors towards the disclosure of child sexual abuse amongst Vhavenda Tribe. *Indilinga – African Journal of indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 18(2):173-188.

Rapholo, S.F. & Makhubele, J.C. 2018. Indigenising forensic social work in South Africa. In Shokane, A.L., Makhubele, J.C. & Blitz, L.V. (Eds). *Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education. Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences Series Volume 1*. Cape Town: AOSIS (Pty) Ltd.

Rathus, S.A. 2011. *Childhood and Adolescence: Voyages in Development*. 4th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Redmond, G. 2009. Children as actors: How does the child perspectives literature treat agency in the context of poverty? *Social Policy and Society*, 8(4):541-550.

Redmond, G. 2008. Child poverty and child rights: Edging towards a definition. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 14(1):63-82.

Rehman, A.A. & Alharthi, K. 2016. An introduction to research paradigms. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(8):51-59.

Reisig, J.A. & Miller, M.K. 2009. How the social construction of “child abuse” affect immigrant parents: Policy changes that protect children and families. *International Journal of Social Inquiry*, 2(1):17-37.

Robinson, L. 2007. *Cross-cultural child development for social workers. An introduction*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ross, E. 2008. The intersection of cultural practices and ethics in a rights-based society: implications for South African social workers. *International Social Work*, 51(3):384-395.

Ross, E. 2010. Inaugural lecture: African spirituality, ethics and traditional healing – implications for indigenous South African social work education and practice. *The South African Journal of Bioethics & Law*, 3(1):44-51.

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. 2016. *Child Protection*. Available: <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk> (Accessed 2017/02/02).

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E.R. 2011. *Research Methods for Social Work*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

Ruiz-Casares, M., Collins, T.M., Tisdall, E.K.M. & Grover, S. 2017. Children's rights to participation and protection in international development and humanitarian interventions: Nurturing a dialogue. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(1):1-13.

Ryke, E.H., Strydom, H. & Botha, K.F.H. 2008. Towards a Social Niche Assessment Instrument. *Social Work*, 44(1):18-33.

Saraw, S. 2009. *Child Protection: An Ecological Perspective to Assessment and treatment*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham. (DPhil Thesis).

Save the Children South Africa. 2018. *National child participation framework*. South Africa: Save the Children. Available:

https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/15380/pdf/save_the_children_ncpf_march_2019_printed_final_version.pdf (Accessed 2020/07/18).

Save the Children, 2013. *Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Call to Action. Joint Inter-Agency Statement*. Save the Children Resource Centre. Available: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/7839/pdf/child_protection_interagency_statement_english1.pdf (Accessed 2019/05/12).

Save the Children. 2008. *Translating the Right to Non-discrimination into Reality*. Sweden: Save the Children. Available:

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/2617.pdf> (Accessed 2018/09/14).

Scalise, E. 2013. Indigenous Women's Land Rights: Case Studies from Africa, pp.53-59, Focus on Land Rights and Natural Resources, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples. Available:

<http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/old-site-downloads/download-1117-Indigenous-womens-land-rights-case-studies-from-Africa.pdf> (2015/12/20).

- Schenk, R. 2019. Social constructionism. In Van Breda, A. & Sekudu, J. (Eds). *Theories for decolonial social work practice in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa (Pty) Limited.
- Schenk, R., Nel, H. & Louw, H. 2010. *Introduction to participatory community practice*. South Africa: UNISA Press.
- Schurink, W., Fouché, C.S. & De Vos, A.S. 2011. Qualitative data analysis and interpretation. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Segal, E.A., Gerdes, K.E. & Steiner, S. 2010. *Empowerment Series: An Introduction to the Profession of Social Work*. Belmont: Brooks/Cole.
- Segura-April, D. 2016. Appropriate child participation and the risks of spiritual abuse. *Transformation*, 33(3):171-184.
- September, R. & Dinbabo, M. 2008. Gearing up for implementation. A new Children's Act for South Africa. *Practice: Social Work in Action*, 20(2):113-122.
- Sewpaul, V. 2016a. The West and the Rest Divide: Human Rights, Culture and Social Work. *Journal of Human Rights Social Work*, 2016(1):30-39.
- Sewpaul, V. 2016b. Politics with soul: Social work and the legacy of Nelson Mandela. *International Social Work*, 59(6):697-708.
- Sewpaul, V. & Lombard, A. 2004. Social work education, training and standards in Africa. *Social Work Education*, 23(5):537-554.
- Shaffer, D.R. 2006. *Key Concepts in Developmental Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Shaffer, D.R. 2009. *Social and Personality Development*. 6th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Shaffer, D.R. & Kipp, K. 2010. *Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence*. Belmont CA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.
- Shava, S., Zasu, C., Tidball, K. & O'Donoghue, R. 2009. Local knowledge as a source of community resilience. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 8(2):218-229.
- Shokane, A.L. & Masoga, M.A. 2018. African indigenous knowledge and social work practice: Towards an Afro-sensed perspective. *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, 30(1):1-18.

- Shoko, K. 2012. Indigenous Weather Forecasting Systems: A Case Study of The Biotic Weather Forecasting Indicators for wards 12 and 13 in Mberengwa District, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 14(2):641-648.
- Shutte, A. 2001. *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a new South Africa*. Cape Town: Cluster Publications.
- Sibanda, S. 2013. *Challenges faced by social workers working in child protection services in implementing the Children's Act 38 of 2005*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (MSW Mini-Dissertation).
- Sigelman, C.K. & Rider, E.A. 2009. *Life-Span Human Development*. 6th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Smith, P.K., Cowie, H. & Blades, M. 2011. *Understanding Children's Development*. 5th ed. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sodi, T. 2009. Indigenous healers' diagnostic and treatment methods for some illnesses and social dysfunctions. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 8(1):59-72.
- Southern African Development Community (SADC). Available: <https://www.sadc.int/member-states> (Accessed 2017/02/07).
- South African History Online (SAHO). 2016. *People of South Africa*. Available: <https://www.sahistory.org.za> (Accessed 2016/12/07).
- Spitzer, H. 2019. Social work in East Africa: A mzungu perspective. *International Social Work*, 62(2):567-580.
- Spitzer, H. & Twikirize, J.M. 2019. Towards integrating indigenous knowledge and problem solving into contemporary social work in Africa. In Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. (Eds). *Social Work Practice in Africa. Indigenous and Innovative Approaches*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
- Ssewamala, F.M., Nabunya, P., Mukusa, N.M. Ilica, V. & Nattabia, J. 2014. Integrating a mentorship component in programming and support for AIDS-orphaned and vulnerable children: Lessons from the Suubi and Bridges Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Global Social Welfare*, 1(1):9-24.
- Stam, H.J. 2001. Introduction: Social Constructionism and its Critics. *Theory and Psychology*, 11(3):291-296.
- Statham, J. & Chase, E. 2010. Childhood well-being: A brief overview. Briefing paper 1, August 2010. Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre. Available: [researchgate.net/publication/242676811](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242676811) (Accessed: 2018/09/08).

Statistics South Africa. 2020. *Mid-year population estimates 2020*. Statistics South Africa. Available: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022020.pdf>

(Accessed 2020/10/29).

Stears, M. 2008. Children's stories: What knowledge constitutes indigenous knowledge? *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 7(2):132-140.

Strydom, H. 2011. Ethical aspects of research in the social sciences and human service professions. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Strydom, H. & Delpont, C.S.L. 2011. Sampling and pilot study in qualitative research. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots. For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Sue, D.W. & Sue, D. 2008. *Counselling the culturally diverse Theory and Practice*. 5th ed. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Sutherland, I. 2013. Arts-based methods in leadership development: Affording aesthetic workspaces, reflexivity and memories with momentum. *Management Learning*, 44(1):25-43.

Tait, C.L., Henry, R. & Loewen Walker, R. 2013. Child Welfare: A Social Determinant of Health for Canadian First Nations and Métis Children. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 11(1):39-53.

Tanga, P.T. 2013. The impact of the declining extended family support system on the education of orphans in Lesotho. *African Journal of AIDS Research*, 12(3):173-183.

Teffo, L. 2013. Rural communities as sites of knowledge. A case for African epistemologies. *Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 12(2):188-202.

Thabede, D. 2008. The African world view as the basis of practice in the helping professions, *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 44(3):233-245.

The African Child Policy Forum (ACFP). 2013. *The African Report on Child Wellbeing 2013. Towards greater accountability to Africa's children*. Available: <https://www.a-dtap.awepa.org> (Accessed 2015/12/15).

The Children's Act, Act no. 38 of 2005. Pretoria: Government Printers.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Act 108 of 1996.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013. Available: <https://www.parlzim.gov.zw> (Accessed 2017/02/12).

- Theron, V. R. 2016. *An exploration of the efficacy of the Namibian child protection system in responding to violence against children*. Windhoek: University of Namibia (Doctoral Thesis).
- The Scottish Government. 2008. *A guide to getting it right for every child*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Parliament.
- Thomas, N. 2011. Children's rights: policy into practice. *Centre for Children and Young People: Background Briefing Series, no. 4*. Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW, Australia. Available: www.scu.edu.au/childhoodstudies (Accessed: 2017/09/29).
- Thomas, J. 2009. *Working paper: Current measures and the challenges of measuring children's well-being*, Newport: Office for National Statistics.
- Tisdall, E.K.M. 2017. Conceptualising children and young people's participation: examining vulnerability, social accountability and co-production. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(1):59-75.
- Tisdall, E.K.M., Hinton R., Gadda, A.M. & Butler, U.M. 2014. Introduction: Children and Young People's Participation in Collective Decision-making. In Tisdall, E.K.M., Gadda A.M. & Butler, U.M.(Eds). *Children and Young People's Participation and Its Transformative Potential. Studies in Childhood and Youth*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tobin, J. 2011. Understanding a human rights based approach to matters involving children: Conceptual foundations and strategic considerations. In Invernizzi, A. & Williams, J. (Eds). *Human Rights of Children*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Toros, K., Valma, K. & Tiko, A. 2014. Interpretation of the Principle of "Best Interests of the Child" in context of Inter-Parental Child Custody Disputes: Case of Estonia. *Journal of Social Welfare & Human Rights*, 2(1):289-303.
- Truter, I. 2007. African Traditional Healers: Cultural and religious beliefs intertwined in a holistic way. *South African Pharmaceutical Journal*, 74(8):56-60.
- Truter, E. & Fouchè, A. 2015. Reflective supervision: Guidelines for promoting resilience amongst designated social workers. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 15(1):221-243.
- Tudge, J.H.R, Mokrova, I., Hatfield, B.E. & Karrick, B.R. 2009. Uses and Misuses of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of Human Development. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 1(4):198-210.
- Turner, F.J. 2005. *Encyclopedia of Canadian Social Work*. Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Twesigye, J., Twikirize J.J., Luwangula, R. & Kitimbo, S. 2019. Building resilience through indigenous mechanisms: The case of *Bataka* groups in Western Uganda. In Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. (Eds). *Social Work Practice in Africa. Indigenous and Innovative Approaches*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. 2019. Indigenous and innovative social work practice: evidence from East Africa. In Twikirize, J.M. & Spitzer, H. (Eds). *Social Work Practice in Africa. Indigenous and Innovative Approaches*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

Twikirize, J.M. 2014. Indigenisation of Social Work in Africa: Debates, Prospects and Challenges. In Spitzer, H, Twikirize, J.M. & Wairire, G.G. (Eds). *Professional Social Work in East Africa: Towards Social Development, Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality*. Kampala: Fountain.

Twum-Dansolmoh, A. 2013. Children's participation of physical punishment in Ghana and the implications for Children's Rights. *Childhood*, 20(4):472-486.

Uliando, A. & Mellor, D. 2012. Maltreatment of children in out-of-home care: A review of associated factors and outcomes. *Children and youth services review*, 34(12): 2280-2286.

Ungar, M. 2002. A deeper, more social ecological social work practice. *Social Service Review*, 76(3):480-497.

UNHCR. 2008. UNHCR Guidelines on determining the Best Interests of the Child. Available: <http://www.unhcr.org/4566b16b2.pdf> (Accessed 2018/09/14).

UNICEF. 2019. Annual Report, 2018. *For every child for every right*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org> (Accessed 2020/05/12).

UNICEF. 2017. *Child Protection. Overview*. Available: https://www.unicef.org/esaro/5480_child_protection.html (Accessed 2017/02/02).

UNICEF. 2015a. *UN lauds South Sudan as country ratifies landmark child rights treaty*. UN News Centre, 4 May 2015. Available: <https://www.un.org> (Accessed 2016/04/26).

UNICEF. 2015b. *UN lauds Somalia as country ratifies landmark child rights treaty*. UN News Centre, 20 January 2015. Available: <https://www.un.org> (Accessed 2016/04/26).

UNICEF. 2015c. *Child marriages, adolescent, pregnancy and family formation in West and Central Africa: Patterns, trends and drivers of change*. Dakar, Senegal: UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office.

UNICEF. 2015d. *Child protection. The case for support*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org> (Accessed 2016/12/15).

UNICEF. 2014a. *Children in Africa. Key statistics on child survival, protection and development*. Division of Policy and Strategy. New York: UNICEF. Available: <https://www.unicef.org>. (Accessed 2016/12/14).

UNICEF. 2014b. *The Convention on The Rights of the Child. Guiding principles: general requirements for all rights*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>. (Accessed 2019/07/01).

UNICEF. 2014c. *The Convention on The Rights of the Child. Survival and development rights: the basic rights to life, survival and development of one's full potential*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org> (Accessed 2017/02/12).

UNICEF. 2014d. *The Convention on The Rights of the Child. Participation rights: having an active voice*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org> (Accessed 2017/02/12).

UNICEF. 2014e. *The Convention on the Rights of the Child. Protection rights: keeping safe from harm*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org> (Accessed 2017/02/12).

UNICEF. 2013a. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. Available: <https://www.unicef.org> (Accessed 2017/02/12).

UNICEF. 2013b. *Every child's birth right. Inequities and trends in birth registration*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org> (Accessed 2017/03/27)

UNICEF. 2010a. *The Convention on the Rights of the Child – CRC Turns 20 – About the Convention*. Available: <https://static.unicef.org/rightsite/> (Accessed 2019/03/31)

UNICEF. 2010b. *Adapting a systems approach to child protection: Key concepts and considerations. Working paper*. Available: <https://www.icmec.org> (Accessed 2018/12/15)

UNICEF. 2006. *Child Protection Information Sheet. What is Child Protection?* Available: <https://www.unicef.org> (Accessed 2016/04/26).

UNICEF. [sa]. *The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Guiding principles-general requirements for all rights*. Available: https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Guiding_Principles.pdf (Accessed 2018/09/14).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2017. *What is Local and Indigenous Knowledge?* Available: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/links/related-information/what-is-local-and-indigenous-knowledge/> (Accessed 2019/08/20).

United Nations. 2019. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*. Available: <http://www.unstats.un.org/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf> (Accessed 2020/01/15).

United Nations Human Rights. *UN Treaty Body Database*. Available <http://treaties.un.org> (Accessed 2018/07/21).

United Nations. 2017. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017*. New York: United Nations. Available: <https://www.unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2017/> (Accessed: 2018/02/20)

United Nations. 2016. Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. 2016. *Human rights and traditional justice systems in Africa*. Available: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR_PUB_16_2_HR_and_Traditional_Justice_Systems_in_Africa.pdf (Accessed 2019/10/18).

United Nations. 2015. *The Millenium Development Goals Report 2015*. New York: United Nations.

United Nations. 2005. *International Workshop on Traditional Knowledge*. Available: <https://www.un.org> (Accessed 2018/03/09).

Van Breda, A. D. 2019. Developing the notion of Ubuntu as African theory for social work practice. *Social Work*, 55(4):439-450.

Vandenhoe, W. 2014. Child poverty and children's rights: An uneasy fit? *Michigan State International Law Review*, 22(2):609-636.

Van Zyl, C.J.J., Dankaert, E. & Guse, T. 2018. Motivation for Solitude: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Adolescents from Collectivist and Individualist Cultures in South Africa. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27:697-706.

Visser, M. 2007. Systems theory. In Visser, M. (Ed). *Contextualising community psychology in South Africa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Vogel, H.M. 2009. Psychological counselling and indigenous African knowledge systems in South African context. *Indilinga – African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, 8(2):175-188.

Vogt, L. & Laher, S. 2009. The five-factor model of personality and individualism/collectivism in South African: An exploratory study. *Psychology in Society*, 37(3):39-54.

Waller, T. 2009. *An introduction to early childhood*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.

Watkins, K. & Quattri, M. 2016. *Child poverty, inequality and demography. Why sub-Saharan Africa matters for the Sustainable Development Goals*. London: Overseas Development Institute. Available: <https://www.population.gov.za> (Accessed 2017/01/15).

Wefwafwa, J.A. 2014. Indigenous Communication Systems versus modern communication systems: A case study of Bukasu subtribe of Western Kenya. *Global Media Journal*, 8(2): 301-317.

- Wells, K. 2009. *Childhood in Global Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wessels, M.G. 2015. Bottom-up approaches to strengthening child protection systems: Placing children, families, and communities at the center. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 43:8-21.
- White, S.C. 2007. Children's Rights and the Imagination of Community in Bangladesh. *Childhood*, 14(4):505-520.
- Wilson, K., Ruch, G., Lymbery, M. & Cooper, A. 2008. *Social Work. An introduction to contemporary practice*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Witkin, S.L. 1990. The implications of social constructionism for social work education. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 4:37-48.
- Woodhead, M. 2009. *Pathways through early childhood education in Ethiopia, India and Peru: Rights, equity and diversity*. London: Young Lives.
- Woolley, M.E. 2008. Assessment of Children. In Archer, M.D. (Ed.) *Getting Started in Forex Training Strategies*. New Jersey: John Willey & Sons.
- World Bank. 2005. *Meeting the Challenge of Africa's Development: A World Bank Group Action Plan*. Africa Region. Available: <https://www.siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRICA> (Accessed 2016/12/13).
- World Bank. 1998. *Indigenous Knowledge for Development: A Framework for Action*. Africa Region: World Bank. Available: <https://www.dlist.org> (Accessed 2016/12/13).
- World Health Organization. 2020. *Child maltreatment*. Available online at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment> (Accessed on 25/09/2020).
- World Health Organisation. *Health and human rights. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. Available: <https://www.who.int/hhr/African> (Accessed 2017/02/12).
- World Health Organisation. *Global health observatory data*. Available: http://www.who.int/gho/mortality_burden_disease/life_tables/situation_trends_text/en/ (Accessed 2018/09/18).
- Wyness, M. 2013. Global standards and deficit childhoods: the contested meaning of children's participation. *Children's Geographies*, 11(3):340-353.
- Zagheni, E. 2011. The impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on kinship resources for orphans in Zimbabwe. *Population and Development Review*, 37(4):761-783.
- Zajadlo, J. 2017. The idea of equality in modern legal philosophy. In Wojciechowski, B., Bekrycht, T. & Cern, K. M. (Eds). *Jurisprudencja 8. The principle of equality as a fundamental*

norm in law and political philosophy, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź: Łódź University Press.

Zastrow, C.H. 2013. *The practice of social work: A comprehensive work text*. New York: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

Zastrow, C.H. & Kirst-Ashman, K.K. 2016. *Understanding human behaviour and the social environment*. 10th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Zermatten, J. 2010. The Best Interests of the Child Principle: Literal Analysis and Function. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 18(4):483-499.

APPENDIX A

*Official communications should
Not be addressed to individuals*

Telephone: Harare
703711/790721-4
Telegraphic Address: 'WELMIN
Fax: 796080/790543/703714



ZIMBABWE

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD WELFARE AND PROBATION SERVICES

Compensation House
Cnr 4th Street/Central Avenue
P.O. Box CY 429
Causeway
Zimbabwe

SW 12/5/29

26 July 2016

Samuel Lisenga Mahuntse
House 752, Muhondo Way
Nharira Views
Norton

Dear S.L. Mahuntse

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE SHANGANI
CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS RELATED TO CHILD
PROTECTION IN CHIREZI DISTRICT**

Please be advised that permission is hereby granted for you to carry out your research study on the Culture and Indigenous Knowledge Systems related to child protection in Chiredzi District.

Please take note that the permission has been granted **STRICTLY** on condition that the research is for academic purposes only in pursuit of your Doctorate in Social Work with the University of Pretoria and not for **PUBLICITY** and that the identity of participating officers and Child Protection committee members will be protected.

May you kindly submit a copy of your final research document to the Department of Child Welfare and Protection Services upon completion as the subject matter of your study has a bearing on our mandate.

Yours Sincerely,

T. A. CHINAKE

DIRECTOR FOR CHILD WELFARE AND PROTECTION SERVICES

APPENDIX B

All communications should be addressed to
"The Secretary"
Telephone: 783484-7, 783508

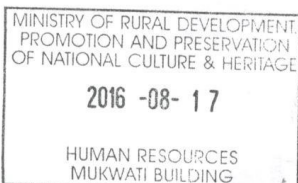


ZIMBABWE

Ministry of Rural Development, Promotion and
Preservation of National Culture and Heritage
64 Kwame Nkrumah/1st street
2nd Floor, Unity Court
P. O. Box HR480
Harare

16 August 2016

→ Mr Samuel Lisenga Mahuntse
House 752 Munhondo way, Nharira Views
Norton



**REQUEST TO INTERVIEW SELECTED CHIEFS IN CHIREDDI DISTRICT: MR
SAMUEL LISENGA MAHUNTSE: DOCTORATE STUDENT: UNIVERSITY OF
PRETORIA:**

The above matter refers.

I am pleased to inform you that, permission has been granted to interview the following chiefs; Chief [REDACTED], Chief [REDACTED] and Chief [REDACTED] as part of your thesis on "Shangani culture and Indigenous Knowledge Systems" related to child protection.

Your request has been approved subject to the following conditions:

- Research information shall be used for academic purposes **only**.
- Confidentiality of information gathered during the research shall not be compromised.
- A copy of the final research document must be forwarded to the Ministry within a week from date of completion of the research.

Meanwhile, on behalf of the Ministry, I wish you the best in your research work.

Thobani
Chitepo T (Dr)

**Secretary for Rural Development, Promotion and Preservation of National Culture
and Heritage**

CC: Provincial Administrator - ~~Manicaland~~ Masvingo
District Administrators - Chiredzi

APPENDIX C

EMBAIXADA DA
REPÚBLICA DE MOÇAMBIQUE



EMBASSY OF THE
REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE

Às
Autoridades Administrativas dos
Distritos de Massangena, Chicualacuala,
Mabalane, Chókwè, Chibuto e Mandlakazi

PROVÍNCIA DE GAZA

Ref. DS /Embamoc-HRE/GE/432.132/2016

Harare, 25 de Julho de 2016

Assunto: Pesquisa Científica.

O Sr. **Samuel Lisenga Mahuntse**, é cidadão zimbabweano e aspirante ao grau de Doutoramento em Trabalhos Sociais pela Universidade de Pretória (África do Sul). No contexto das suas pesquisas para a obtenção do referido grau académico, o cidadão supra menciona visitar as comunidades nos Distritos de Massangena, Chicualacuala, Mabalane, Chókwè, Chibuto e Mandlakazi, para entrevistas, observações e análises dos aspectos sócio-culturais do povo da etnia Shangane.

Os dados colectados serão, mais tarde, equiparados aos obtidos das pesquisas similares com os elementos da mesma etnia na África do Sul e no Zimbabwe.

Em face do acima referido, solicita-se o apoio de todas as autoridades competentes moçambicanas na facilitação das pesquisas a serem realizadas pelo Sr. **Samuel Lisenga Mahuntse**.

Na certeza que o assunto merecerá de V.Excias, queiram aceitar os protestos da nossa mais elevada consideração.



APPENDIX D

National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe

Makombe Government Complex, Block 3, Office 83 & 99

Email address: whidyausiku@naswzim.org

Tel: +263 4 799001



10 August 2016

Dear Samuel Lisenga Mahuntse

REF: PERMISSION TO INVOLVE NASW-Z MEMBERS IN DOCTORATE STUDY ON SHANGANI/TSONGA INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND CHILD PROTECTION

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to involve NASW-Z members in your Doctorate study titled "*The contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems to Child Protection among the Shangani/ Tsonga People of Sub-Saharan Africa*". The Association will assist you with the membership database to purposively sample 15 Social Workers for your study. We have noted that you anticipate to conduct your interviews any time in November 2016 – February 2017.

The researcher shall meet workshop costs and reimburse bus fares for participants.

The Association anticipates you to share the findings of your research in form of a report. Our office will assist you with the necessary assistance that you have requested.

The Association wishes you the best of lucky in your study endeavors.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Whidyausiku".

Weston Chidyausiku
(Programs Officer)



National Executive Committee: Dennis Dzikiti (Acting President), Sifelani Mudimu (Vice President), P.D. Motsi (Treasurer), Tinashelani (Publicity Secretary), Effie Malianga (Committee Member), Blessing Bhaiseni (Committee Member), Advocate Charles Warara (Legal Advisor), Charles Dziro (Harare Branch Chairperson), Pardon Muyambo (Manicaland Branch Chairperson), Tawanda Masuka (Mash West & Central Branch Chairperson) and George Madzima (Midlands Branch Chairperson)

APPENDIX E

Interview schedule: Tsonga IKS experts (Phase 1)

Goal of the study:

The goal of the study is to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

Themes:

1. What in your opinion constitutes Tsonga IKS?
2. What are the sources of Tsonga IKS in your community?
3. What, in your opinion, are similarities and/or differences in Tsonga IKS in South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe?
4. What are elements of the Tsonga IKS that can be used to enhance children's well-being?
5. What is your opinion on the role of Tsonga IKS in child protection?
6. What elements of Tsonga IKS can enhance or hamper children's right to protection?
7. What, in your opinion, should be included in an awareness programme for social workers on the use of IKS in the child protection field?

Snowball nomination:

Do you know any person in your area whom you consider to be an expert on Tsonga IKS that might be willing to participate in the research?

YES () / NO () If yes, please provide his/her contact details

Name:

Village: Ward:

Cell phone:

I want to thank you for giving me your precious time to answer these questions. The person/people you have nominated will be contacted to ask them to participate in the study if they agree.

APPENDIX F

Interview schedule: child protection social workers (Phase 1)

Goal of the study:

The goal of the study is to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

Themes:

- What is your role as a social worker in the field of child protection in your community?
- What are the legal and statutory instruments used to protect children from all forms of abuse that are available to you?
- How do you see the potential role of Tsonga IKS in child protection?
- In your view, what elements of Tsonga IKS might enhance or hamper children's right to protection?
- What should constitute an awareness programme for social workers on the integration of IKS in their work in the child protection field?
- What general guidelines can you recommend for the utilisation of IKS in social work services?

APPENDIX G

Interview guide: focus group interview with social workers (Phase 2)

Goal of the study:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the programme and in the focus group interview. As you know, the goal of my research is to develop and pilot test an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to child protection.

I will appreciate your feedback in order to guide me in refining the awareness programme for use in social work education and practice.

Themes:

2. What is your opinion on the relevance or applicability of IKS in child protection?
 - (c) From a systemic perspective
 - (d) From a social constructivism perspective
3. What recommendations do you have for the refinement of the programme?
 - (a) In terms of the information/content
 - (b) In terms of the presentation.
4. In your opinion, how can this programme be replicated to other countries besides Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe?
5. What recommendations do you have for further research in this area?

APPENDIX H



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

26 May 2017

Dear Mr Mahuntse

Project: A social work programme on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection: a Tsonga case study
Researcher: SL Mahuntse
Supervisor: Dr MP le Roux
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference: 15369732 (GW20170520HS)

Thank you for the **well written** application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

I am pleased to inform you that the above application was **approved** by the **Research Ethics Committee** on 25 May 2017. Data may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maxi Schoeman'.

Prof Maxi Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Research Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

cc: Prof A Lombard (HoD)
Dr MP le Roux (Supervisor)

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Dr L Blokland; Ms A dos Santos; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder; Dr E Johnson; Dr C Panebianco; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Dr M Taub; Prof GM Spies; Prof E Taljard; Ms B Tsebe; Dr E van der Klashorst; Dr G Wolmarans; Ms D Mokalapa

APPENDIX I



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities

Researcher: Mr SL Mahuntse
Degree: DPhil (Social Work)
Contact details: +263 773 202262

INFORMED CONSENT: PARTICIPANTS (PHASE 1) – IKS EXPERTS

1. Title of the study

A social work programme on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection: a Tsonga case study

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

3. Procedures

As a participant in the research, I will be invited to take part in a personal interview with the researcher, Mr Samuel Mahuntse. The information gained in the interview will help the researcher to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on utilising indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to promote child protection services. The duration of the interview will be approximately 60 minutes and I may be asked for a further follow-up interview. I understand that I will be advised of the date, time and venue of the interview. I give full consent to the researcher to audio record the interview and to make notes during the interview, and for him to be assisted by a research assistant who will help with translation, if needed. After the interviews, the audio recordings will be transcribed into a written document for the researcher to analyse the information.

4. Possible risks

Mr Mahuntse is interested in my views on the possible use of IKS in child protection. As the interview will focus on my knowledge of Tsonga IKS and not on my personal situation, there are no foreseen risks and discomfort involved in participating in the study. However, I understand

that this research will involve a discussion of practices in my own culture related to child protection, which might cause discomfort. After the interview, Mr Mahuntse will make sure that I do not have any misunderstandings about the interview. If I experience discomfort due to my participation in the interview, Mr Mahuntse will refer me to a registered social worker or any such professional with such capacity in my area to arrange for counselling.

5. Benefits of participation

I understand that the researcher will not offer me any incentives for being involved in the study. However, in line with my own Tsonga cultural practice, I will be given a single bath soap as a token of appreciation. My participation can however provide valuable information that can promote the well-being of children in the African context, as the researcher plans to develop a programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection.

6. Rights as a participant

I am fully aware that participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation from the study at any time if I so wish, without negative consequences. I am aware that I am under no obligation to participate in the research.

7. Confidentiality

All information and documents used or accrued in this research shall be kept confidential and will only be available to the researcher and the concerned parties. I am aware that other than the researcher, the research assistant and the researcher's supervisor will have access to the research data and that they will treat it as confidential. Interviews will be done in a private venue to ensure my right to privacy. All information will be handled with strict confidentiality. My name, other identifying details and any information leading to my identification will not be made known. The researcher undertakes not to divulge information from the interviews to anybody else. The researcher and research assistant will sign this letter as an agreement of confidentiality. I am aware that raw data such as the informed consent letters and transcripts of the interviews will be securely stored for a minimum of 15 years, in accordance with the stipulations of the University of Pretoria.

I also understand that, based on the findings of the study, the researcher will compile a research report to be submitted to the University of Pretoria for academic purposes and that the research findings will be used for publication in scientific journals or presented at academic conferences. The researcher will ensure that no information that would identify me (for example my name and surname or my telephone number) will be made known in the research report or in any other way.

The information gained during the interviews may be used again at a later stage for further research. In such a case, the same principles of confidentiality described above, will be upheld. I understand that all information will thus still be handled confidentially, my name and details will not be made known, and no one will be able to identify me. I have no objection to the use of the data for further research.

9. Permission for participation in the research study

By signing this letter of consent, I confirm that I have read and clearly understood its contents. I further confirm that I asked all the questions I might have about the contents and I was satisfactorily answered by the researcher. I understand what the research is about and why it is being done.

If I need more clarity on this research, I can contact the researcher on his cell number stated above.

I understand my rights as a participant and give permission to voluntarily participate in the research study.

I have received a copy of this letter.

..... Participant (Print name) Participant's Signature Date
..... Researcher (Print name) Researcher's Signature Date
..... Research assistant (Print name) Research assistant's signature Date

APPENDIX J



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities

Researcher: Mr SL Mahuntse
Degree: DPhil (Social Work)
Contact details: +263 773 202262

INFORMED CONSENT: PARTICIPANTS (PHASE 1) – CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS

1. Title of the study

A social work programme on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection: a Tsonga case study

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

3. Procedures

As a participant in the research, I will be invited to take part in a personal interview with the researcher, Mr Samuel Mahuntse. The information gained in the interview will help the researcher to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers for utilising indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to promote child protection services. The duration of the interview will be approximately 60 minutes and I may be asked for a further follow-up interview. I understand that I will be advised of the date, time and venue of the interview. I give full consent to the researcher to audio record the interview and to make notes during the interview, and for him to be assisted by a research assistant who will help with translation, if needed. After the interviews, the audio recordings will be transcribed into a written document for the researcher to analyse the information.

4. Possible risks

Mr Mahuntse is interested in my views on the possible use of IKS in child protection. As the interview will focus on my knowledge and experience of child protection within the Tsonga context and not on my personal situation, there are no foreseen risks and discomforts involved in

participating in the study. However, I understand that this research will involve a discussion of practices related to child protection within the Tsonga culture, which might cause discomfort. After the interview, Mr Mahuntse will make sure that I do not have any misunderstandings about the interview. If I experience discomfort due to my participation in the interview, Mr Mahuntse will refer me to another registered social worker in my area to arrange for counselling.

5. Benefits of participation

I understand that the researcher will not offer me any incentives for being involved in the study. However, in line with the Tsonga cultural practice, I will be given a single bath soap as a token of appreciation. My participation can however provide valuable information that can promote the well-being of children in the African context, as the researcher plans to develop a programme for social workers on the use of IKS in child protection.

6. Rights as a participant

I am fully aware that participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation from the study at any time if I so wish, without negative consequences. I am aware that I am under no obligation to participate in the research.

7. Confidentiality

All information and documents used or accrued in this research shall be kept confidential and will only be available to the researcher and the concerned parties. I am aware that other than the researcher, the research assistant and the researcher's supervisor will have access to the research data and that they will treat it as confidential. Interviews will be done in a private venue to ensure my right to privacy. All information will be handled with strict confidentiality. My name, other identifying details and any information leading to my identification will not be made known. The researcher undertakes not to divulge information from the interviews to anybody else. The researcher and research assistant will sign this letter as an agreement of confidentiality. I am aware that raw data such as the informed consent letters and transcripts of the interviews will be securely stored for a minimum of 15 years, in accordance with the stipulations of the University of Pretoria.

I also understand that, based on the findings of the study, the researcher will compile a research report to be submitted to the University of Pretoria for academic purposes and that the research findings will be used for publication in scientific journals or presented at academic conferences. The researcher will ensure that no information that would identify me (for example my name and surname or my telephone number) will be made known in the research report or in any other way.

The information gained during the interviews may be used again at a later stage for further research. In such a case, the same principles of confidentiality described above, will be upheld. I understand that all information will thus still be handled confidentially, my name and details will not be made known, and no one will be able to identify me. I have no objection to the use of the data for further research.

9. Permission for participation in the research study

By signing this letter of consent, I confirm that I have read and clearly understood its contents. I further confirm that I asked all the questions I might have about the contents and I was satisfactorily answered by the researcher. I understand what the research is about and why it is being done.

If I need more clarity on this research, I can contact the researcher on his cell number stated above.

I understand my rights as a participant and give permission to voluntarily participate in the research study.

I have received a copy of this letter.

.....
Participant (Print name) Participant's Signature Date

.....
Researcher (Print name) Researcher's Signature Date

.....
Research assistant (Print name) Research assistant's signature Date

APPENDIX K



Faculty of Humanities

Researcher: Mr SL Mahuntse
Degree: DPhil (Social Work)
Contact details: +263 773 202262

INFORMED CONSENT: PARTICIPANTS (PHASE 2) – SOCIAL WORKERS

1. Title of the study

A social work programme on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection: a Tsonga case study

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

3. Procedures

As a participant in the research, I will be invited to participate in a workshop with the aim to pilot test an awareness programme for social workers for utilising indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to promote child protection services. The awareness programme will be developed based on information that the researcher obtained in interviews with experts who are familiar with the Tsonga IKS and child protection workers within a Tsonga context. The workshop will be presented by the researcher and will last about three hours. Afterwards, I will be requested to participate in a focus group interview to provide feedback on the programme. The focus group interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I am aware that I may be asked for a follow-up contact by Mr Mahuntse in case he needs to further clarify information obtained during the focus group interview. I will be advised of the date, time and venue of the workshop and focus group interview. I give full consent to the researcher to audio record the interviews and take notes of the interview proceedings.

4. Possible risks

Mr Mahuntse is interested in my views on a programme for social workers on the possible use of IKS in child protection. As the focus group interview will focus on my opinion on the awareness programme for social workers and not on my personal situation, there are no foreseen risks and discomfort involved in participating in the study. However, I understand that this research will involve a discussion of the social work practice in child protection work, which might cause discomfort. If I experience discomfort due to my participation in the interview, Mr Mahuntse will refer me to another registered social worker in my area to arrange for counselling.

5. Benefits of participation

I understand that the researcher will not offer me any incentives for being involved in the study. However, the researcher will reimburse me for my bus fare for attending the workshop. Light refreshments will be provided after the workshop. My participation can however help the researcher to refine the awareness programme for the use of IKS in child protection and, in doing so, can promote the well-being of children in the African context.

6. Rights as a participant

I am fully aware that participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation from the study at any time if I so wish, without negative consequences. I am aware that I am under no obligation to participate in the research.

7. Confidentiality

All information and documents used or accrued in this research shall be kept confidential and will only be available to the researcher and the concerned parties. I am aware that other than the researcher, the researcher's supervisor will have access to the research data and will treat it as confidential. The focus group interview will be done in a private venue to ensure participants' right to privacy, and participants in the focus group interviews will be requested to treat the discussion confidentially. The researcher will handle all information with strict confidentiality. My name, other identifying details and any information leading to my identification will not be made known and the researcher undertakes not to divulge information from the interviews to anybody else. I am aware that raw data will be securely stored for a minimum of 15 years, in accordance with the stipulations of the University of Pretoria.

I also understand that, based on the findings of the study, the researcher will compile a research report to be submitted to the University of Pretoria for academic purposes. The research findings will also be used for publication in scientific journals or presented at academic conferences. The researcher will ensure that no information that would identify me (for example my name and

surname or my telephone number) will be made known in the research report or in any other way.

The information gained during the focus group interview may be used again at a later stage for further research. In such a case, the same principles of confidentiality described above, will be upheld. I understand that all information will thus still be handled confidentially, my name and details will not be made known, and no one will be able to identify me. I have no objection to the use of the data for further research.

9. Permission for participation in the research study

By signing this letter of consent, I confirm that I have read and clearly understood its contents. I further confirm that I asked all the questions I might have about the contents and I was satisfactorily answered by the researcher. I understand what the research is about and why it is being done.

If I need more clarity on this research, I can contact the researcher on his cell number, as stated above.

I understand my rights as a participant and give permission to voluntarily participate in the research study.

I have received a copy of this letter.

.....
Participant (Print name)	Participant's Signature	Date
.....
Researcher (Print name)	Researcher's Signature	Date

APPENDIX L



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities

Researcher: Mr SL Mahuntse
Degree: DPhil (Social Work)
Contact details: +263 773 202262

INFORMED CONSENT: PHASE 1 – RESEARCH ASSISTANT

1. Title of the study

A social work programme on the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to child protection: a Tsonga case study

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to develop and evaluate an awareness programme for social workers on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to child protection, based on a study of Tsonga IKS.

3. Procedures

As a research assistant, I will be requested to assist the researcher, Mr Samuel Mahuntse, with the facilitation of the individual interviews conducted with the research participants, who will be experts who have knowledge of Tsonga IKS as well as social workers who have knowledge of child protection and of the local Tsonga context. The interviews will be conducted in the rural areas in the Chiredzi district in the Masvingo province of Zimbabwe and in the Chokwe district in Gaza province in Mozambique. Each individual interview will last approximately 60 minutes and in some cases, may involve follow-up interviews with the participants. The purpose of the interviews is to gain information on the possible use of Tsonga IKS in child protection services. It is foreseen that approximately 40 interviews with IKS experts and 10 interviews with social workers will be conducted, depending on data saturation.

My role during the interviews will involve assistance with translation of information in the local Tsonga dialects, where needed, and the audio recording of the interviews. Afterwards I will assist the researcher in identifying themes in the transcripts of the interviews that will be made by the researcher. I understand that I will be advised of the date, time and venue of the interview meetings.

Department of Social Work & Criminology
Room 10-21, Humanities Building
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 2325

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo

4. Possible risks

I understand that there are no foreseen risks or discomfort involved regarding my role as research assistant.

5. Benefits of participation

I understand that the researcher will not offer me any remuneration for being involved in the study. However, I shall be paid a stipend to cover living costs during the study.

7. Confidentiality

All information and records used or accrued in this research shall be kept confidential. I am aware that the names of participants or any information leading to their identification should be handled with strict confidentiality. I undertake not to divulge information from the interviews, transcripts or the research process to anybody else. I am aware that raw data such as the informed consent letters and transcripts of the interviews will be securely stored for a minimum of 15 years, in accordance with stipulations of the University of Pretoria.

9. Permission for participation as a research assistant

By signing this letter of consent, I confirm that I have read and clearly understood its contents. I further confirm that I asked all the questions I might have about the content and I was satisfactorily answered by the researcher. I understand what the research is about and why it is being done. I voluntarily participate in the research study.

.....
Research assistant (Print name)	Research assistant's signature	Date
.....
Researcher (Print name)	Researcher's Signature	Date