

Factors Contributing to Child Neglect Among Young Mothers Incarcerated for Neglecting Their Children: A Case of Female Correctional Institution in Maseru, Lesotho.

By

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DECLARATION

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I declare that the study “Factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children: A case of a female correctional institution in Maseru, Lesotho” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

DATE

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and supervised as having met the requirements of the Faculty of Social Sciences, National University of Lesotho, for the award of the Degree of Master of Social Work.

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“BOKA JEHOVAH, MOEA OAKA, U SE KE OA LEBALA LIT’SITSO TSOHLE TSA HAE”! (Psalm 103 verse 1-2). Dear Lord, I thrived and conquered through your love and grace. Honour and glory goes to you. Thank You Lord for giving me the strength and wisdom to persevere until the completion of this dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

Child neglect is a major public health concern that compromises the socio-emotional, psychological and academic functioning of toddlers, young children and adolescents born to young mothers. This study set out to explore the factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho. The study, is informed by the Problem-behaviour theory. In an attempt to provide suitable responses to the research problem, the qualitative phenomenology design was adopted and semi-structured interviews were utilised with four social workers and nine young mothers to collect the data. Thematic analysis was useful in identifying the themes and subthemes from the data gathered.

The study found out that child neglect among young mothers is extensive and that young mothers' poor background in terms of poverty increases the rate of child neglect. Additionally, the findings also show that the most prevalent subtypes of child neglect were supervisory neglect and physical neglect. According to the results of the study, multiple factors cause young mothers to neglect their children, and among these are: unemployment, limited knowledge that leaving a child unsupervised is a criminal offence, maternal history of childhood abuse, lack of social support, mental illness and in some cases, spiritual attacks. In light of these findings, young mothers have seemingly developed a positive attitude towards parenting yielded by the provision of time to time rehabilitation services. The study recommends that, parenting practices and provision of family support be developed. Specifically, the provision of parenting education and training in this capacity, for all parents, guardians or future parents can also be advantageous.

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List of Acronyms

CPWA Children's Protection and Welfare Act

PBT Problem Behaviour Theory

MoSD Ministry of Social Development

NGOs Non-Governmental Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This dissertation seeks to explore the factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho. With this premise, the chapter outlines a brief background of the study, problem statement, and the research objectives, followed by the research questions. The chapter further presents the significance of the study, purpose of the study and includes the definition of key terms, limitations of the study and concludes by providing an overview of chapters and a summary.

1.1 Background of the study

Child neglect is the least understood and least studied of all forms of child maltreatment (Avdibegovic and Brkic, 2020). Studies of child maltreatment have closely examined child abuse and neglect together as if they were identical incidents or focused on child abuse because it is identifiable and easy to respond to (Louds *et al.* 2006). Child neglect varies from other forms of child maltreatment, as it refers to the negligence in meeting the basic needs of children. Research that has been conducted on the factors contributing to child neglect indicated that, there is not a single factor sustaining the high incidence of child neglect. Usually, a variety of intense, complex and interrelated factors have been identified as major predictors of child neglect. These factors can be found in four distinct levels. The ontogenetic development of parents, which means that the history of adverse

childhood experiences is brought into their present parenting behavior; child related characteristics and the environmental related factors.

Likewise, different theoretical models have been advanced to describe child neglect, for example, the theoretical model of Belsky (1980), which was found on the ecological perspective on development of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2000). On the transactional theoretical model standpoint, coined by Cicchetti and Rizley (1981), is where mutual interplay between a child, parent/ primary caregiver and their environment are fundamental. This model not only emphasizes the significance of risk factors of which their existence alternates over time, but also the significance of protective factors, which can reduce the risk of child neglect. Lastly, is the theoretical model of Wolfe (1991), which implies that child maltreatment is a result of inconsistent parenting behaviors. Briefly, each of the theoretical models assert that the recurrence of and interaction between several protective and risk factors either increase or decrease the incidence of child neglect instead of a single factor. Mulder *et al.* (2018) further states that child neglect can be explained by the balance between several risk and protective factors existing in the child and distinct ecological systems surrounding the child. According to Lamont *et al.* (2013), when a child is exposed to several risk factors combined with lack of protective factors, it increases the potential to experience neglect. Although pathways to child neglect are many and diverse, child or environmental related factors will not be covered as the focus of the study is on the factors related to the parent, particularly young mothers. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2012, p. 2) suggests that child neglect is a broad term describing “the absence of sufficient attention, responsiveness, and protection appropriate to the age and needs of a child”. In other words, child neglect

takes place when either a parent or guardian fails to meet the basic needs of a child. Furthermore, what has been observed in other studies is, either these parents are forced to leave behind their children with no supervision with the aim to seek better means of living elsewhere; or may be suffering from intellectual, physical or multiple disabilities which then compromise their ability to provide adequate care and supervision for their children (Whetten, Osterman, Pence, O'Donnell and Messer, 2009).

Child neglect is divided into several subtypes. Crosson-Tower (1996), Kay (2003) and Beckett (2007) state that there are four primary subtypes of child neglect namely, physical neglect, emotional neglect, medical neglect and supervisory neglect. Physical neglect refers to the failure of the caregiver to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter while emotional neglect means the failure to protect the child from emotional harm (Crosson-Tower, 1996; Kay, 2003 and Beckett, 2007). Medical neglect refers to the failure to ensure that the child receives adequate medical care and lastly, supervisory neglect means the failure to provide the child with adequate supervision both inside the home and outside the home (Crosson-Tower, 1996; Kay, 2003 and Beckett, 2007). Moreover, Jonson-Reid, Drake and Zhou (2013); Kaufman, (1994); National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, (2012) and Pears (2008), assert that these subtypes of child neglect can be found to be co-occurring. This is to say, a combination of any of the subtypes can be experienced by the child simultaneously. A detailed review of these subtypes will be explained further in chapter two.

A large number of infants and young children across the globe are neglected, or left vulnerable to the environment, as their biological parents are unable to provide for their basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, security, medical care and emotional and

psychological needs (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Particularly, it is estimated that, approximately 255 million children are neglected worldwide, with 155 of those reported as orphans (Escueta, Whetten, Ostermann and O'Donnell, 2014). In the United States of America, the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS, 2017), reported 56% of victims of child neglect in 2017. In comparison, 28% of child abuse reports counted for child physical abuse, while only 13% of these reports were for child sexual abuse (USDHHS, 2017). The difference in these statistics is staggering, and it is apparent that the difference is higher as a result of child neglect being notoriously under-reported (Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2016).

The biggest number of children vulnerable to child neglect, were reported in South and East Asia at an estimated 76 million, Central and Eastern Europe with approximately 900 000 and finally, Western and Central Africa with roughly 25.9 million children subjected to child neglect (Whetten *et al.*, 2009 and UNICEF, 2009). Equally important, recent literature estimates that between one and two-thirds of the documented cases of child neglect are associated to a mother's young age (USDHHS, 2019). Even though it is challenging to reach any possible conclusions concerning a causal relationship between a parent's age and child neglect, it is abundantly clear that a strong correlation exists.

Additionally, authors from the Sub-Saharan African region, have conducted extensive research on the issue of child neglect and the studies have documented serious and devastating findings (Cori, 2012). In their systematic review, Kotch, Lewis, Hussey, English, Thompson and Litronik (2018); Mbagaya, (2013) and Nguyen (2009), evaluated the current circumstances of child neglect in Africa in high income countries, upper income and lower income countries respectively. In high income countries, the findings

were: 29% in Nigeria, 59% in Kenya, 64% in Egypt and 71% in Morocco respectively. Furthermore, upper-income countries studied in Sub-Saharan countries are Botswana with 23%, Angola 37% and Rwanda 48%. Lastly, in lower income countries, overall lifetime neglect rates ranged from 29 % in Tanzania to and 59 % in Uganda.

From the above reviewed literature, it is apparent that there has been a historical inattention of child neglect in scientific research and up to now; neither researchers nor clinicians appear to renowned the intensity of its outcomes on children. Regardless of this, there was a current motion towards a higher expertise of the impact of becoming a parent at an early age on the severance of child neglect. Much of this effort was rooted from the work done within community support groups, which were established to help instill improved parenting techniques in young mothers (Marlow and Corey, 2014).

To achieve this goal, the community support groups enroll all young mothers and their children. The affiliated intervention teams, fathers of children, child and family therapists and case-workers, then provide services to address each family member's individual or family system-related needs within a guided informative platform (CSAT, 2016). As a result of the intensive and well-rounded intervention and support services offered by the community support groups, the field is noting improvements in better parenting outcomes (Marlowe and Carey, 2018). However, there rests a paucity of examinations that focuses at the parental deficit model and how it relates to their children's risk of experiencing neglect. As a result, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated as a result of child neglectful tendencies in Maseru, Lesotho.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Information about the incidence of child neglect in Lesotho remains inadequate. Despite attempts by the researcher, no supporting annual government statistics indicating the widespread implications of child neglect were found. According to Children's Protection and Welfare Act (CPWA) of 2011, PART III- Rights of a child and responsibilities of a parents and the state, Section 10, states that a child has the right to live with parents and grow up in a caring environment. Section 11(1) stipulates that a child has a right to proper education, nutritious food, clothing, shelter, clinical attention, social services or any other service required for the child's development. Of particular interest to this study is Section 3(e) under PART 1- Preliminary that states that a child should not be exposed to physical and mental neglect. Ideally, this means children should live with both of their parents in an environment filled with care, sensitivity and responsiveness to their needs, where they will be protected from the social, emotional and psychological adversities. However, the Child Vulnerability index compiled by SOS Children's Village International reports that more than 57.3% of children in Lesotho are seen as "at risk" of being vulnerable to neglect (SOS Children's Villages International 2015).

The lack of clearly stipulated legal frameworks in Lesotho concerning child neglect has enabled the occurrence of child neglect cases to fall through the cracks as the community may not be aware or knowledgeable of the behaviors that constitute child neglect. Equally important, there is no thoroughly stated criterion of the identification of child neglect and procedural steps to take to report child neglect when it occurs. As a result, if continuously left untreated, child neglect may potentially have long-term negative impacts on the children's biological, emotional, psychological and relational domains, as observed from

the similar study conducted by Thabane and Kasiram (2015) on the context of child abandonment in Lesotho. The study revealed that attitudes such as aggressiveness, use of profanities and a fear of social closeness to name but a few were observed in these children. However, there still remains an absence of studies focusing on the relationship between parental related factors and child neglect. Thus, the study intends to explore some of the factors contributing to the phenomenon of child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho.

1.3 Objectives of the study

This section provides general and specific objectives on which the study is based.

1.3.1 General objective

The main objective of the study is to explore the factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The following specific objectives subsequently guided the study:

- i. To investigate the social factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho;
- ii. To identify the psychological factors heightening child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho;
- iii. To examine the economic factors increasing child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho;

- iv. To establish possible mitigation measures against child neglect in Maseru, Lesotho.

1.4 Research questions

In order to shed light on the research problem, the following research questions were developed:

- i. What are the social factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho?
- ii. What are the psychological factors heightening child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho?
- iii. Which economic factors increase child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho?
- iv. What are the mitigation measures against child neglect in Maseru, Lesotho?

1.5 Significance of the study

Although a family is generally considered a safe place for children, it can also be extraordinarily dangerous. Parents may be challenged to genuinely deal with severe occasions together with constrained finances and may suffer from several mental disorders while being concerned for an infant or a young child. Similarly, children experiencing traumatic experiences may be severely affected emotionally and psychologically throughout their development. This consequently indicates that it is far critical to determine the possible factors contributing to child neglect at the parental level. This study is therefore motivated by the lack of substantial literature that considers child

neglect as another form of child maltreatment that receives recognition from all relevant bodies to combat this social phenomenon.

Several studies have placed more concentration on the increasing number of reported cases of child neglect made to the child protection services. Also, child neglect is linked with several negative outcomes that continue throughout the lifespan of an individual (Watson, 2005). However, up to this date, no study concentrates on the factors contributing to child neglect, specifically among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho. As a result, by exploring the factors contributing to child neglect, the study will contribute in helping social workers and the related stakeholders to establish relevant preventative measures and assistance programs that may successfully address the severe ongoing prevalence of child neglect.

It is crucial to examine these factors in an effort to influence the government and welfare agencies to devise laws and policies because without an understanding of these contributing factors the government and policymakers may misunderstand and distort the issues they have to address. The importance of this study is that it may provide knowledge and awareness to parents, specifically mothers, on the implications of neglect on infants, young children and adolescents. The outcomes of this study will also contribute to the needed baseline data to people involved in educating communities and children in Lesotho about child neglect. Finally, it is hoped that the study will be the beginning of an ongoing body of research into the problem of examining causes of child neglect.

1.6 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho. This study also seeks to specifically understand the social, psychological and economic factors contributing to child neglect in detail as well as to establish the possible mitigating measures in response to the phenomenon of child neglect.

1.7 Definition of key terms

This section includes definitions of key terms used within the study. These key terms are: child, child maltreatment, child neglect, young mother, psychological factors, social factors, economic factors and mitigating factors.

1.7.1 Child

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011 (CPWA); United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989). According to Hornby (2006), a child means a young individual who is not yet an adult. In this study, a child is a young individual under the age of 18, who is neglected by their mother.

1.7.2 Child maltreatment

The European Report on the prevention of child maltreatment (2002), defines child maltreatment as the physical, sexual, mental abuse and/or neglect of a child under the age of 18. According to World Health Organisation (WHO, 2018), child maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or other

exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's well-being in the context of a relationship of responsibility and trust. The study has adopted the definition as stipulated by World Health Organization.

1.7.3 Child neglect

This is defined as the failure to meet the basic needs of children (Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011, (CPWA)). National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2012) refers to child neglect as the lack of adequate attention, responsiveness and protection appropriate to the child's age and needs. Horner (2012) describes child neglect as the instance where parents withhold the basic needs of a child by leaving them unattended, struggling for survival where their needs are not met. In this study, child neglect refers to a situation where the mother has failed to take responsibility of the child's needs. This is a situation where a mother has chosen not to take responsibility to provide for the emotional, social, psychological, medical, educational and supervisory needs of the child.

1.7.4 Young mother

This is a female parent of the child (Aslan, 2016). Mothers perform the role of a disciplinarian and a protector (Botros, 2019). Thus, depending on the context, women may be taken into consideration through a distinctive feature of having given birth between the ages of 18 and 28. In this study, young mothers refer to young mothers who fail to exercise their roles in providing for the child's basic needs such as the physical, emotional, social and psychological needs.

1.7.5 Psychological factors

Clarke (2015) states that these are factors which entail individual–level processes and meanings that affect mental state. However, in this study, these factors mean the poor mental and emotional health, attachment and social difficulties for a mother to feel attached to her child in order to provide adequate care.

1.7.6 Social factors

These are factors that represent a significant set of influences on human behavior. Mutie (2015) defines social factors as the general factors at the level of human society concerned with social structure and social processes that impinge on the individual. In this study, these factors mean things that influence the lifestyle of a mother to fail to provide care for her child.

1.7.7 Economic factors

These are the underlying market and economic data considered when calculating an investment. Nyarkor (2014) defines economic factors as things that affect the economy and include interest rates, tax rates, law, policies, wages and governmental activities. However, in this study, economic factors are understood to mean the absence of funds to sustain the mother in order for her to provide for her children.

1.7.8 Mitigation measures

To mitigate something is to lessen its harmful impacts. According to Webster (2020), the term refers to making something less severe. The study has therefore adopted this

definition from Webster. For this study, mitigation measures are regarded as means participants use or depend on to adjust and cope with their everyday lives and challenges.

1.8 Limitations of the study

Due to the nature of this study, there are limitations to be discussed. This study represented a limited sample of nine incarcerated young mothers and four social workers found within the Lesotho Correctional Service premises. As such, the findings may not be generalized to the entire population. Additionally, the fact that the researcher only made use of incarcerated young mothers and social workers who serve them, limited the research results. Finally, the study was conducted in a relatively short period of time, therefore social workers from other institutions could not be interviewed.

1.9 Overview of chapters

The research report is organized into five chapters, and these include the following:

Chapter One: General overview of the study

Chapter one presents the general overview of the research study. It describes the introduction, the background of the research, statement of the problem, objectives of the research study, research questions and the importance of the research study. The chapter also presents the purpose of the study, definition of key terms as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature review

The chapter outlines the theoretical framework that informed this research study and highlights on the criticism of the theory. A detailed overview of child neglect is provided, followed by factors contributing to child neglect and mitigation measures in response to child neglect collected from previous research studies as informed by the research objectives.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted by the study, clearly highlighting the philosophical underpinnings, research approach, research design, study site and population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection, and methods of data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and the indication of how trustworthiness of the findings was ensured.

Chapter Four: Presentation of findings and discussions

The chapter presents the analysis of the collected data. Tables reflecting the biographic characteristics of participants are outlined and presentation of empirical findings and discussions as guided by the objectives of the study and the adopted theoretical framework are found in this chapter.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

The chapter provides a summary of findings and conclusions in relation to the findings and recommendations to a variety of stakeholders regarding factors contributing to child

neglect among incarcerated young mothers in the Female Correctional Institution in Maseru, Lesotho.

1.10 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented the general overview of the study. It outlined the introduction, the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study. This chapter also presented the purpose of the study, definition of key terms, limitations of the study and an overview of chapters in the study. The next chapter provides a detailed account of the theoretical perspectives on factors contributing to child neglect among incarcerated young mothers and previous research based on the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the theoretical framework used to inform and guide the research topic under study. The theoretical framework presented in this dissertation provides a conceptual understanding for this study. Criticism of the theory is outlined, followed by an overview of child neglect. This chapter concludes with the literature related to the study objectives accumulated from a review of preceding studies' findings that relate to the research topic under study, followed by gaps in the literature.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This section describes the theory that guided the study. It outlines the empirical support of the theory, application of the theory to the study, principles of the theory and criticism of the theory. Creswell and Creswell (2018) outlined a theory as a very significant aspect of a research study, as it is needed to explain a research question. In this regard, the study was guided by the Problem Behavior Theory (PBT) to help describe factors contributing to child neglect among incarcerated young mothers in Maseru, Lesotho.

2.1.1 Problem Behavior Theory (PBT)

Problem behavior theory is a multivariate psychosocial theory derived initially from the basic concepts of value and expectation in Rotter's (1954, 1982) social learning theory and from Merton's (1957) concept of anomie. According to Steinberg (2011) problem

behavior is behavior that is socially defined as a problem or as a source of concern by the social or legal norms of conventional society and its institutions of authority.

The earliest formulation of what later came to be known as problem behavior theory was developed in the early 1960s to be used as a guide for a comprehensive study of alcohol abuse and other problem behaviors in a small, tri-ethnic community in southwestern Colorado (Jessor *et al.* 1968). Post its initial application in the Tri-Ethnic Research Project, the framework was revised in the late 1960s for a longitudinal study of the socialization of problem behavior among secondary school students and college students (Jessor and Jessor, 1977), and it is this version of the theory that is most widely known and cited.

Thirty years later, PBT was revised and expanded in the course of a series of studies by Richard Jessor and his colleagues. It is adapted to encompass the developmental stages of young adults (Jessor *et al.* 1991). In particular, it has been extended to clarify the important social contexts of young adults' lives, family, work, and friends and to measure important characteristics of these contexts, such as the stresses and satisfaction they are create.

Conversely, PBT attempts to describe both risk behaviors and protective behaviors to explain youngsters' level of proneness for problem behaviors. Such behaviors include drug and alcohol abuse, delinquency and reckless driving. The theory further asserts that involvement in one of the problems increases the likelihood of involvement in another problem behavior, for example, use and abuse of drugs and alcohol may lead to involvement in risky sexual behavior thus resulting in early child bearing. The theory further stipulates that young people engage in problem behaviors as a way of trying to "fit in" or gain acceptance and acknowledgement from peers.

Again, PBT posits that behavior comes as a result of dynamic and continuous interactions between the person and the environment. Furthermore, it asserts that there are factors, both internal and external that influence problem behavior within young adults. Finally, the theory is composed of four systems as articulated by Sher (2016), which are in line with the objectives of this study together with the research questions, and these are; the personality; the behavior, and the perceived environment and the control variable.

2.1.1.1 Application of Theory to the Study

The basic concept of the Problem Behavior Theory is the relationships maintained within and between the four major systems of psychosocial principles: the Personality principle; the Perceived-Environment principle; the Behavior principle and the Control principle. As causal principles, these are assumed to have the most direct impact on the occurrence of a particular behavior and are closest to it. In addition, the variables within each principle represent either incentives or protective factors, which in combination, generate a dynamic state called susceptibility, which is a theoretical result that indicates the potential for behavioral problems. The application of this theory to the study is relevant as it helps unpack the causes of problem behaviors in young mothers, specifically, child neglect.

2.1.1.2 Principles of the theory

This theory describes four principles influencing problem behavior. These principles are as follows, the behavior, personality, perceived environment and the control principle.

i. The behavior

This is built on the notion that patterned and interrelated set of behavioral and cognitive factors reflect observational and developmental experiences comprised of influential

personality traits. Youths who are exposed to negative experiences are prone to lower value on getting educated, increased value on living alone, increased alienation, lack of self-esteem and lower religiosity. According to Bromfield *et al.* (2010), unmanaged parent mental health problems can impact on a wide range of parenting behaviors, that is, it was anticipated that mental illness would be associated with the risk of child neglect. The behavior principle therefore adopts the first objective of the study.

ii. The personality

This composes of emotions within an individual that contribute to problem behavior. Exposure to traumatic experiences like intimate partner violence, drug and alcohol abuse and being cared for by a parent who is mentally retarded during childhood, can lead to disruptions in the emotion and cognitive functions of the individual to develop disorders like depression, anxiety, personality disorders and behavioral problems such as drug overuse, agitation and carelessness. Again, child neglect is influenced by the unresolved internal issues within individuals such as unmet emotional needs of a child. For example, as a result of experiencing parental drug misuse, an individual may develop feelings of hopelessness which can lead to child neglect and poor response to both emotional and psychological needs of both the mother and the child. This principle aligns itself with the second objective of the study.

iii. The perceived-environment

This includes environmental factors that influence problem behavior. Young adults raised by parents with low parental disapproval of problem behavior, low parental controls and support as well as young adults who are surrounded by friends who influence problem

behavior, low peer control and low compatibility between parent and peer expectations are likely to trigger youngsters to engage in neglectful tendencies as parents.

Other influential behaviors include exposure to environmental toxins such as heavy drinking and drug abuse among members of the family and within peer groups, low educational achievement, stressful life events, delinquency and low socio-economic status (low income, unstable employment and unemployment). According to Akerhurst (2015), parents' insensitivity to their children's physical and emotional needs, unrealistic expectations of their child, and preoccupation with their own needs may be possible factors for neglect and may be manifestations of poor emotional well-being. This study will come into precise adjustment by relating this principle to objective three of the study.

iv. The control principle

The role of control principle is to decrease the likelihood of participating in problem behavior. This principle provides a model for positive, pro-social behavior, personal and social controls against problem behaviors as well as support to sustain pro-social commitment. When individuals are in possession of stable, reliable models, they can defeat risk behaviors. This principle is in line with the fourth objective of the study.

2.1.1.3 Empirical support for Problem Behavior Theory

Problem behavior theory has been employed in several studies, both cross-sectional and longitudinal and remarkable proof has been established in support of the generality and robustness of the theoretical framework. For example, researchers in the United States and around the world have utilized the concepts derived from the theory and they have been applied to the examination of a wide variety of behaviors in childhood, teenagers

and young adults involving substance abuse, early sexual intercourse, drink-driving and the use of illegal drugs (Donovan, 1996). Moreover, the personality and perceived environment have demonstrated evidence of both cross-sectional and developmental difference, which when taken together, ranged between 30% and 50% of the difference in behaviors such as illegal drugs or delinquency among adolescents (Donovan, 1996).

In Ariel University, a study conducted by Korn *et al.* (2014) used a structured questionnaire which was administered to undergraduate students. The study sampled 1,360 students, both males and females aged 25 years. The study revealed that PBT was replicated in this sample. Religiosity and high-academic attainments were found to be strong and significant protective factors that reduce risk behaviors (Donovan and Jessor, 1985). Again, it was found that among young and religious students, the personal vulnerability has almost no effect on engagement in risk behaviors (Donovan and Jessor, 1985). It was concluded that PBT finds empirical support in this young adult undergraduate Israeli sample (Donovan and Jessor, 1985).

Table 2.1: Factors contributing to child neglect as described by Problem Behavior

Theory

<p>Behavior principle: Consists of patterned set of behavioral factors that reflect developmental experiences composed of influential personality traits.</p>	<p>Objective one: To investigate the social factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho.</p>	<p>Research question one: What are the social factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho?</p>
<p>Personality principle: This composes of emotions within an individual that contribute to problem behavior.</p>	<p>Objective two: To identify the psychological factors heightening child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho.</p>	<p>Research question two: What are the psychological factors heightening child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho?</p>

<p>Perceived-environment principle:</p> <p>This includes environmental factors that influence problem behavior.</p>	<p>Objective three:</p> <p>To examine the economic factors increasing child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho.</p>	<p>Research question three:</p> <p>Which economic factors increase child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru Lesotho?</p>
<p>Control principle:</p> <p>To decrease the likelihood of participating in problem behavior.</p>	<p>Objective four:</p> <p>To establish mitigation measures against child neglect.</p>	<p>Research question four:</p> <p>What are the mitigations measures against child neglect?</p>

(Source: Author)

2.1.1.4 Criticism of the theory

Theoretical frameworks help to explain a phenomenon of interest. However, theories have particular delimitations, and the Problem Behavior Theory is no exception. The theory neglects the importance of accountability in one's actions. For example, by placing more emphasis on environment, the theory assumes one's behavior and tendencies are determined by peers and in some cases, parents, not by how an individual handles or processes information. Deutsch *et al.* (2014) argues that the theory further fails to account for all behavior, more specifically in the case when there is no outside influence, that is to say, the theory fails to highlight the psychological related factors as contributing aspects in engagement in problem behaviors.

The development of PBT theory was originally conducted in a community consisting of white people with middle-class backgrounds (Jessor, 2001). As such, it is challenging to generalize the theory to other cultures. Similarly, most studies examining PBT have only accounted for one of the three systems, or looked at the three systems individually, therefore, this suggests that it is difficult to predict the future behavior if all three systems are not examined as a whole. However, in order to address the discussed limitations of the theory, the researcher intends to adopt the Social Cognitive Theory as coined by

Albert Bandura in the 1980s. The theory emphasizes that children observe, think about what they have seen, then they will either imitate that behavior or decide otherwise. Furthermore, the theory is divided into five principles, however, one of them will be used in this study, and it states the psychological constructs that individuals develop to perceive the world molds their personality. In simple terms, children's psychological constructs about their parents' caregiving approaches mold their personalities and how they will parent their own children as adults.

2.2. Empirical literature

This section presents the review of pertinent literature regarding child neglect.

2.2.1 An overview of child neglect

This portion presents a detailed description of child neglect. First, the conceptual definition of child neglect is outlined, followed by its subtypes, the dynamics and finally, the indicators of child neglect.

2.2.1.1 Conceptual definition of child neglect

The occurrence of child neglect is one of the overlooked yet widespread phenomena around the world. This is attested by Levey *et al.* (2017) who affirm that the neglect of a child is a problem that is correlated with developmental difficulties experienced by children globally. According to the Children, Youth and Family's Bureau (2016) neglect is described as a form of maltreatment that refers to the inability of the mother or father or predominant caregiver to provide the imperative and age-appropriate care even though there are resources available to exercise ample care for the child. This study adopts the

definition of a child in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Child's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011 that a child is one below 18 years of age.

2.2.1.2 Subtypes of child neglect

While child neglect may present challenges in defining or substantiating as compared to other types of child maltreatment, there is a general agreement on the five widely acknowledged subtypes of neglect namely; physical neglect, medical neglect, supervisory neglect, educational neglect and emotional neglect (Allnock, 2016; Blumenthal, 2015; Dubowitz, 2013; English, Thompson, Graham and Briggs, 2005; Hibbard, Barlow and MacMillan, 2012; McSherry, 2007; Naughton, Maguire, Mann, Lumb, Tempest and Gracia, 2013; Scott, 2014). Miller-Perrin and Perrin (2013), Crosson-Tower (2002) and Munro (2008) agree with the above authors that neglect has several subtypes. Again, Miller-Perrin and Perrin (2013) add that there is a newly discovered subtype of neglect, prenatal neglect. This means the neglect of the unborn baby while still inside the mother's womb.

i. Physical neglect

This is defined as the failure to meet the basic needs of a child, as the child is not supplied with the needed food for extended periods of time, thus leading to hunger, malnutrition, failure to thrive; enough supply of clothes or provision of housing (Beckett, 2007; Crosson-Tower, 2002; Giardino, Christian and Giardino, 1997; Kay, 2003 and Miller-Perrin and Perrin, 2013). According to the World report on violence and health (2012), in Canada, a population-based study of child neglect instances reported to child welfare services observed that 19% concerned physical neglect.

ii. Medical neglect

Drawing from the dominant definition of medical neglect originating from the United Kingdom and the United States, but also used in the developing countries of the Sub-Saharan region, medical neglect is identified as the delay or failure of a parent or primary caregiver to seek necessary healthcare recommendations for a child (Allnock, 2016; Blumenthal, 2015; Dubowitz, 2013; English et al. 2005; Hibbard *et al*, 2012; McSherry, 2007; Naughton *et al*, 2013 and Scott, 2014).

Children's infections are more frequent and severe among Sub-Saharan populations and several health conditions are life-threatening. For instance, the evidence from National Demographic and Health Survey (2018) suggests that the majority of parents fail to provide treatment which intensifies the child's illness or delay to seek medical advice irrespective of potentially, life-threatening impacts for their child.

In Kenya, 40% of parents fail to seek medical assistance for their children with half of them attributing this occurrence to lack of quality health provision, geographic inaccessibility and medical costs (Sethi, Bellis, Hughes, Gilbert, Mitis and Galea, 2013). Similar results are reported for Nigeria as 55% and Uganda as 47% (Tinuade, et al. 2010; Onwujekwe *et al.*, 2010; Rutebemberwa, *et al.*, 2009; Ettarh, *et al.*, 2011). Likewise, in Malawi, estimates of cases of medical neglect reported ranged from 35%-49% (United Nations, 2010).

iii. Supervisory neglect

This is defined as the parent or primary caregiver's unwillingness or inability to provide sufficient supervision and control of the infant or young child. In Canada, a study

conducted, revealed that supervisory neglect accounts for 48% as a parent's failure to provide adequate supervision of the child (Sethi *et al.* 2013). UNDP Kenya (2016) concluded that a large number of families leave their children unsupervised as a result of the inability to afford daycare facilities.

iv. Educational neglect

This is defined as the failure of a parent or primary caregiver to ensure that the child has access to quality education (Miller-Perrin and Perrin, 2013). In a study conducted by Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano (2012), 21.9% of children reported that they had been educationally neglected by their parents. In Canada, a population-based study of cases reported to child welfare services found that, among the substantiated cases of neglect, 21% involved educational neglect (Pears and Capaldi, 2001). In Kenya, educational neglect was reported as the most commonly prevalent subtype of child neglect when adults were questioned on the matter (Nairobi, African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child abuse and Neglect, 2000).

i. Emotional neglect

Emotional neglect is defined as the inattentiveness to a child's emotional and development needs (2012). In European countries, a small number of studies have been conducted on child neglect, however, there were no statistical records provided, but a combined analysis of studies globally conducted demonstrate that prevalence is high with 18.4% for emotional neglect. Over and above to these extensively acknowledged domains of neglect, there is ongoing definitional progress in the area of neglect. For instance, more subtypes of neglect that have been highlighted by some scholars include

environmental neglect, drug-affected infants and drug exposed children, neglected correlated with religious and cultural tendencies and negligence to supply sufficient healthy food resulting in child obesity (Allnock, 2016; Dubowitz, 2013). However, thus far, the above-mentioned domains are regarded as the main neglectful practices commonly accepted and integrated into literature, law and child protection services.

From the above reviewed literature, it was discovered by the researcher that there exists scarcity of statistical records relating to the sub-types of child neglect in Sub-Saharan region, specifically in Lesotho. There are no known statistical records of child neglect and its sub-types, hence there is no literature reported on the subtypes of child neglect in the context of Lesotho.

2.2.1.3 Indicators of child neglect

What constitutes child neglect and its most common occurrences may differ, hence the reason professionals may find neglect both challenging to identify and hard to respond to (DeBruin, 2015). For this reason, Munro (2008) attests that the identification of child neglect needs a profound assessment of childcare for a lengthened period of time. In research conducted by Ferguson (2011), the conditions in a household were a remarkable indicator of the neglect of children and therefore important in the assessment process.

The above statement in the researcher's point of view marks a generalization of the limited understanding and definition of the compound nature of neglect. In the past, child neglect has been correlated with being poor as well as a lack of general personal and social resources. Nevertheless, it is evident from the literature that neglect is a

multifaceted social problem that cannot be attributed to just one factor. One also has to understand the concepts of omission and commission when attempting to describe and understand the indicators of child neglect (Miller-Perrin and Perrin, 2013).

The identification of neglect may pose difficulties, as 90% of children who are neglected in the United States of America are below the age of twelve, and this makes the ability of a child to testify on cases of neglect challenging (Lampinen and Sexton-Radek, 2010). Perhaps the one individual who could elaborate on the occurrence of neglect is the perpetrator and this testimony in the views of the above mentioned authors would not be reliable. According to Munro (2008), family history as well as past behavioral patterns should be assessed when conducting an assessment of child neglect in a family, as future behavior is best predicted by past behavior. Kay (2003) argues that one of the best indicators of child neglect is the height and weight of a child using a chart.

Professionals can utilize several indicators to determine child neglect. Kay (2003) presented the following indicators that can enable the practitioners to identify child neglect: a child being underweight, poor physical development and a short stature for the age of the child, the child appearing thin and showcasing an unhealthy look, poor hygiene such as smelly clothes, unwashed body and hair or persistent nappy rash. The child may present with a general lack of interest or may be difficult to stimulate; the child's illnesses or injuries will not have been attended to; the child may be frequently absent from school; the child may be generally unresponsive towards adults and therefore may be consistently seeking attention from adults; and there may be some improvements when the child is placed in a caring environment (DeBruin, 2015).

In the studies conducted by Crosson-Tower (2002) and Miller-Perrin and Perrin (2013), children who were neglected had the following indicators: they had dull eyes; tended to look away and could not respond to a friendly touch; and had infections that were not treated. They also had slight bruises with minor dislocations, and they were dehydrated almost to the point of death and their language was inappropriate. DeBruin (2012) stated that it is of utmost importance that practitioners working with child neglect use these guidelines to assess neglect as children themselves may be too young to be reliable sources of assessment.

2.2.1.4 Dynamics of child neglect

Age may account for increased child neglect considering its potential in early childhood. Child neglect involves the whole family and most of the time, it is children from birth to a year who are usually neglected (Crosson-Tower 2002). In a study conducted by Matthews, Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin and Lombard (2012), babies between the ages of 0-4 years are the most vulnerable to being neglected. The author elaborates further that young girls are more likely to die as a result of neglect at this stage as compared to boys. McCoy and Keen (2009) assert that the age and developmental level of the child during neglect are the predictors of the outcomes of neglect on the child.

It may be concluded that even though child neglect is harmful to children of all ages, the severity of neglect is felt more harshly by young children as compared to older children. For instance, an infant who skips a day or more of their daily meals is prone to several illnesses, while an adolescent who can take care of themselves may not depend much on food or their parents. From the above example, it is noticeably clear that the child is

dependent to their parents or primary caregiver which then increases the occurrence to be even more detrimental. Therefore, McCoy and Keen (2009) and Matthews (2012) present an explanation of the effects of neglect on the infant, child and adolescent:

In infancy, vulnerability to physical neglect ranges between the ages of 0 and 4 years, with girls more at risk than boys. Extreme forms of neglect involve nonorganic failure to thrive, mental retardation and failure in school, continued growth problems and psychomotor delays. Finally, emotionally deprived infants may withdraw and lose weight. In children, neglect is characterized by language delays, psychological problems and impaired social involvement. In adolescents, neglect comprises of running away from home as a result of needs that are unmet, social withdrawal, experiences of lack of support from peers, academic challenges, juvenile delinquency, mental disorders and an increased rate of suicide attempts.

From the review of literature, it can be concluded that a child of any age may be vulnerable to the occurrence of neglect. Additionally, the child who is dependent on their caretaker is significantly affected by neglectful behaviors. Essentially, literature demonstrates that neglect impairs the human spirit and also delays the social and psychological development of the child (DeBruin, 2015).

2.2.2 Social factors contributing to child neglect

Research studies on factors contributing to child neglect in European countries found that factors such as immigrant families, single parent families, step-families, poverty and culture are some of the predictors of child neglect. World-wide approximations report that the prevalence of these factors ranges from 6-67% for single parent families, 20-58% for

young age at maternal birth and 20-63% for low educational attainment, signifying that millions of children in the European Region are exposed to child maltreatment.

There are a number of social factors contributing to child neglect and among these are: history of childhood neglect, single parenthood, and domestic violence, early child-bearing and negative parent-child relationship.

2.2.2.1 History of childhood neglect (intergenerational transmission)

Parents' experience of neglect as children and poor relationship with their own parents are identified as potential predictors for child neglect in later parenthood life. Over the past several years, the notion that neglected children become neglectful parents has received notable recognition. Also, it has been one of the most pervasive and popular themes in the literature (Cicchetti and Aber, 2011; Kaufman and Zigler, 2017; Kempe and Kempe, 2018; Steele *et al.* 2019).

Additionally, this notion of intergenerational transmission was the first developmental hypothesis in the area of neglect (Garbarino and Gilliam, 2010). However, according to these reviewers (Garbarino and Gilliam, 2010), the alleged linkage had not really passed scientific collection. Since that period, several studies have found proof to support a history of child neglect as a predictor for child neglect in later parenthood (Garbarino and Gilliam, 2010). Two clinicians at the forefront of child maltreatment research, specifically neglect, noted that parents themselves were nearly always neglected as children (Fontana, 2012) and that there is a visible line in the recurrence of parental neglect from childhood into adulthood years (Steele, 2012).

Previously cited studies demonstrate that upon becoming a parent, children who were neglected in their childhood, have the potential of putting their own children at an increased risk of being neglected (Thornberry *et al.* 2012). Furthermore, they are more likely to become parents of children with drastic behavior difficulties (Collishaw, 2007). Thus, as a result of complex interplay of negative outcomes of child neglect, it is vital to provide interventions appropriately with families. One such field of intervention is determining the role of parent-child relationships to help address the risk of child neglect.

The rate of intergenerational transmission is relatively high and that most neglectful parents were neglected as children (Liao, 2011). For instance, Steele and Pollack (2018), in a study evaluating clinical data, established that all 60 neglectful parents were previously neglected during their childhood. Moreover, longitudinal studies suggest a difference between 7% (Gil, 2011) and 70% (Egeland and Jacobvitz, 2014) in the intergenerational transmissions of child neglect. Lastly, Kauffman and Zigler's (2017) fragmentary evaluation of the research estimated a 30% rate of intergenerational transmission.

It is evident from the large body of research that the pattern of child neglect is continuous from previously neglected parents to one day become the perpetrators of upcoming child neglect. The literature is therefore relevant to the ongoing study as childhood neglect is one of the factors that the study aims to explore in the context of Maseru, Lesotho.

Limitations of longitudinal studies are highlighted. Inherent limitations of the longitudinal studies include the incapacity of determining the proportions of adults who were previously neglected in their childhood, who have successfully provided enough caretaking for their children. Additionally, the studies do not stipulate the extent to which

previous and current concepts of neglect are in consensus. It is also challenging to evaluate whether neglectful parents may present misleading reports of their childhood. All these factors may contribute to an exaggeration of the rate of intergenerational transmission.

Prior research has shown that child neglect has the capacity to disrupt a child's physical brain development as well as functioning (Hart and Rubia, 2012). A closer look at these data revealed that, unfortunately, several problems that take place during childhood also continue throughout adulthood and persist to negatively affect functioning across several aspects. For example, in correspondence to exposure to negative cognitive outcomes, like hopelessness, constant worrying and heightened rates of suicide, adults who were exposed to child neglect also experience increased rates of diabetes, smoking, and alcoholism (Widom *et al.* 2012).

From this review of literature, it can be concluded that the manner in which parents were raised can possibly have an effect on the way they raise their own children. Parents who did not have their own basic, emotional, psychological and physical needs met as infants or younger children, may not know how to attend to the same needs of their own children (Depanfilis 2006). In addition, the literature is relevant to the study as it provided a basis to establish a gap in the literature with respect to Lesotho on this topic. The researcher discovered that no studies relating to child neglect have been conducted in the context of Lesotho, hence no literature was provided.

2.2.2.2 Single parenthood

Being a single parent serves as a predictor for increased child neglect. One study found that being in a single-parent household increased the risk of child neglect by 87% (Cornell-Carrick, 2009). Several factors may be responsible for this. In a study conducted by Depanfilis (2006), the findings revealed that there is lack of time to carry out the tasks in the home, such as monitoring and spending enough time with children and earning adequate salary when there is only one parent. Depanfilis (2006) further stipulates that single parents often have to work away from home which means they are not always available to provide adequate caregiving to their offspring. It is stated also that single parents live in poverty stricken environments than two parent households.

Sethi *et al.* (2013) supported the idea that single parenthood can involve a variety of stressors that increase risks of neglect, like low financial resources, social isolation and a lack of emotional and caregiving support. Non biological parental figures such as mother's intimate partners can also contribute to occurrence of child neglect. In a longitudinal study, it was found that single motherhood more than doubled the risk of having a child placed on the child protection register for neglect (Graham *et al.* 2010). However, analysis of data from 28 developing and transitional countries including several from European regions found consistent relationship between single-parent households and neglectful behaviors (Sethi *et al.* 2013). Likewise, in some countries such as Cameroon and Uganda, neglectful behavioral patterns were more common in single-parent households, whereas in others such as Georgia and Canada it was less common (Jones, Bellis, Wood, Hughes McCoy and Eckley, 2012). The discussed literature stimulates thoughts around how to reveal more factors influencing child neglect among

young mothers in Maseru, Lesotho. It is also relevant as it shows the severance of the discussed factors and how much they warrant attention from professionals in order to provide timely intervention. Again, the literature will help guide the researcher in addressing the question of what are the social factors contributing to child neglect among incarcerated young mothers.

2.2.2.3 Domestic violence

Every year, an estimation of 4.8 million acts of physical or sexual aggression are perpetrated against women, whereas 2.9 million physically aggressive acts are perpetrated against men in United States (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2018). What is more disturbing about these acts is the fact that they occur in the presence of young children in the homes. Research has proven that between 3 and 17.8 million children experience the view of domestic violence in the household in African countries (Carlson, 2014).

United Nations Declaration on the elimination of violence against women (1993) describes domestic violence as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm to women. Children who live in a home characterized by domestic violence are at an increased of exposure to neglect. Shepherd and Rashick (2010) conducted a study that revealed that 35 percent of neglect cases had occurred in the home.

Furthermore, parents who are victims of domestic violence may be abused to the extent of being incapable to keep their perpetrators from inflicting maltreatment tendencies to the children (Tolan, 2012). This form of neglect is frequently known as failure to protect the child from harm. In some cases, abused parents are fearful to defend children in their

care as doing so may put the abused parent or children's lives in danger or provoke more abuse (Tolan, 2012). Recent studies indicate that in 30-60 percent of homes with notifiable cases of domestic violence or child neglect, it is possible that both types of abuse exist (Bragg, 2016).

The key message from the above stipulated literature reveals that exposure to domestic violence may be particularly traumatic and psychologically abusive to the child as a result of feeling helpless and confused. The literature is therefore relevant to the study as it reveals that child neglect is sometimes not intentional but is facilitated by factors imposed by other parents who incapacitate mothers to provide adequate care for their children. It is also hypothesized by the researcher that, battered women may even run away as a means to protect themselves, while leaving children behind in the hands of the perpetrator. The literature is going to be useful in helping to reveal more about factors that contribute to child neglect among incarcerated young mothers in the case of Female Correctional Institution, Maseru.

2.2.2.4 Early childbearing

Early childbearing has been theorized to influence the high risk of child neglect through several possible pathways. For instance, young mothers are often single, poor, and poorly educated, making young parenthood associated with several other known risk factors for neglect (Lee and George, 2019). Again, literature suggests that young mothers possess less knowledge of children and their developmental needs compared to older mothers (Ofsosky *et al.* 2013). For women who become mothers in their teens, many are still

attending to the developmental tasks of adolescence, which may contribute to challenges in taking on the complex role and tasks associated with motherhood (Noria, 2015).

Compared with older mothers, for instance, younger mothers are more likely to have children referred to child protective services for neglect or suggestive of child neglect (Putnam-Hornstein and Needell, 2011; Parrish and Roberts 2011). In addition, relative youth of a mother at childbirth was a notable predictor for child neglect (Brown *et al.* 2018). Young mothers are likely to be short of finances and may have limited budgeting and caregiving skills. They may also have competing priorities on their time such as managing the well-being of their infants, consulting with professional, attending school, working or applying for jobs and may not possess the maturity to make well-informed decisions.

Using data from two waves of the National Institute for Mental Health's Epidemiologic Catchment Area survey, Chaffin *et al.* (2016) separately assessed the relative effect of possible factors for child physical abuse and neglect in a representative community sample. To evaluate factors for their effect on the initiation of abuse and neglect, the analysis concentrated on parents who did not document any abuse or neglect in the first wave of the study but documented either physical abuse or neglect in the second wave. Parental age (mothers younger than 18 at the birth of their first child) was one of only two social demographic factors demonstrated to possess significant impact on the onset of both physical abuse and neglect, with younger mothers demonstrating an increased possibility to commit both (Chaffin *et al.* 2016).

On the one hand, Klerman (2013) asserts that the likelihood of risk of child abuse and neglect for young mothers compared with older mothers may be due in part to socioeconomic factors like income, education, family size, mobility and stress. Using

demographic data on parents with indicated abuse and neglect reports in 2010 and parents with children in out-of-home care in Illinois in 2012, Massat (2015) established that adolescent mothers were not overrepresented among abusing and neglecting mothers or among mothers with children in out-of-home care, although maternal age was associated with a number of negative outcomes for children.

A large array of other variables like the quality of prenatal and postnatal care, the socioeconomic status of the mother, and whether there are other caretakers in addition to the adolescent mother happens to be linked with age (Chaffin, *et al.* 2016). Therefore, low socioeconomic status of the mother is a possible factor for early child bearing as well as for child neglect and abuse (Chaffin *et al.* 2016). Lee (2011) used data from Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study to investigate the association between harsh parenting behaviors by mothers who were age 19 or younger compared with mothers who were 26 or older at the birth of the first child. The findings showed that adolescent motherhood was significantly correlated with harsh parenting behavior, even after controlling for demographic and maternal characteristics (Chaffin *et al.* 2016).

In their 2019 study, Lee and George (2019) studied the relationship between child maltreatment including physical and sexual abuse and neglect, early child bearing and poverty using data collected through Illinois Integrated Database of Children and Family Services along with Illinois birth certificate records. They found that both maternal age and poverty contributed individually to the chances that a child would be maltreated, however, they note that when young maternal age was combined with poverty, the chances of maltreatment increased substantially compared to cases where only one or the other of these risk factors were present (Lee and George, 2019). The interaction

between poverty and young maternal age was also supported by Drake and Pandey (2016). Their study of the community correlates of maltreatment noted in that poor areas, children born to mothers 17 years or younger were 10 times more likely to be the subject of a substantiated neglect investigation compared to children born to mothers 22 years older (Lee and George, 2019).

Today, however, about two-fifths of all births are from young women. This has resulted from a complicated combination of moral and behavioral changes which increased the statistics of young mothers. According to VerBurggen (2017), 40% of children are born out of wed-lock today. The author identified ready access to the contraceptive pill and the shifting societal mores, which made premarital sex less of a taboo, as responsible factors for these increased statistics. Moreover, VerBurggen (2017) indicates that further societal changes made unmarried childbearing so acceptable such that half of the births from non-marital pregnancies today are so common.

The above literature suggests that pregnancy at an early age is still prevalent and is associated with several negative outcomes as stipulated. Again, it is comprehensible that there has not been a strong correlation explored so far among young mothers with an independent factor such as depression and child neglect. Instead, strong generalized associations between depression and child neglect are evident. As such, the gap in the literature is quite noticeable. The current study aims to close this gap in the literature by attempting to identify the contribution of depression to the severance of child neglect.

2.2.2.5 Negative parent-child relationship

Learning to communicate emotionally with a child is challenging, especially if the concept is foreign to the parent, which is often the case with families at risk (Killen, 2011). Studies have shown that women with exposure to negative childhood experiences are confronted with more difficulty in bonding with their infants as compared to women without such a history (Muzik, *et al.* 2013). Moreover, women who were exposed to emotional neglect during their childhoods, whose own basic needs were not fulfilled, may have a hard time fulfilling the needs of their infants and may feel resentment towards them (Strahearn, 2011). Indeed, studies have demonstrated that women with a history of neglect present a reduced activation in reacting to infant facial cues and decreased peripheral oxytocin response to mother-infant contact (Trad, 2011).

A longitudinal study was conducted by Talmon, Meshkati and Kirichek (2019). The aim of the study was to examine a model illuminating the mechanism underlying the association between childhood emotional neglect and women's adjustment during pregnancy, the postpartum period. Talmon *et al.* (2019) recruited 655 pregnant women based in Israel. The findings of the study suggest that childhood emotional neglect may significantly color women's experiences during the transition to motherhood. Further, they show that exposure to childhood emotional neglect is implicated in women's experiences of their bodies, their attachment to their babies and their sense of maternal self-efficacy during the transition to motherhood. The subsequent limitations were stated. Although large, the sample was a convenience sample. Thus, any generalizability of the results should be made cautiously. It was concluded that the findings point to the long-term implications of

childhood emotional neglect for women's adjustment to the transition to motherhood (Talmon *et al.* 2019)

The above literature is quite relevant to the current study as it places the ongoing study within the context of existing literature thus enabling the researcher to identify the possible causes of negative parent-child relationships. Also, the literature is very significant as it shows that negative parent-child relationships not only exist but also bring about threats that negatively affect the development of children raised by a parent with no relationship with their child.

Conversely, limited established parental rights relinquishment strategies develop an opening of bonds between infants and children to their parents and following separation of such bonds (Thabane and Kasiram, 2015). In the case of Lesotho, separation is documented through leaving the infant or adolescent in the care of otherwise incapacitated extended family members, grandparents, neighbors and in some cases, unattended, all of which are common practices in South African context as well (Mturi and Nzimande, 2006). A qualitative study was conducted by Thabane and Kasiram (2015) in Lesotho to describe possible dangers of child abandonment and neglect as well as to consider strategies which may be put in place to prevent abandonment and neglect of children in Lesotho. The study adopted a purposive sampling and selected six professionals and 16 adoptive mothers. Unstructured questionnaires were used to collect data.

The findings of the study revealed that abandonment and neglect could increase chances of maladaptation later in the lives of affected children like aggression and violent behavior including intimate partner violence as well as poor choice of friends and intimate partners

(Thabane and Kasiram, 2015). Further, Thabane and Kasiram, (2015) found that a trend of poor academic performance and poor life decisions was common. Also, it was found that people who come forward to provide care for the children are sometimes not aware of their unique needs. Lastly, it was established that measures for prevention of abandonment in Lesotho are lacking, while strategies for protection of affected children are weak (Thabane and Kasiram, 2015).

One limitation of the study is that the data used to examine the dangers of child abandonment and neglect was obtained from questionnaires filled by professionals. The data collected is prone to self-report bias. Additionally, the study was conducted in Lesotho, but specific areas of data collection were not revealed. The study was conducted for a small fraction of adoptive mothers and professionals and cannot be generalized to the rest of the country.

The study concluded that given the increase in occurrences of abandonment in Lesotho, it is socially costly to deny women the right to abort, when deemed necessary (Thabane and Kasiram, 2015). Thus, recommending that abortion on social grounds be legalized as a matter of urgency, as this would counter the need to abandon children as unwanted babies would not be born (Thabane and Kasiram, 2015). Secondly, follow up of families whose care of children with previous experiences of abandonment and neglect are placed should be made a provision of the law. Again, it was noted by Thabane and Kasiram (2015) that the law should make it a requirement for prospective foster and adoptive parents and children to undergo psychological assessment and for prospective parents to receive parenting training prior to adoption.

Moreover, Thabane and Kasiram (2015) recommended that the effect of legally proven abandonment and maltreatment should be made clear by the law. Finally, age-appropriate children must be mentally prepared for modifications in parenting arrangements before fostering or adoption takes place in order to avoid confusion of children. Again, evidence to that taking place should form part of evidence presented to courts of law in application for parenting rights (Thabane and Kasiram, 2015). According to Thabane and Kasiram (2015), this should be made clear by the law.

From the findings in the literature, it may be inferred that absence of laws that protect children contribute to the translated long-term intellectual effects that can result in poor school performance and school drop-out, mental disorders, social isolation and trouble establishing long-term and fulfilling relationships. Again, the review of the literature insinuates that children who were exposed to neglect in their childhood, may also exercise the same experiences in adulthood, upon becoming parents. As such, this literature review is of relevance to the study as it highlighted the consequences of poor laws and how intervention is crucial to avoid transmission of neglectful behavior. This information may be relevant to the context of Lesotho as there are existent laws that are not put in practice to protect the well-being of children.

2.2.3 Psychological factors heightening child neglect

Psychopathologies such as depression, drug and alcohol abuse have been reported as associates for child neglect. According to Whiteford *et al.* (2013) and Baxter *et al.* (2013) parent psychopathology is a common mental health problem. Globally, an estimation of 10% to 20% of parents are suffering from disabling mental health problems (Kieling *et al.*

2011). About 50% of all adults with mental disorders have their onset in adolescence (Belfer, 2008). The depth of mental disorders among parents is quietly distinct around various parts of the world. According to a study in South India, about 45% of parents had experienced psychological distress (Beattie *et al.* 2019). A study in Indonesia also revealed that about 53.2% of parents had experienced psychological distress (Wydiasari and Yuniardi, 2018). Below are the factors to be discussed in more detail: depression, parental stress and drug and alcohol abuse.

2.2.3.1 Depression

This is defined as the state of emotional suffering characterized by several symptoms such as loss of interest, feelings of sadness, hopelessness and unworthiness. These are usually accompanied by somatic symptoms such as lack of sleep, lack of energy and poor appetite (Bore *et al.* 2016 and Jarman *et al.* 2018).

Young mothers are more likely to have a diagnosis of depression than any other mental health disorder (Akerhurst, 2015; Schumacher, Slep and Heyman 2001; and Stith, Liu, Davies, Boykin, Alder, Harris and Dee, 2009). Studies have shown a correlation between child neglect and severe post-partum depression. For instance, mothers suffering from post-partum depression are less likely to be responsive and sensitive toward their offspring and may be withdrawn (Grayson, 2011).

A substantiated body of research has investigated mechanisms through which parental depression translates into negative child outcomes (Akerhurst, 2015; Schumacher *et al.* 2001 and Stith *et al.* 2009). For instance, harsh parenting and impaired parenting are some of the identified factors of parental depression. In harsh parenting, studies have

consistently shown that depressed mothers of infants and young children were more likely to express negative emotions and to be physically and verbally aggressive with their children (Lyons-Ruth and Bronfanman, 2012).

Keller and Davis (2016) conducted a study focused on mothers and found that, particularly, depressed mothers were more likely to be intrusive, to engage in arguments and to be inconsistent in discipline. Similarly, harsh parenting styles have been identified with older youths. Depressed mothers were more likely to demonstrate irritability, to criticize and to be hostile or angry when talking to school children and adolescents (Conger and Conger, 2013; Jaser *et al.* 2018). In the area of impaired parenting, mothers who were depressed were less likely to engage in positive interactions with their infants, but more likely to exhibit withdrawal and less likely to respond to their children's emotional needs (Goodman and Brumley, 2020).

Turning to parents of school-aged children and adolescents, parental depression was related to lower levels of parental warmth, involvement and monitoring for both mothers and fathers, which related to higher levels of children internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Du Roscher and Cummings, 2017; Elgar, 2017; and McKee *et al.* 2018). Harsh parenting styles lead to children performing poorly academically, engaging in juvenile delinquency and enhancing the likelihood to participate in early sexual behaviors. Parental depression has been associated with emotional and behavioral problems for children and adolescents (Akerhurst, 2015; Schumacher, 2001; and Stith *et al.*, 2009). The evidence for this correlation, most of which is mothers, has consistently reported increased rates of emotional and behavioral problems in children and adolescents, such as depression, anxiety and disruptive behavior disorders (Angelo and Costello, 2011).

Akerhurst (2015), Schumacher (2001) and Stith *et al.* (2009) conducted a qualitative study in England to examine the impact of parental depression on child and adolescents emotional and behavioral problems. The findings demonstrated that parental depression (88.7% among mothers) predicted higher levels of emotional and behavioral problems in children, with 40% of children and adolescents in the clinical range for internalizing challenges and 60% in the clinical range for externalizing challenges (Akerhurst, 2015; Schumacher, 2001 and Stith *et al.* 2009). Furthermore, the study found that mothers with depression demonstrated decreased positivity and congeniality as compared to mothers without depression.

Akerhurst (2015), Schumacher (2001) and Stith *et al.* (2009) noted one limitation of the study, stating that it is necessary to examine depression and parental correlation with more specifically defined measures. It was concluded that it is essential to provide further understanding of how parental depression is linked with risk for depression among children. In a similar study using case review, having a depressed parent was correlated with a greater possibility of having an attention-deficit disorder diagnosis, being on psychotropic medication and having another psychological concern noted in the child's life (Lescheid *et al.* 2015). The potential repercussions of parental depression are an increase in adverse health outcomes such as tobacco and solvent misuse, child maltreatment, and more likely to repeatedly use health care facilities.

It is quite noticeable from the reviewed literature that children from families of parents with mental disorders are vulnerable to possible risks of child neglect. These findings therefore guided the researcher to determine whether mothers in Maseru, Lesotho are confronted by the same challenges or not.

In Lesotho, a study was conducted by Hollfield *et al.* (2015) to determine the prevalence of major depression among the Basotho people, in a medium sized village (unnamed). The study interviewed 356 subjects and the findings of the study indicated that the prevalence of depression was higher in Lesotho compared to the USA. These findings further disputed Laubsher's (2009) and Carothers' (2011) suggestion that depression is uncommon in African populations, and supported findings of Leighton (2013) and Mayer (2013) who showed that the prevalence of depressive symptoms in Nigeria and Uganda were higher than in Canada and London respectively. The study was conducted in a very small area of Lesotho, with a very small sample size. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other parts of the country, and again, the age and gender of subjects were not revealed in the study.

Existing research studies have examined this factor and its presence among the nation, however, there is insufficient literature available attempting to associate depression among young mothers with child neglect. Most of the literature has concentrated on the general population or with a combination of all forms of child maltreatment. As such, the discussion of the above literature has helped the researcher to identify a gap and therefore attempt to close this gap by identifying mental health encounters contributing to child neglect among young mothers.

2.2.3.2 Parental stress

Parenting stress is defined as the stress that a parent experiences that is directly related to the parenting role (Abidin, 2012). Parenting stress can be influenced by several factors that may have an impact on the quality of the parent-child relationship (Young, 2018). It

was further noted that parenting stress can also have an impact on the development of a child (Young, 2018). For instance, research conducted by Cappa, Begle, Conger, Dumas and Conger (2011) determined that parenting stress predicted the occurrence of child neglect. While lower levels of parenting stress resulted in the ability of a child to cope, better parent-child relations, increased levels of social, emotional and achievement-related coping competencies (Cappa *et al.* 2011).

Moreover, Cappa *et al.* (2011) conducted research on at-risk pre-school children who were in a Head Start program. It was found that children of young mothers reported greater levels of parenting stress (Cappa *et al.* 2011). Mothers of children with protective factors, like good communication skills and appropriate attachment levels, documented lower levels of parenting stress (Cappa *et al.* 2011). In addition, findings by Neece, Green and Baker (2012) on stress in young parents and older parents are in support of these findings. They concluded that in general, parenting stress predicted behavior problems in children and that behavioral problems in children were a source of parenting stress (Neece *et al.* 2012). Similarly, a study conducted by Resch, Elliot and Benz (2012) determined that parents who perceived their situation of raising a child at a tender age to be stressful documented more symptoms of depression. Additional research by Smith and Grzywacz (2014) supported the Resch *et al.* (2012) findings. In a study of young parents and older parents, they found that parents who are younger reported poorer overall mental health and more symptoms of depression (Smith and Grzywacz, 2014).

Palermo, Valrie and Karlson (2014) found that limited parenting skills in young mothers is a source of greater levels of parenting stress and that the emotions, behaviors and personal health all have an effect on the development of a child. Previous literature has

also demonstrated that young mothers with lack of support from friends and family and lack of education also experience high levels of parenting stress (Bender and Carlson, 2013 and Neece, 2012). Additionally, Neece (2012) found that parenting stress was a predictor of child neglect. It has been documented in the literature that bearing a child at an early age is linked with several psychological challenges. Resch, Elliot and Benz (2012) identified that young mothers reported higher levels of parenting stress and showed the likelihood to develop symptoms of depression. This is important as a result of the presumption that parental health risks may be a predictor for child neglect and that parental stress has an effect on both the parent and the child. 36 states report parental stress as a potential factor for child neglect.

Lambert (2010) articulates that the importance of including parental stress as one of the maternal factors includes the understanding of the role parental stress plays in the wellbeing of children. The role of parental stress as a potential predictor of child neglect has been explored in research (Egeland, Breitenbucher and Rosenberg, 1980; Whipple and Webster-Strantton, 1991). Parental stress is often manifested in the context of intense parent-child conflict in addition to highlighting a variety of alternative sources of parenting stress (Greenwald, 1989). A common source of stress for parents involves difficult child characteristics as demonstrated by the child's health or behavioral health status such as age and disability (Jones *et al.*, 2012).

2.2.3.3 Drug and alcohol abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse can be described as the excessive use of alcohol and drugs (Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, 2016). This is a common and prevalent

phenomenon that has appeared in literature concerning its adverse outcomes. Interestingly, drug and alcohol abuse has been notified as a major possible predictor of child abuse and neglect within a family environment (Kajese *et al.*, 2011; Laslett *et al.*, 2012; Mowbray and Oyserman, 2003; Onigu-Otite and Belcher, 2012). The use and abuse of drugs and alcohol can begin from as early as adolescent stage as a result of peer pressure, means to deal with emotional and psychological problems, or from simply observing and learning from family members engage in the similar tendencies (Longman-Mills *et al.*, 2013 and Vilhena-Churchil and Goldstein, 2014). Parents engage in this behavior as a way of managing or dealing with the challenges they come across (Douglas, 2013).

A strong relationship between parental drug and alcohol abuse and neglect exists as these impair one's psychological functioning (Akerhurst, 2015). Depanfilis (2006) posits that parents who abuse substances are frequently incapable of making proper decisions like preventing a child from going out on their own late at night or even supervising children fully. Akerhurst (2015) also noted that parents put their own needs before the needs of the child such as spending money on alcohol instead of spending money on the basic needs of the child. Smith and Fong (2015) assert the high incidence of parental substance abuse among parents involved in child welfare services. Additionally, Dore (2018) stipulates that substance abuse affects parenting through the creation of a child rearing context characterized by caregiver's lack of social support from healthy relations. For instance, Lee and George (2019) noted that many substance abusing parents associate with other users and for mothers who abuse drugs or alcohol, there is an increased potential that their partners will also become addicts.

While most of the research concerning substance abuse and child neglect concentrates on mothers, Smith and Fong (2014) contend that fathers are equally likely to abuse drugs and alcohol and therefore contribute to a neglectful family surrounding. Likewise, this is supported by the findings of Dufour *et al.* (2017) which noted no significant differences between rates of alcohol abuse and drug abuse for mothers and father figures in families marked as neglectful. According to one study of child protection services, 65% of neglected children who had parents with substance problems were neglected while the parent was intoxicated (Zipper, 2017). Again, the substance most likely to be misused by neglecting parents is alcohol on its own or combined with other illegal drugs (Donahue, 2014).

Substance abuse may be correlated to the recurrence of neglect. Research has revealed that parents with substance abuse problems are highly attributable to neglect their own children continually and to be referred to child protection services than parents who do not abuse substances (Coohey, 2016). Similarly, Kelley (2012) asserts that substance abuse has been connected with as many as two thirds of child neglect deaths.

In their prospective study, Lee and George (2019) used data from Waves I and II of the National Institute for Mental Health's Epidemiological Catchment Area survey. Focusing on the 7,103 parents of both genders who did not report any abusive or neglectful parenting at Wave I, Lee and George (2019) followed these caregivers for one year to determine the risk factors associated with new reports of maltreatment at Wave II. The findings indicated that substance abuse was a strong predictor for neglect, with parents who abused substances over three times more likely to neglect their children than parents who did not abuse substances (Lee and George, 2019).

One limitation of the study stated by Lee and George (2019) is that, although a strength of the study was that it was not limited to cases reported to child welfare services, a possible concern is the fact that the measure of neglectful caregiving depended on parental self-endorsement of four items, including leaving young children alone for long periods of time, providing inadequate food or care, and having a health care professional suggest that a child was neglected, possibly providing biased responses due to social desirability.

The relationship between substance misuse disorders and neglectful parenting is increasingly compound covering both short and long-term impacts of substances used in addition to context and attributes of the parents (Moss and Tarter, 2013). Furthermore, a parent with substance abuse disorder can cause parenting problems for the other parent (Ammerman *et al.* 2009). However, there exists scanty research that seeks to link parental substance abuse among young mothers with child neglect. Most research has attempted to explore drug and alcohol abuse among a generalized outcome of child abuse and neglect or a combination of forms of child maltreatment.

It is also probable that professional caseworkers' perceptions of caregivers' substance misuse influence their perceptions of neglect and its severity (Berger, 2010). Recent reviews have found as well that parental drinking or a family history of alcoholism is a possible factor for childhood neglect, sexual and physical abuse (Miller *et al.* 2017 and Vogeltanz *et al.* 2019). In essence, the impact of parental substance abuse on the severity of child neglect seems to be particularly important, as it is consistently found to be more predictive of child neglect than other risk factors (Staton-Tindall, Sprang, Clark, Walker and Craig, 2013).

In Lesotho, a study was conducted by LYES (2012), where findings show that 19.7% of young adults regularly use alcohol, while 80.3% do not. The data shows that there is an advanced growth in consumption of alcoholic beverages from a low of 4.8% (1 in every 20 adults) among 15-19 year olds to 33.7% among 20-25 year olds. However, no data exists on the arrays of consumption and the rate of drinking. Furthermore, the collected data shows that 58% of young adults consume alcohol for entertainment reasons, while those who consume to release stress are 19.4% and adults drinking because of friends and peers comprises of 20.3% respectively.

Review of the existing literature has helped determine the need to explore the contribution of drug and alcohol abuse to the incidence of child neglect in the case of Female Correctional Institution as it is evident from the literature how high it is among young adults.

2.2.4 Economic factors increasing child neglect

Economic factors according to Conrad-Hiebner and Byram (2018), include debt, unemployment, and income transfers like food stamps, cash assistance; and material hardship like food, paying bills and housing insecurity. Conrad-Hiebner and Byram (2018) further posit that economically disadvantaged children experience 3-9 times more abuse and neglect than economically secure children. Unemployment and low socio-economic status are discussed below as some of the economic factors.

2.2.4.1 Unemployment

The contribution of unemployment to the high rate of child neglect is significant. Unemployment does not only affect household income, it affects the stability of a family,

child development as well as child rearing (Finnegan, 2021). Reports of unemployed parents have consistently been put forward in a variety of subjects and presently available studies concerning the likelihood of negative outcomes.

Parents who are unemployed are confronted with a variety of psychological challenges resulting from their state of unemployment and therefore engage in child neglect. Additionally, parents who are unemployed are likely to be more depressed and stressed and therefore can exercise unhealthy parenting practices such as giving out angry outbursts, ill-treatment of children and express harsh treatment towards themselves, the children and other members of the family. Furthermore, presently available studies have determined unemployment as a remarkable and recurring issue throughout the world in families with infants and younger children experiencing child abuse and neglect. However, there exists insufficient literature accessible aiming to associate unemployment among young mothers with child neglect, as most literature has focused on determining unemployment with a generalized outcome of maltreatment or with a combination of other parental related factors.

In 2013, Mowbary and Oyserman examined several studies highlighting the impacts of parental lack of employment and subsequently reported an increased likelihood of child drug and alcohol abuse and maltreatment. Again, Lightfoot and Slayter (2014) posit that parents who are unemployed were more associated with documented occurrence of child physical abuse and sexual abuse. In a study conducted by Madu *et al.* (2012), the findings revealed that job loss and the presence of intimate partner violence were some of the factors associated with child sexual abuse and incidences of child neglect. Parental lack

of employment, short term and inconsistent employment have been reported as major predictors of child neglect (DePanfilis, 2006).

Clearly, from a review of lack of studies accessible, there has not been a strong contribution determined up to this far among young parents' unemployment status to the prevalence of child neglect (Akerhurst, 2015; Schumacher *et al.* 2001 and Stith *et al.* 2009). Nevertheless, strong generalized associations between unemployment and child neglect are evident. Insufficient literature presently accessible concerning parental lack of employment and child neglect has been most commonly associated with other forms of child maltreatment such as child sexual abuse and child emotional abuse. For example, the risk factor of maternal and paternal job loss has been correlated with the failure to exercise adequate care for their children (Crittenden and Ainsworth, 2019). Parents who voluntarily leave their jobs have been reported to possess neglectful behaviors to their children (Milner, 2011).

Lack of literature that have sought to explore the contribution of young motherhood to the severance of child neglect clearly indicates the gap in the literature. The current study therefore seeks to fill this gap by identifying the contribution of unemployment of young mothers to the neglect of their children.

Contrarily, the high incidence of child neglect can be affected by economic factors in communities, such as recession, high rates of unemployment, income inequality as well as poverty (Hibbard *et al.*, 2012). In the United States, one study found that child hospitalizations for neglectful head trauma rose up during an economic recession (Jordan, 2009). Another study found only weak and inconsistent associations between official child neglect reports and predictors of economic recession (Kaur, 2012).

Therefore, it can be concluded that economic crises can be a pathway to elevating unemployment rates, increased economic challenges and associated stress and depression, all of which may increase risks of child neglect (Kaur, 2012).

In 2019, Lee and George studied a sample of mothers in receipt of aid to families with dependent children in New Jersey, 380 of whom were reported to child welfare agency predominantly for reasons of neglect and 144 of whom had no history of child welfare involvement. Results indicated that while both groups experienced high levels of economic hardships, the maltreating group lived in the most materially deprived conditions, making neglect most prevalent among the “poorest of the poor” (Lee and George, 2019, p. 175).

Moreover, the state of being unemployed may lessen a parent’s ability to nurture, monitor and provide stable caregiving by contributing to the number of stressful life events exposed to, while also restricting available material and emotional resources (Liao, Lee, Roberts-Lewis, Hong and Jiao, 2011). Lane (2016) concurs that severe economic challenges in society can result in parents struggling to provide for their children, thus leading to child neglect and trafficking. The stipulated literature is relevant to the current study as it highlights the severity of economic factors in predicting the prevalence of child neglect, factors which are applicable in the context of Lesotho. The literature has also helped in refining the researcher’s knowledge on the current topic.

2.2.4.2 Low socio-economic status

Increased risk of neglect has consistently been associated with lack of socio-economic status (Aron, 2010). The relationship between socio-economic status such as parental

income and employment and child neglect is found to be compound, however, research has consistently found that low socio-economic status is linked with an elevated risk of child neglect (Akehurst, 2015 and Schumacher *et al.* 2001). Lack of socioeconomic status in a family tends to have an impact on children and adults as a result of the financial stress it causes within the family. In their study, Schumacher *et al.* (2001) documented findings for employment and income individually. One study stated that low income was a factor for both physical and educational neglect (Brown *et al.* 2012).

Evidence for the complexity of this relationship, the interaction between influencing factors and how they may have a compounded effect on increasing the risk of neglect was found by Austin (2016) and Liao *et al.* (2011). Furthermore, Liao *et al.* (2011) found that the impact of low socio-economic status on risk of neglect is likely to be worsened by its interaction with several other parent related factors such as parenting and financial stress from unemployment.

Using data from the United States National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (2019), Lee and George compared the incidence of neglect in families with an income of at least \$30,000 to those with an income below \$15,000. Children in the lower income families had difficulties four times higher for experiencing abuse, and difficulties more than 12 times higher for experiencing neglect than those in higher earning families (Lee and George, 2019). Thus, while socioeconomic status can be said to be a strong correlate of both abuse and neglect, it is more closely associated with neglect (United National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, 2019). Again, Lee and George (2019) propose that the correlation between low income and neglect found among young

mothers' samples is confounded through a series of social class-related biases in labelling and reporting maltreatment, thus, concern about this issue persists.

The strong generalized contributions of low socio-economic status to child neglect is evident. Nevertheless, contribution of low socio-economic status to child neglect has not been explored in the context of Lesotho. The literature is therefore relevant to the current study as it will help bring more light into some of the related financial factors that may exist among incarcerated young mothers in Maseru.

In Lesotho, economic constraints are crippling most of Basotho to the extent that it is hard for young mothers to assist with meeting most of the needs of theirs and those of their children. According to the World Bank (2021), in recent years, Lesotho's economic performance has been negatively impacted by sluggish global economic growth amid a massive downturn in both arising markets and advanced economies, as well as natural disasters. Maintained political instability, together with slow economic growth in the South African economy, also contributed to slow economic performance (World Bank, 2021).

Unemployment remained high at 22.5% in 2019 together with high inequality and poverty. The national poverty rate declined from 56.6% in 2002 to 49.7% in 2017 (World Bank, 2021). Urban areas registered strong poverty reduction of 13 percentage points, while rural areas poverty rates levels decreased marginally by 0.6 percentage points leading to wider urban-rural inequality (World Bank, 2021). Young women therefore remain vulnerable to economic hardships coupled with the emergence of Covid-19 and its unwavering impacts.

The key message is that the discussed literature has demonstrated that several factors contributing to child neglect have been found to warrant a remarkable occurrence of neglect of children. In further exploring the psychological, social and economic factors of child neglect, exposing a pertinent angle to intercede in this tedious cycle of behavior can advance. Presently available studies have helped embellish an applicable pattern thus far concerning the issue of factors contributing to child neglect (Douglas, 2013; McKee and Bramante, 2010 and Yampolskaya *et al.* 2009).

2.2.5 Mitigation measures against child neglect

Mitigation measures are regarded as those measures that lessen the impacts of individual vulnerabilities so that the adaptational trajectory is more positive than would be the case if the protective factors were not functional or present (Masten *et al.* 2011). Prior literature has shown that mitigation measures appear to predict positive outcomes from 50 to 80% of a high-risk population, in comparison to causal factors that are predictive for about 20 to 69% of a given high-risk population (Bernard, 2014). Furthermore, these measures are generally categorized into three - parental, community and individual factors (Masten and Coatsworth, 2018). However, the current study focuses on the parental measures as these have gained limited attention from researchers, which also have motivated the current study.

i. Close relationships

Howard, *et al.* (2015) stipulate that one of the most documented parental mitigating measures is possessing a close relationship with a caring parent figure where the relationship is characterized by warmth, consistency and minimal problems. Moreover,

parental support and closeness have been linked with positive outcomes for neglect victims and may play a vital part in resilience (Chandy *et al.* 2016; Masten and Coatsworth, 2018; Spacarelli and Kim, 2015). Masten and Coatsworth (2018) concur that authoritative parenting, which consists of warmth, increased expectations and structure, is another common parental mitigating measure. Parental employment, high self-esteem, lack of parental support for corporal punishment and higher parental education are some of the mitigating measures that can reduce the risk of child neglect.

In addition, research shows that having close relationships with extended family members provides protection in that it allows access to extra caregivers and parental figures (Masten and Coatsworth, 2018). Equally important, the same authors further reported that access to socioeconomic advantages provides less vulnerability to the risk of neglect as they give the family ease to the much needed resources such as the ability to afford day care facilities, ability to participate into social activities as a family, going to the park and enjoying recreational activities together as a family.

ii. Provision of support and empowerment

Likewise, further research attains that the ability to develop confidence and secure attachment in the support from others comes as a result of having an emotionally and sensitive caregiver, thus serving as a mitigating measure (Egeland *et al.* 2013). Also, the same authors further stipulate that empowering family changes like interventions focused at minimizing the impact of neglect have been found to act protectively.

iii. Nurturing and attachment

The Department of Health and Human Sciences (2012) outlined the mitigating measures that lay the foundation for reducing child neglect and thus promoting child well-being. These are: nurturing and attachment, knowledge of parenting and child development, parental resilience, social and emotional competence for children and factors that promote resilience in neglected children (Shirley, 2012).

Nurturing and attachment refer to parents who establish relational bonds with their children in early life stages and form nurturing bonds with them throughout childhood (The Department of Health and Human Sciences, 2012). Children's positive social and emotional development is cushioned and supported by safe, warm and trusting relationships which often results in parenting and parent-child relationships. Knowledge of parenting and child development is characterized by parents who understand and acknowledge child development and possess skills to apply this in their parenting styles. Such parents are less likely to have unrealistic expectations of their children and more likely to utilize age and developmentally appropriate and language and discipline techniques.

iv. Parental resilience

Parental resilience means finding ways to solve challenges, building and sustaining trusting relationships including relationships with a child and knowing how to seek help when necessary (Shirley, 2012). Resilient parents have the capacity and skills to remain positive in the presence of challenges and to identify and tackle challenges in their lives as they arise, that is, they can be less likely to take their frustrations out on children (Shirley, 2012). It is stated that resilience can be specifically important for parents who

are confronted by specific problems like history of childhood neglect. Social and emotional competence for children means when parents are able to identify and sensitively respond their child's needs effectively when the child is socially and emotionally competent (Shirley, 2012). Appropriate communication and cooperation between children and parents can strengthen relational bonds and prevent parental frustration as well as stress. In addition, child social and emotional competence can also support their interaction with friends and other adults (Shirley and Rosan, 2010).

Chan *et al.* (2012) conducted a longitudinal study on high functioning children who had been neglected and identified the stable presence of at least one caregiver in childhood as a protective factor related to resilience. In a sample of 147 neglected boys and girls, being satisfied with emotional support from caregivers at the time of discovery of maltreatment was related to better teacher and parent-rated adjustment one year later (Bellis, 2011). Similarly, in a sample of 86 neglected girls aged 11 to 17 years, less conflict with mothers and being trusting of others, in addition to empowerment, adaptive coping strategies, and less drug use were related to stable resilience during a five-month period (Slack *et al.* 2011).

A small number of cross-sectional studies involving adult samples have examined factors linked to resilience among people with child neglect histories (Clemmons, Walsh, DiLillo, and Messman-Moore 2007). At the parental level, less parental stress has been associated with greater resilience (Sigler *et al.* 2010). Additionally, in a sample of mothers with a history of childhood neglect, spousal support was related to resilience (Brandon *et al.* 2012). In sum, research focusing on mitigating factors for child neglect is far less developed as compared to research on causal factors. As a result, there is little evidence

pointing which mitigating factors are most suitable for which subtype of child neglect (Shirley, 2012). However, strengthening these factors especially in the most vulnerable families is a vital part of child neglect prevention programs.

2.2.6 Gaps in the literature

Considering the literature on child neglect reviewed in this chapter, there are insufficient studies on the causes of child neglect among young mothers in Sub Saharan countries. Specifically, no study that focused on child neglect was found in Lesotho. Again, there exists limited information of the subtypes of child neglect that are prevalent in African countries. Of the available studies in Lesotho, the focus was mainly on adoptive parents and child abandonment, neglecting the incidences of child neglect in Lesotho. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by focusing on factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated as a result of child neglectful tendencies in Maseru, Lesotho.

Furthermore, the majority of studies on child maltreatment around the world, have placed more emphasis on other forms such as child sexual abuse and physical abuse, leaving behind the phenomenon of child neglect. In this regard, there exists availability of literature on other forms of child maltreatment than there is on child neglect. This study therefore intends to explore the causal factors of child neglect among young mothers, the number of recorded cases of child neglect and their nature in the female correctional institution, thus providing literature on the phenomenon of child neglect in the context of Lesotho.

2.2.7 Chapter summary

The chapter presented the empirical literature and also highlighted research studies conducted on the topic as well as in other related fields. It further presented the theoretical literature, which included the problem behavior theory and concluded with the identification of gaps in the reviewed studies. Chapter three provides the outcome of the application of research methodology, by including the philosophical underpinnings, the research approach, research design, sampling and population, data collection and analysis and ethical considerations as implemented.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The research methodology provides the researcher with procedures on how to approach the study. Research methodology can be defined as the methods that are used to learn about people's experiences, perceptions and how they understand their world in a research study and concentrates on tools and procedures that are used in research (Babbie, 2013; Delport, Fouche and Schurink, 2011). Walliman (2011), elucidated that the research methodology signifies an idea of what the researcher plans to do in order to carry out the study. Oosthuizen-Erasmus (2021) added that the research methodology is based on the research approach that is selected to undertake the study and collect the desired data.

This chapter therefore begins by presenting the philosophical underpinnings of the study, outlining the research approach and design, the study site, population, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis techniques. It also presents ethical considerations, and concludes with considerations of trustworthiness of data.

3.1 The philosophical underpinnings of the study

Philosophy is the guiding framework for linking data and theory. "Adopting a philosophical perspective prior to conducting data collection helps guide researchers with a theoretical view of the social world that necessarily enriches the researchers' endeavors" (Brotanica, 2006, p. 103). According to Creswell (2016), philosophies inform researchers' usage of theories, research methodologies, designs as well as methods of data collection. Mohau

(2021) added that philosophy helps provide clarity of research designs, such as, which design will work and which will not, as well as to identify and establish designs that the researcher had never had experience of. Understanding philosophy is vital as social science research can only be fully interpreted when there is clarity about the decisions that were made that affect the outcomes of the research (Mohau, 2021).

The study adopted the above descriptions to help the researcher have an insight of the meanings the participants attach to their realities. Additionally, the constructivist ontology as well as the interpretivist epistemology were utilized to help guide the exploration of factors contributing to child neglect among incarcerated young mothers in Maseru, Lesotho.

3.1.1 The constructivist ontology

An ontology is defined as a belief system about the nature of the social world (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston 2013). This is further defined as the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of human beings' existence as individuals, in society and in the universe (Squire, Wixted and Clark 2008). Squire et al. (2008) further highlighted the ontological questions such as "are humans best understood as individuals? Or are they best understood as existing in a group of social system?" Ntuli (2020) added that these key ontological questions concern whether or not there is a social reality that exists independently of human conceptions, interpretations as well as whether there is an existence of shared social reality.

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) supplemented that ontology explores the underlying beliefs of researchers in regard to the nature of being, existence and reality. Similarly, Ntuli (2020)

contended that ontology therefore assists researchers to make meaning of the nature of reality as well as what the researcher believes ought to be acknowledged about that reality. In this manner, the philosophical assumption allows researchers to conceptualize the data they collect, align their rational about the research problem, its importance and assists them acknowledge the issue under investigation exhaustively and consequently donate to its interpretation Kivunja and Kuyini (2017).

Using the philosophy of constructivism, this study is embedded in the assumption that meaning is created when people engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998). Additionally, constructivists acknowledge several realities and that knowledge is constructed through discourse in the context of individual histories and social interaction (Schwandt, 2000). This ontological stance therefore contends that the narratives told by incarcerated young mothers and social workers unleash many subjective positions that reflect their point of view, and their relationship with me as a researcher. As a consequence of numerous interpretations of reality, there is no central meaning to be discovered, but rather, there are diverse possibilities to be constructed (Crotty, 1998).

The ontology of this study is that incarcerated young mothers are confronted with a combination of risk factors that serve as pathways to neglectful behaviors. These factors then threaten the developmental aspects of children and therefore bring about undesirable effects for children in their childhood as well as in adulthood. In contrast, as the researcher interacted with participants, the narratives shared enabled the researcher to gain the understanding and meanings from the perspective of the study participants. As such, the researcher understood better how factors associated with child neglect were narrated from both incarcerated young mothers and social workers' frame of reference.

3.1.2 The interpretivist epistemology

An epistemology is a belief system about how research proceeds and what counts as knowledge. Typically, epistemology refers to the research pertaining to the source, classification, specialization and limitation for knowledge (Hamlyn, 1995). It encompasses the elements of generating knowledge, the relationship of knowledge with the truth, the reasons why knowledge is acquired, the changes that occur in knowledge, the relationship of knowledge with man's experience and the mind's limitations to translate knowledge (Maynard, 1994). Moreover, Abdullah (2005) is of the view that epistemology is only one of the components to the rudimental question of the philosophy of knowledge. The study aligned itself with the above descriptions. As such, the researcher found this epistemology suitable for the study as semi-structured interviews were utilized to extract more authentic information from the research participants as they narrated the knowledge of their experiences.

3.2 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was employed for several reasons in this study. Qualitative research focuses on the experiences of people and the meanings they assign to social problems (Creswell, 2014). The process of qualitative research contains non-numerical data and fosters an understanding of real-life observations of behaviors instead of relying on controlled measures of explanations (Babbie, 2013; Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole, 2013; Fouche and Schurink, 2011). Additionally, in the opinions of Fouche and Delport, (2011), a qualitative research approach is most suitable when the topic under study is slightly unknown and the aim of the study is to acquire an in-depth understanding

of the problem. Most importantly, qualitative research studies a person or phenomenon in its natural context (Creswell, 2014; Fouche and Delport, 2011). In this sense, the researcher engaged with the research participants at the site planned to conduct the study, being the Lesotho Correctional Service Compound premises.

In qualitative research, a flexible rather than a prearranged or predetermined research design is selected (Fouche and Delport, 2011). This is to say, the researcher needed to be receptive to change in the research process as guided by the relevance of the data collected. Qualitative research is deemed an exploratory inquiry according to which the researcher creates an interpretive understanding of how the participants experience the phenomenon in their world. Raphulu (2021) complemented that in qualitative research the intention is to understand the experiences of participants from their own point of view. Therefore, in this study, the researcher emphasized the true meanings as explained by the research participants without any personal bias from the researcher regarding the topic under study, by keeping in mind the several perspectives of individuals involved in the study.

It was on the basis of the above reasons that the qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate in examining the views of the participants as they provided the opportunity to gain in-depth, rich and more contextualized perceptions and experiences, thus providing clarity on reasons behind the neglectful behaviors.

3.2.1 Research design

A research design should in the first instance direct the planning of a study, which includes the research topic, population, and methods to be used for the purpose of answering the

research question (Babbie, 2013; Bless *et al.* 2013 and Flick, 2009). The research design determines the approaches of the analysis that will be used to study the research question (Oosthuizen-Erasmus, 2021). Fouche and Schurink, (2011) clarified that qualitative researchers almost always develop their own designs as their study unfolds by using one or more of the available strategies of enquiry. According to Walliman (2011), there are several types of research designs to choose from, depending on the nature of the problem posed by the research aims. These are as follows; phenomenology, explorative, descriptive and contextual research design. The study therefore adopted a phenomenological research design as part of the enquiry in understanding how young mothers as well as social workers interpreted their views on factors contributing to neglectful behaviors towards children.

A phenomenological design is, according to Creswell (2014), a design of inquiry which stems from a philosophical and psychological viewpoint, where the real-life experiences of the participants are described. Yuksel and Yildirim (2015) added that the principal aims of phenomenological studies are to pursue the truth from the participants' description of their life stories, emotions and to generate meaningful explanation of the issue. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) complemented that, the basic purpose of phenomenology is to bring down individual experiences with a problem to an explanation of the universal essence. Generally, a phenomenological design underpins an understanding of people and the data that reflect their personal experiences (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze and Patel 2011).

The phenomenological research design was therefore deemed appropriate for this study as it enabled the researcher to gain in-depth individual experiences of the problem

through conversations. Naturally, humans have different traits, as such, the idea was to acquire as many different perspectives as possible, and hence phenomenology was followed.

3.3 Study site

Murhovi (2018) defined a research site as a place where research is conducted. There are eleven correctional institutions in Lesotho, however, only ten of them are functional, while the eleventh one in Mafeteng is under maintenance (Mohau, 2021). For this research, the study was conducted in the Maseru district, at the Female Correctional institution within the Lesotho Central Correctional Compound. The institution consists of the female correctional institution and the juvenile training center. Several studies have focused on institutions in other districts of the country. This therefore sparked more interest to the researcher to pursue the conduct of this study in the Maseru district as it has been reported that offences among females are high in this district. Moreover, Bureau of Statistics (2017) showed that the institutions received the majority of offenders in 2006 and 2007. The female correctional institution was among other institutions that recorded bigger numbers of females in 2011 and 2012.

Table 3.1: Population in Correctional Institutions by Year (2011, 2012, 2021)

Correctional Institution	2011	2012	2021
Central	810	905	589
Juvenile	41	50	35
Female	64	68	42
Berea	133	164	115
Leribe	284	276	170
Botha-Bothe	101	82	68

Mokhotlong	59	68	60
Thaba-Tseka	119	161	121
Qacha's Nek	68	87	71
Quthing	88	118	98
Mohale's Hoek	379	406	393
Mafeteng	167	187	----
Total	2,313	2,572	1,762

(Source: Bureau of Statistics, 2017)

3.4 Study Population

Bless *et al.* (2013) defined population as the entire set of objects or people and their characteristics that are the focus of research. Further, Babbie (2016) expanded population as the group of people about whom the researcher wants to draw conclusions. In accordance with this, Creswell (2014) complemented that a population should consist of people who are experiencing or have previously experienced the problem being investigated and are able to provide valuable information applicable to the intended research study.

For the purpose of this study, the target population comprised of all incarcerated young mothers between the ages of seventeen and twenty-eight years, who have neglected their own children and have been incarcerated as well as social workers in the Lesotho Correctional Service regarded as key informants with extensive knowledge and work experience in the field of child neglect.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is an essential component in research. It entails knowing which people to have as interviewees and which characteristics and events to observe. Kumar (2011) stated

that sampling is the process of selecting a certain number of units from a population to become the basis for estimating the incidence of an unknown phenomenon. Korstjens and Moser (2018) also added that sampling is the process of searching or selecting items, objects, contexts and research participants who share extensive information of the problem under study.

3.5.1 Sampling method

Non-probability sampling refers to a sampling technique where individuals are not provided equal chances of selection (Blaikie, 2010). In order to obtain a sample for the study, the researcher used purposive sampling as one of the types of non-probability sampling.

3.5.2 Sample selection

Essentially, purposive sampling is grounded on the decision of the researcher. Maxfield and Babbie (2012) elaborated that purposive sampling occurs when the researcher selects elements to be observed, based on the researcher's own conclusions about which elements will be suited for the purpose of the research. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) complemented that purposive sampling entails the selection of participants who are at an advantage of providing the required data for the study. They further indicated that these participants are estimated to possess the data through experience and may also share valuable data to the researcher. In support, Johnson and Christensen (2012) indicated that in purposive sampling, the researcher identifies eligible participants based on specific attributes.

By using purposive sampling, each sample was purposely selected based on the uniqueness of the sample elements (Bachman and Schutt, 2011). As such, research participants were selected according to their specified characteristics and contribution towards the purpose of the study instead of being sampled randomly. This means that they were deemed to provide data that would serve the main objective of this study which is to explore factors contributing to child neglect among incarcerated young mothers.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher achieved purposive sampling by writing a letter to the commissioner of the Lesotho Correctional Service in the Maseru district requesting permission to conduct the study from the selected correctional institution (Female Correctional Institution). Upon receiving permission in a written formal letter to conduct the study, arrangements were then made with the senior rehabilitation officer to act as a gatekeeper and contact person for the purpose of recruitment and communication between the social workers, young mothers and the researcher. According to Fouche and Schurink (2011), a gatekeeper can provide approved access to research groups, sites, or participants and is therefore regarded as an individual with authority on behalf of the targeted sample population.

During recruitment, the researcher visited the institution identified as representing thorough knowledge, experience and understanding of professional service workers in the justice system. The researcher then explained the purpose of the study to the senior rehabilitation officer. For both groups of participants, the researcher used a recruitment script which screened participants and allowed the researcher to determine which participants were suitable for the study. When suitable candidates were identified during recruitment, the researcher then provided the necessary information advising potential

participants of pertinent information about the research study so they could make informed decisions about participation.

The researcher then arranged for individual interviews with each prospect participant. The study participants were provided with an information sheet, entailing specific information outlining the objectives of the study, describing their roles and rights and the criteria for inclusion. The researcher clarified that no compensation would be provided upon participation in the study. The participants who were willing to take part in the study were provided with consent forms to complete. Appointments were then scheduled with the research participants for interviews at a time and place convenient to them.

3.5.2.1 Inclusion criteria

The researcher intended to use the following inclusion criteria to select participants for this study; incarcerated young mothers who had given birth and were between the ages of seventeen and twenty-eight years, and were detainees as a result of neglecting their own children. Mothers with children aged between zero and twelve years were targeted. For social workers, an experience of five years and beyond in child protection afforded them an opportunity to be included. Social workers of any age and gender were considered for the study. Social workers who were available and willing to participate in the study were also included in the study.

3.5.2.2 Exclusion criteria

The study excluded young mothers who were not detained for neglecting their children in the Female Correctional Institution as well as mothers who were below the age of seventeen and beyond the age of twenty-eight. Mothers with children beyond twelve

years of age were also excluded. Again, the study excluded social workers who have minimal experience in child protection services and social workers handling other cases not involving child neglect.

3.5.3 Sample size

The sample size for this study was thirteen research participants, of which nine were young mothers and four were social workers. Raphulu (2021) noted that, in qualitative research, sample size should not be too small to a point it is challenging for the researcher to achieve data saturation. Data saturation is, according to Green and Thorogood (2014), a point during which the researcher realizes that no new data emerges from research participants. Thus, data saturation determined the termination of the process of data collection. When selecting the sample, the researcher relied on convenience sampling, where candidates who consented participation in the study and were deemed to have knowledge and experience regarding child neglect were invited to participate in the study. Upon confirmation of participation, data collection commenced.

3.6 Data collection

Data collection refers to the process of collecting and measuring data on variables of interest, in an established manner that allows the researcher to answer the research question, test hypotheses and evaluate findings (Kabir, 2016). Data collection is intended on providing the foundation upon which the findings of the study will be based, documented and analyzed, to be reviewed and commented upon (Walliman, 2011). Creswell (2014) complemented that data collection typically involves interviews and observations in qualitative research. In research, it is essential to find ways to acquire

access to the study participants through attraction, demonstrating interest in their life experiences. As such, the way in which the researcher intended and prepared for the process of data collection will be discussed below.

3.6.1 Methods of data collection

For the purpose of this study, interviews were utilized as means of data collection. Interviews are the primary method of data collection in qualitative research and are based on a social relationship specifically intended for effective information exchange between the researcher and the participant (Greeff, 2011; Flick, 2009). According to Babbie (2013), an interview can be described as an interactive association between the researcher and the participant. Creswell (2014) added that, interviews can be carried out through telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews and focus groups respectively.

3.6.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Specifically, data were collected by means of conducting semi-structured interviews aided by open-ended questions contained in an interview guide for both young mothers and social workers. Walliman (2011) defined semi-structured interviews as flexible but guided segment of a qualitative research study. Semi-structured interviews entail a set of open-ended questions centered on the topic under study (Raphulu, 2021). The author further augmented that the nature of open-ended questions describes the topic being studied but presents opportunities for both the researcher and the participant to establish a discussion of other topics. Furthermore, Greef (2011) highlighted that they enable the researcher to focus on areas of interest, but also bring flexibility to the scope and depth

of data collection. Therefore, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to follow the in-depth, interpersonal views and perceptions of each participant thereof.

Semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate for this study as they enabled the researcher to personally meet with the research participants in order to extract the most valuable information from the participants by encouraging them to delve more deeply into their experiences through sound communication. Additionally, the semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to use prompts in order to elaborate on the original response provided by the participant. Most importantly, since questions were prepared ahead of time, it saved time for both the researcher and participants.

3.6.1.2 Data collection instruments

In order to facilitate the semi-structured interview procedure, the researcher prepared an interview guide which comprised of a number of set questions to be utilized during the interviews. Greeff (2011) asserted that the guide should include specific questions for the participants and a list of topics the researcher would like to explore. Therefore, the interview guide assisted the researcher in ensuring that the interview continued systematically and with clarity. Again, it allowed the researcher to create a comfortable space for participants as well as to shape the process, whilst being an attentive listener.

In both interviews with the young mothers as target population and social workers as key informants, a tape recorder was used. The researcher requested the participants' permission to record interviews. Tape recorders are helpful in capturing the exact words of participants (Raphulu, 2021). This therefore helped the researcher to recollect important data that was shared.

Field notes were also used to complement the use of a tape recorder. Field notes are the data compiled by the researcher; these provide the explanation of what was observed (Mohau, 2021). Field notes were helpful in generating in-depth descriptions of the environments, non-verbal behavior, and assumptions that were not directly communicated. These were very important as they afforded the researcher to have a continuous record of observations.

3.6.1.3 Interviewing skills

Several interviewing skills were utilized during the interviews. In order to prompt more information from the participants, the researcher used probing. This was strengthened by the use of paraphrasing to encourage participants to open up more and provide more information. Again, the researcher showed interest in the participants' elaborations by actively listening, being aware of non-verbal cues and showing empathy with their stories.

The researcher used minimal encouragers. These are verbal and non-verbal messages a researcher uses to encourage participants to continue sharing their information (Raphulu, 2021). Every now and then, the researcher used non-verbal encouragers by nodding her head and using body gestures to keep the conversation going without interrupting the participant speaking. Verbal encouragers are expressions such as *“uh-huh, Mmhm, I see, please go on.”* Further, the researcher consciously made use of reflection in order to link connections from verbal and underlying messages by creating a comfortable and supportive interview environment.

3.6.1.4 The administration of individual interviews

The data was collected during the last two weeks of March 2022. The semi-structured interviews were administered individually and lasted about fifty minutes to an hour each. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in the Sesotho language as it is the maiden language in Lesotho as well as within the Lesotho Correctional Institution. Interviews were arranged to take place at the Correctional Institution premises as the researcher deemed it would fully accommodate participants in terms of their time and comfort. To minimize the disruptions, the researcher allowed the participants to select dates and times that would be convenient for them. Most of the interviews were slotted in the morning hours and there were minimal disruptions.

3.6.1.5 End of interviews

At the end of every interview, the researcher stopped the recording device to thank the participants, and left them with her phone number in case they wished to follow up on any of the issues they had raised during the interviewing process. They were once again reminded to seek a published version of the thesis if they wished to have one. Each interview was transcribed, commencing a day after the interview was conducted. This meant that the researcher could vividly recall much of the non-verbal information, which was also captured in the field notes.

3.7 Data analysis

Schurink *et al.* (2011) described data analysis as the process according to which the researcher tries to assign order and structure to the information collected. According to Creswell (2014), analysis of phenomenological data requires the researcher to look for

significant statements and the generalization of meanings. Additionally, Schurink *et al.* (2011) stated that through data analysis themes are developed, and the researcher looks for underlying similarities between these themes. Oosthuizen-Erasmus (2021) elucidated that data analysis includes the process of filtering all the data the researcher has collected in order to obtain information which contributes most to the study. It was further elaborated that it requires the researcher to identify reoccurring information and similarities provided by the participants (Oosthuizen-Erasmus, 2021). These similarities then connect views and develop themes relevant to the study. The researcher began deducing the collected data once patterns emerged from the views of the young mothers as well as social workers.

Thematic analysis was used for this study. Thematic analysis is, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), a qualitative method used systematically to identify, organize, describe and offer insight into themes across the data set. Furthermore, it is a form of analysis which has the theme as its unit of analysis and which looks across data from several sources to recognize themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) noted that, thematic analysis has a goal, and that is to extract patterns in the collected data, that may spark interest to the researcher in order to use those patterns to answer the research objectives.

Thematic analysis was regarded appropriate for this study because of its flexibility and the fact that it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective, this is to say, it is very diverse in nature. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there are six-step framework to conducting thematic analysis. The six-step framework is set out below:

Step one: Familiarization with the data:

This implies that, the researcher plunges herself in the data by reading and re-reading the textual data in order to gain a profound understanding of the participants' views that answer the research question. At this stage, the researcher used discretion to remain objective to promote the research study. Furthermore, whilst collecting the data, the researcher preliminarily began to transcribe and translate the data into English as the data collection was carried out in Sesotho. Again, while reading the transcripts to develop a general impression of the narration and extracting remarkable attributes of the data, the researcher underlined portions of the data, made notes by writing comments and highlighted items of potential interest from the data.

Step two: Generating initial codes:

For the second step, the researcher began to systematically read through the data numerous times to establish codes. These codes helped the researcher to identify and provide certain concepts in the transcripts which appeared several times, connecting them to the emphasis that the participants placed on them, thus, providing a summary of a portion of data.

Step three: Searching for themes:

Several readings in the third step refined and consolidated the codes as examples were noted. As such, themes were generated. During this stage, the researcher dismantled the data provided by young mothers and reconstructed it according to various themes. The researcher wrote more clear definitions and selected suitable examples to represent the

themes. Again, the researcher systematically regarded these as additions and some considered irrelevant were removed.

Step four: Reviewing potential themes:

The themes were placed into categories that were coded, thus allowing the researcher to repeatedly identify themes easily to avoid repetitions. The various themes were then tested and the researcher looked for further explanations.

Step five: Defining and naming themes:

This step is where the researcher clearly stated the uniqueness of each theme as well as how specific it was. The researcher ensured that themes had a singular focus.

Step six: Producing the report:

This is the last step of the analysis where the researcher compiled a report entailing how the process of data analysis was carried out and providing justifications for the theory, methodology and method of analysis adopted throughout the study.

3.8 Ethical considerations

In research with human subjects, it is vital to consider and abide by the ethical considerations. Strydom (2014) described the word ethics as a set of moral principles, which offers rules and behavioral expectations regarding the correct conduct when working with research participants. According to Walliman (2011), ethics reflects on the researcher, determining whether he/she has conducted himself/herself with integrity and honesty by adhering to ethical aspects when conducting social research. Also, Babbie (2013) complemented that being ethical is to become sensitive to the dimensions of social

research. The researcher attempted to be more sensitive to the emotions of the research participants in order to avoid feelings of pressure to share information the participants were not ready to disclose.

In this study, the following ethical research practices were followed to minimize risks, uphold justice, and enhance the privacy of and respect for the participants.

3.8.1 Informed consent

The informed consent sheet should provide as much detailed information as needed on the intended study, including its objectives and the procedures that will be carried out during the exploration in order for study participants to make an informed decision to participate in the study (or not) (Bryman, 2012 and Strydom, 2011). Walliman (2011) highlighted that consent assures that each prospective participant will be treated with ethical consideration by the researcher, from how they will be selected and how their personal data contributions to the study will be used.

Informed consent therefore suggests that participants voluntarily consent to take part in the research study by giving their written consent, fully informed of the details of the study and participation expectations (Babbie, 2013 and Strydom, 2011). Even more important, in the consent form, it should be clearly stipulated that research participants can withdraw at any time should they feel the need to do so or when they feel threatened in any way (Creswell, 2014). An informed consent sheet was therefore given to incarcerated young mothers before the beginning of data collection to obtain their permission to conduct the interviews. The research participants were made aware that the information they were

about to share was confidential. The informed consent was written in Sesotho language to provide the purpose of the study.

3.8.2 Harm to participants

Research studies should not harm participants. Basically, researchers do not aim to think about harm since they do not intentionally go out to cause harm. However, there are a number of types of harm that participants can be exposed to (Walliman, 2011). These include physical harm, psychological distress and discomfort to participants as the topic may be more sensitive and so the researcher needs to be aware of the usage and choice of words when conducting interviews in order not to harm participants' emotions and feelings. As such, in order to minimize harm, a researcher should think about obtaining informed consent, protect the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants and allow participants the right to withdraw from research anytime they feel the need to. The researcher ensured not to cause any discomfort or embarrassment to young mothers in any way by being sensitive and more engaging during the interviews without making them feel cross-examined.

3.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality is a concept referring to the protection of information in such a way that identification of the participants will not be possible (Babbie, 2013 and Walliman, 2011). Likewise, Bryman (2012) reported that confidentiality as it accords to an agreement between individuals hinders accessibility by others to private information shared by the participant to the researcher. According to Strydom (2011), confidentiality should therefore generate a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participant,

where participants can feel free to share information and choose what they wish to share and what should be kept confidential.

In compliance with this, the researcher assured that the identity of the participants was kept anonymous throughout the process of this research by using pseudonyms. Again, the researcher ensured that the participants felt completely safe and considered the researcher to be trustworthy, enabling them to share personal information without being implicated at a later stage. Therefore, the researcher securely kept the information provided by the participants confidential by handling all interview recordings in a classified manner, locked safely to ensure the maximum privacy of each research participant. This included a password-protected laptop where data was stored electronically.

Anonymity is an ethical term referring to the requirement of ensuring protection and keep the identities of participants safe and secure from disclosure (Neuman, 2011; Strydom, 2011). In addition to this, Walliman (2011) stated that the identity of participating institutions or individuals should not be identifiable by the reader of the report. Creswell (2014) defined anonymity as the protection of the participants' identifying details by using pseudonyms for people and places. For the purpose of this study, all identifying details of the research participants were kept anonymous. These included the names and addresses of participants. All real names were replaced with pseudonyms.

3.8.4 Deception

Deception is defined as the use of deliberate misleading communication with research participants about research purposes or activities. Kowalczyk (2017) documented that deception in a research study is the process of intentionally misleading a participant to

obscure the real purpose of the study. Strydom (2011) is of the opinion that deception is the deliberate withholding of valuable information from the participants with the aim of luring them into taking part in the study. While it is an accepted research technique, deception raises ethical concerns as it interferes with the ability of the participants to provide informed consent.

Even though deception is arguably necessary for certain types of research where participants' full knowledge is likely to bias the results by causing participants to behave differently than they naturally would if the technique was not employed, this study avoided using deception by remaining honest to the participants by also providing the informed consent sheet detailing the purpose of the research study. As such, the researcher ensured that the participants had a clear understanding of what was expected of them and that they had adequate information to make all their decisions.

3.9 Ensuring trustworthiness

In qualitative research, researchers adhere to the concept of trustworthiness to measure validity and reliability (Babbie, 2013 and Bryman, 2012). Concepts like validity and reliability are defined by Creswell (2014) as determining whether the findings are accurate from the point of view of the participant, the researcher and the reader. Babbie (2013) defined validity as the extent to which a measure reflects the theory under study. Whereas reliability is a matter of generalization of a technique, applied several times to the same object, and being able to provide the same or similar result each time (Babbie, 2013).

According to Walliman (2011), in order to generate the research findings beyond the study, they should go through the internal and external validity tests before, where validity

testing refers to the extent to which the ideas of cause and effect are supported, and external validity posits the extent to which findings can be generalized to other populations.

The method of data verification for this research study was done through validating the collected data with the research topic. Again, it was validated through reliability to ensure that similar results would be found if the same study was conducted with different populations.

The four constructs needed for validity and reliability are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. This is according to Lincoln and Guba (in Schurink et al. 2011). To attain validity and reliability of findings, the study adopted Lincoln and Guba's four constructs for establishing trustworthiness in a qualitative study. As such, the researcher will provide an overview of data that was tested using the four aspects of trustworthiness.

Credibility: This demonstrates that the research topic was accurately selected and defined in the qualitative study (Schurink *et al.* 2011). According to Walliman (2011), credibility in a research study reflects the honesty of the researcher. Again, it denotes the actuality of the reference and that it is free from inaccuracies (Flick, 2009).

In a qualitative study, there exists definite characteristics that help in guaranteeing the credibility of the findings (Bless *et al.* 2013:238). These are as follows:

- Providing a full description of the context of the study.
- Describing the sample and method of sampling, and sampling measures that will be used.

- Using the process of data collection and analysis concurrently. The researcher planned to continue collecting data while analysis took place so that emerging themes could be followed up on as identified.
- Applying triangulation by using different methods in the collection of data with the aim of providing the same results. As such, the outcome of the study will be independent of the methodology.
- Gaining insight from other researchers in a similar field (methodological verification).
- Adhering to the principle of data saturation. The researcher planned to collect data from as many young mothers as possible until no new data emerged.

To warrant credibility in this study, the researcher intended to devise these characteristics as cited above. The researcher regarded the study participants as experts in their own experiences by recognizing and deliberating emerged themes with each participant with the intention to make clear as well as to gauge the consistency of the data collected.

Transferability is seen as a prospect for the researcher to enquire whether findings from the study can be transferred to other studies (Moon et al. 2016; Bryman, 2012; Schurink *et al.* 2011 and Flick, 2009). This involves asking whether the research findings can be applied to another context (Bryman, 2012). Transferability equals external validity in defining whether the findings will be applicable to other studies, by indicating the extent to which the outcome is applicable in other contexts (Bryman, 2012; Flick, 2009). The following information is significant to the applicability of a study (Moon *et al.* 2016:4):

- Any limitations in the criteria for participants.
- The number of participants to take part in this study.

- The data collection methods that will be used.
- The interval between data collection sessions as well as the number of interviews conducted.
- The period over which the data were collected.

Transferability was useful given the restrictions expressed above, the number of participants, data collection methods, the length of interview sessions as well as the time frame scheduled for the completion of data collection. The researcher acquired as much data as needed until the saturation point was reached and also reduced any restrictions.

Dependability is defined by Schurink *et al.* (2011:21) as the researcher's efforts to account for changes in and around the research question under study. In order to assess dependability, the following question needs to be asked (Babbie, 2013:353): Would you get the same results if the measurement is repeated again and again? Bryman (2012:392) is of the opinion that the findings should be readily applied to similar situations. Data findings should be supported by similar studies and theories which have been researched before. Dependability refers to establishing the merit of the research in terms of the following (Bryman, 2012:392):

- a. Describe and explain the research plan and the implementation thereof.
- b. Provide detailed information on how data were collected, how sampling was done, and how the transcription of interviews took place.
- c. Evaluate the process of studying the experiences of the study participants.

This study adopted the above mentioned aspects of research in a detailed manner.

Confirmability is described by Lincoln and Guba (in Schurink *et al.* 2011:421) as the need for the researcher to determine whether the data findings could be confirmed by others. Objectivity is similar to confirmability; that is, although different scientists have different personal views, they should nevertheless achieve similar results (Babbie, 2013:46). It relates directly to transparency in the process of dividing the raw material into categories, so that the researcher's personal prejudices intrude as little as possible (Bryman, 2012:289). The application of this principle entailed that the researcher did not impose any personal expectations and bias on the participants, but that data collected from the participants determined the true outcome of the study.

Data collection needs to be supported by findings and interpretations by using the following steps of validity (Creswell, 2014:202):

- Triangulation can add validation to the study if the collected data produce themes among participants when reviewed.
- Member checking can be used by taking findings back to the participants for their comments and feedback.
- Self-reflection clarifies the pre-judgment the researcher may bring to the study by reflecting an open and honest narrative.
- Using peer debriefing by others to enhance the credibility of the study.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology utilized in examining the factors contributing to child neglect among Maseru young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho. The chapter started with the description of

philosophical underpinnings adopted by the study, followed by the study site, population, sample and sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis techniques. The chapter also reflected on the ethical considerations and how trustworthiness was ensured. In the next chapter, data findings as well as the discussions of data extracted from incarcerated young mothers and social workers will be presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of qualitative data collected from nine incarcerated young mothers and four social workers in relation to the study titled “Factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children: A case of a female correctional institution in Maseru, Lesotho.” A phenomenological research design was utilized for the purpose of this study. Again, a purposive sampling was used to recruit eligible participants who were voluntarily willing to participate in the study. Data was obtained through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The focal themes observed in this data set were identified because they were pivotal in answering the research questions and objectives posed by this study, and also captured shared meaning patterns from the data set. These themes were derived from both the social workers’ perspectives and the young mothers’ perspectives. A brief summary of the participants approached for this study is given, followed by a discussion of the themes, and finally, a chapter summary.

4.1 Biographic characteristics of participants

Regarding the information gathered from the social workers, all the social workers approached for this study worked at Lesotho Correctional Service. A total of four social workers took part in this study, one male and three females. Their positions ranked from Principal Rehabilitation Officer (PRO) to Senior Rehabilitation Officer (SRO), with work experience spanning from 5 years up to 16 years. The highest qualifications of the social

workers included a Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC), BA degree in Social Work and a Masters in Community Development. A summary is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of Social Workers

Pseudonyms	Gender	Position	Years of work experience	Highest qualification
Lineo	Female	PRO	10	COSC
Mpho	Female	PRO	5	BA Social Work
Neo	Female	PRO	15	BA Social Work
Leloko	Male	SRO	16	MA Community Development

In the case of young mothers interviewed, the young mothers approached for this study were all inmates at the Lesotho Correctional Service facility located in Maseru. A total of nine young mothers were interviewed, with their ages ranging from eighteen years to twenty-eight years. The participants presented with varying educational backgrounds, most of the mothers had not advanced beyond secondary/high school education and only one mother had a Diploma from a higher learning institution. Most of the mothers were single, with only two being married and three others having separated from their husbands. All mothers had at least one child and most of them, except one, were unemployed at the time of their detainment. A summary of the information is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Demographic characteristics of Incarcerated Young Mothers

Pseudonyms	Age	Marital status	Educational background	Employment status	No. of children
Mpeo	26	Separated	Form A	Unemployed	Two
Lisebo	27	Single	Standard 4	Unemployed	Two

Matlakala	24	Married	Standard 6	Unemployed	Two	
Moipone	27	Separated	Form B	Unemployed	Two	
Bokang	21	Married	Form B	Unemployed	Three	
Fumane	27	Separated	Standard 7	Unemployed	Three	
Kabelo	28	Single	Diploma	Unemployed	One	
Paballo	23	Single	Form A	Unemployed	One	
Rethabile	18	Single	Grade 10	Unemployed	Twins	

4.2 Presentation of empirical findings and discussions

The findings are presented using themes and subthemes derived from the objectives of the study, these themes emerged during the process of data analysis. They are as follows; social factors contributing to child neglect, psychological factors heightening child neglect, economic factors related to child neglect and mitigation measures against child neglect.

It is important to note that another point that was not considered as an objective for this study, but was found to have a profound effect on this study, is that of the number of child neglect cases attended to in the year preceding the research study as well as the nature of child neglect cases attended by social workers in the Female Correctional Institution in Maseru. These findings influenced the study because without clear records of child neglect cases in child welfare services, there is little or no action that can be taken to combat the phenomenon of child neglect and to even employ proper mitigating measures without any recording on its extent.

A more detailed discussion of the findings follows in this section. This will therefore precede the themes and subthemes of the study as informed by the study's objectives.

4.2.1 Social workers' child neglect caseload

The study sought to explore social workers' child neglect caseload through questioning the study participants to state the number of child neglect cases they have come across in the year prior the research study as well as to indicate the nature of child neglect cases attended during the same year.

4.2.1.1 Number of child neglect cases attended

The researcher asked participants to state the number of child neglect cases they have attended to in the year of 2021. Most of the participants were able to estimate on the number of child neglect cases attended, while few reported to not have attended any child neglect case in the year prior the research study. However, all the participants who stated the estimations of the number of child neglect cases attended, gave the impression of not being in possession of statistical records or register of child neglect cases served by their office. The following extract was verbalized by one of the participants.

“Generally, at around 10% (4) of my caseload” (Mpho).

However, one of the participants revealed to have not come across any specific child neglect case in the previous year, which is in contradiction with what most of the participants have indicated:

“I have dealt with cases of a different nature really; I don't remember working with any child neglect related case” (Lineo).

Table 4.3 presents a summary of the estimated number of child neglect cases attended in the year preceding the research study. It is essential to note that table 4.3 does not refer to registered statistical findings, however, it is the data retrieved from participants' memories.

Table 4.3: Estimated number of child neglect cases as identified by social workers.

Social worker pseudonyms	Num. of child neglect cases attended
Mpho	4
Leloko	5
Neo	2
Lineo	0
Total	11

From the findings, it is apparent that social workers do not serve their purpose of keeping records of reported cases as they are supposed to. It is in the opinion of the researcher that this is a gap in the child welfare services, specifically, the correctional institutions, therefore, there is a need to empower social workers to keep records of cases as they are reported in order to be able to trace the prevalence of child neglect. At this point, the researcher did not find any literature on numbers of neglected children nationally.

4.2.1.2 Nature of child neglect cases

Participants were asked to indicate the nature of child neglect cases they have attended to during the previous year. They reported physical neglect and supervisory neglect respectively.

4.2.1.2.1 Physical neglect

When asked to indicate the nature of child neglect cases attended to, one of the participants reported an instance where a child was wearing dirty clothes even though the parents could afford proper clothes for the child. This was uttered by the participant:

“The child wore dirty clothes, but the mother could afford proper clothes for the child”
(Leloko).

One of the social workers elaborated on the child’s lack of provision of food as an occurrence of physical neglect:

“The child seemed to be consistently unclean and lacked proper nutrition” (Neo).

Some of the social workers mentioned instances where they noticed how physically neglected the children were:

“The child’s nails looked very long and untidy; he was even developing some skin rashes”
(Mpho).

“When a child has cracking heels, it’s a sign that, that child has no shoes and walks by feet all day long, not because they like, but as the result of their parents’ failure to provide for them” (Lineo).

From the findings of the study, it is apparent that social workers have a profound understanding of child physical neglect. This is supported by their ability to observe and identify several instances of children who are physically neglected.

4.2.1.2.2 Supervisory neglect

In this study, it was found that young mothers disappear for days leaving children under no supervision of an elder. It emerged that some of the children's lives are found to be at risk as a result of inadequate supervision from their mothers. The participants' views were as follows:

“Some of these parents have reported to have been away because they were going to seek for food packages for their children” (Leloko).

“I have had a case where a child fell, drowned and came out dead from an open pit latrine because the mother was reported to have gone to the shebeen” (Neo).

These storylines indicate that mothers have tendencies of leaving their children unsupervised, however, they carry out the behavior without realizing that leaving a child unsupervised serve as a criminal offence. It is also evident that mothers leave their children behind, unawares of the possible dangers they are subjecting their children to as a result of leaving them unsupervised for a prolonged period.

4.2.2 Social factors contributing to child neglect

This section discusses social factors contributing to child neglect and includes all the subthemes derived from the data analysis process. The sub-themes are as follows; maladaptive parental styles, maternal history of childhood neglect, intentional neglect, early motherhood, spiritual attacks and poverty.

4.2.2.1 Maladaptive parental styles

Participants were asked to elaborate on the social factors contributing to the neglect of children among young mothers. One of the participants reported that she was labelled and compared to her own mother. It was further established that parents of young mothers interviewed in this study, failed to practice responsible parenthood by using maladaptive methods to reproof them as children. This is what was uttered by some of the research participants:

“My father would expect me to cook before going to school. He also yelled at me a lot saying how useless I was, that I was no different from my mother who could not stay in their marriage and would often beat me. I did not engage well with other children and would get expelled from school for unpaid school fees” (Mpeo).

It was revealed by some of the participants that they were emotionally abused as children indicating that their parents expressed hurtful words towards them:

“Everything happens for a reason. If you are usually told you are crap, then you believe, think and start behaving like that” (Matlakala).

“Every slight mistake done that upset my mother, she would tell me that she wished I wasn't born and if I had any contact with the family, she would kill me. I don't remember what I had done to be treated this way. It ruined my life, and the way I see things, I deserve everything that is happening to me” (Kabelo).

One of the participants noted that a form of physical abuse was used as a way of disciplining her.

“I was beaten by my father, saying I am a hard-headed child so he was instilling some discipline in me. I had some marks because I was beaten with his belt” (Bokang).

From the findings of the study, it is apparent that exposure to maladaptive parenting styles has a negative impact on the normal development of children, and how they see themselves, thus resulting in negative and disruptive thinking patterns. It can therefore be concluded that the experiences one goes through in being parented in their early and formative years contribute in setting up the foundation of what parenting strategies they will utilize in future as parents.

4.2.2.2 Maternal history of childhood neglect

Maternal history of childhood neglect emerged as one of the social factors contributing to the neglect of children. From the findings of the study, it was revealed that mothers who had gone through the experience of being neglected and maltreated in their childhood and formative years are capable of neglecting their children as well. One of the participants mentioned that she has an estranged relationship with her own mother. This is what she had to say:

“My mother and I have never had a good relationship; even up to date, we still fight endlessly. I can never say I have a mother that I can talk to if I need support” (Kabelo).

One of the social workers interviewed had this to say about the history of childhood neglect and young mothers being the victims of the problem:

“It could be that some of these mothers were victims too. At the same time, I don’t want to call it projection of things they went through in their early childhood, and to give an example, there is one parent (currently an offender) who neglected her own children.

She would leave her children unsupervised for several days, with no one knowing her whereabouts. So, even when screening and conducting assessments to find out why she leaves her children unsupervised for longer periods, you find that she sees nothing wrong about that as she reasons by saying for them to eat, she has to go all out, saying it's for their benefit. The mother grew up being left alone for hours" (Leloko).

It was further discovered that another aspect of historical neglect is the effect it has on the victim's socio-emotional state. Children who have suffered at the hands of neglectful parents present with both internalizing and externalizing behaviors, which are due to parental childhood trauma being inflicted on the children. Externalizing behaviors include aggressive and disruptive outbursts, while internalizing behaviors include stress and mental health issues:

"I am a very insensitive person. I say what's on my mind right there and then without consideration of how my friends would feel. Whether they feel hurt or not doesn't really bother me" (Moipone).

It is evident from the study's findings that a parent's experience of childhood neglect affects their parental ability to establish stable and secure attachment which can result in neglectful behaviors. It is also clear that childhood neglect is undoubtedly generational and also has unpleasant long-term consequences such as impulsiveness and poor affective regulation for the victim.

4.2.2.3 Intentional child neglect

One of the participants noted that she deliberately left her child unsupervised. The young mother shared that she had reached the point where she had run out of ways to better

discipline her unruly child. It emerged that she was left unsupervised in a place which put her child's life in danger, who by that time was heavily pregnant. For instance, she was left to survive alone at home:

"I went away to go live with my boyfriend. I couldn't live with that child anymore as I felt one day, I was going to end her life... really! I cared less if she died or not" (Kabelo).

Apart from the intentional lack of supervision of a child, one of the participants indicated that she had developed a lack of attachment to her infant. This was uttered by the young mother:

"There were days where I felt so detached from my baby girl; moments where even if she cries, I just let her be" (Bokang).

These views about intentional neglect of children by young mothers may possibly stem from the pain mothers went through in the process of motherhood. In view of how pain may subject a child to neglect, strategies to address neglectful parenting may need to focus on parenting education of young mothers in order to alleviate the potential of child neglect incidences as a result of mothers who are unable to cope or overcome some the parenting challenges.

4.2.1.4 Early motherhood

Young mothers elaborated that early motherhood was a major factor in the neglect of their children. Some of the participants indicated that their neglectful practices as parents stemmed from having limited life skills and experience in parenting. Further, it was established that the impact of loneliness and social isolation when faced with the

responsibility of raising a child alone influenced young mothers to neglect their children.

This is what one of the young mothers said:

“I felt bored with having to look after my babies, and so I would leave them there and go to an isolated place where I would sit alone for several hours and would come back later in the evening when I felt I was hungry” (Bokang).

In addition to this, one of the young mothers mentioned that:

“I was not able to approach and seek advice from friends and family because each time I was around them, they would constantly ask me questions that made me feel uncomfortable, and I got irritated in the process. I felt they were prying about matters that did not concern them and so I would spend most of my time browsing through the internet. I cared less about my children’s well-being as I was too occupied in my own thoughts” (Kabelo).

From a social worker point of view, young mothers neglect their children as a result of lack of support from their families:

“With no help, no sleep and no personal time, young mothers’ frustrations level up and they tend to lose their temper on children. They become impatient because they feel tired and, in such cases, the children are usually left by themselves and do not have much supervision and monitoring” (Leloko).

The findings show that young mothers go through several challenges as a result of becoming mothers at an early age. Also, it was discovered that children of young mothers suffer the occurrences of neglect at the expense of their mothers’ sufferings. Generally,

not only mothers but children also suffer or are faced with several challenges as a result of early motherhood.

4.2.1.5 Spiritual attacks

Amongst the interviewed young mothers, one of the participants revealed that she neglected her children because she was under the influence of spiritual attacks. It was shared that the neglect is not intentional. The young mother had this to say:

“I don’t know how to put it, but, usually, if it happens that I am overcome by ancestral powers, I leave home; I leave my children behind. I don’t communicate with anyone or tell them what I am going through. Most times, the spirit tells me to go far away. For instance, there is one mother who lives in Lady Brand whom I usually go to when I am going through the spiritual episodes. She is a Sangoma. I go to her so that she can assist me, to help me connect with my ancestors. It usually takes time for her to attend to me because there would be many of us at her place, and so I take days, sometimes weeks at her place of dwelling” (Matlakala).

The findings show that some of the participants neglect their children as a result of their ancestral influences. The researcher found this revelation to be interesting as it was not anticipated. Also, it was highlighted that the neglect of children was never intentional as this occurs uncontrollably.

4.1.2.6 Poverty

Most of the participants revealed that poverty is highly influential in the neglect of children. It was found that the basic needs of children are not met as a result of being poor (mothers dropped out of school, they are single parents and receive no support from family and the

fathers of the children). It was also established that for most of the children who were neglected by their mothers, the major predictor was poverty. This is what one of the social workers had to say:

“Statistics indicate that most people are under the poverty line, so poverty plays a huge role in the neglect of children. I think if more mothers were employed, they would be able to fully raise their children” (Neo).

A young mother had this to say:

“There were incidences where my children and I slept on empty stomachs because there was nowhere to take food from” (Bokang).

One of the social workers mentioned that children are malnourished as a result of being raised in poor families:

“Most of these children are underweight because of living in poor conditions where their parents are unable to provide adequate meals for them” (Lineo).

It is apparent that records exist of the prevalence of poverty among young mothers as well as its impacts on the livelihood of children. As a result of poverty, mothers find themselves unintentionally neglecting the needs of their children. Some children were reported to be poorly fed as a result of their mothers being poor.

4.3 Psychological factors heightening child neglect

The goal of the study was to examine the psychological prediction of child neglect from the perspectives of young mothers and social workers. Parental stress, depression and anxiety and substance abuse were found and discussed.

4.3.1 Parental stress

When asked to elaborate on the psychological factors heightening child neglect, participants mentioned parental stress as one of them. It was revealed that young mothers often face several caregiving demands that serve as pathways for parental stress. The following are the storylines of the participants:

“It weighed heavily on me that I have to provide for the needs of these three children as a single parent. It was really stressful, especially when I have nothing and cannot depend on anyone to help me with the children... the fathers of these children are not present in their lives” (Matlakala).

One of the young mothers reported that the source of her stress was the estranged relationship with her mother:

“My relationship with my mother grew apart because she did not like the father of my child. I was very concerned that she would kick me out of her house at the time I needed her the most as I was unemployed and she provided for me” (Kabelo).

From the findings of the study, young mothers were seemingly stressed about how they would make ends meet in their times of desperate need and in taking care of their children. Being in a stressful situation where one has no social support negatively affects children and leads to strained emotional relationships. The lack of social support, either from family, friends and children’s fathers means that these negative emotions (e.g fear of loss and frustrations) are harbored and fester during the trajectory of one’s life and manifest as mental health issues that include depression, anxiety and other psychological problems. And without the proper outlets for these emotions, it results in the internalizing

and externalizing difficulties. The lack of any adaptive coping strategies means that these strains are never dealt with and when young mothers are on their own journeys of motherhood, the trauma and dysfunctionality are continued unto the children they raise.

4.3.1.2 Depression and anxiety

Some of the participants uttered expressions of hopelessness and being constantly worried:

“At first, it was painful and disappointing. I felt hopeless, however, I had to accept because such situations you can never change. After all, a child comes from God” (Rethabile).

Some of the young mothers elaborated on the emotions they experienced as a result of being young mothers:

“It was very worrisome, imagine all those aspirations I had for myself and everything was just shuttered like that, boom! Yes, yes! I was so frustrated. I was struggling to come to terms with the situation, I would cry every day. It was not easy” ().

“It was not nice at all. I was hurt and disappointed in myself that I was going to be a mother at such an early age. It was not easy to accept that my peers will be advancing in life while I am in this place as a result of poor decisions I made” (Lisebo).

Every young person aspires to achieve big dreams and to become a parent at a later stage of their lives. Hence when young mothers found out they were pregnant they experienced several mental health issues that affect their outlook on themselves and life in general. Young mothers seemingly compare themselves with their peers and that unfortunately establishes feelings of despair and loss.

4.3.1.3 Substance abuse

Participants shared their experiences of living with substance abusing spouses. Literature reports that substance abuse is very dangerous as it affects reasoning and logic, and that is why supervisory neglect, physical and sexual abuses are often associated with child neglect (Sanchez-Gomez, 2012). Aggregated substance use is also linked to domestic violence, as alcohol or drug use inhibits reasoning and at often times, triggers behaviors such as aggression and loss of temper (Rusbult, 2004). The following extracts from Lisebo show the consequences of substance abuse on the lives of her children.

“Some days I would leave my own house to go live with my friends. I would leave the children behind because when my husband was drunk, he became very abusive” (Lisebo).

One of the young mothers had this to say:

“At the time, I wasn’t coping at all. I looked for other means to numb my pain, every little cent I had, I would spend it on drug. I was care free because I knew my mother would look after my children while I was gone” (Rethabile).

It can be concluded that substance abuse intensifies the potential of children to be left in the hands of an abusive parent while a mother leaves them behind for her safety. Lack of proper childcare as a result of high alcohol consumption and abusive parents leaves children vulnerable to experiencing long-term trauma.

4.4 Economic factors associated with child neglect

The study sought to examine the economic factors that are associated with child neglect. Unemployment emerged as one contributing factor.

4.4.1 Unemployment

Most of the participants reported that their unemployment status was one of the biggest risk factors that contributed to their neglectful behaviors. Mnisi (2015) highlighted that income instability negatively impacts on how people successfully meet their needs and their family's needs. In this regard, one of the participants had this to say:

“To be unemployed is really hard, especially when you have children to look after, let alone when they become sickly... People wouldn't lend me money if I wanted to take my children to the hospital... They would ask how I was going to pay them back when I was not working” (Fumane).

One of the social workers when asked to name economic factors linked to child neglect, responded in this manner:

“Unemployment is a biggest challenge in this country, especially among youths. This is why some young girls end up dating taxi drivers and old men to get money. Some do it out of desperation to support their families. I have a case of one of the offenders who participated in prostitution. At night, she would leave children to go to work and sometimes during the day” (Mpho).

The following storyline indicates the perspective of one of the social workers on the effects of unemployment on children of unemployed young mothers:

“What can be expected when dealing with unemployed young mothers is that their children do not attend school well; there is a lack of provision of food and adequate housing. The children in these circumstances then will loiter the streets aimlessly and

end up in criminal engagements such as becoming manomoro and their future gets destroyed in the process” (Lineo).

It is easy to see that with being a young mother comes a lot of challenges and a state of extreme unemployment makes it difficult to meet the basic needs of the child and places children at an even greater risk of neglect and a gateway to participation in deviant behaviors as well as becoming members of a gang.

4.5 Mitigation measures against child neglect

The goal of the study was to examine the mitigation measures against child neglect. Mitigation measures that emerged from the findings of the study include acceptance, provision of social and community support, food and clothing supply, influence of fathers’ involvement in their children’s lives and social work support.

4.5.1 Acceptance

In order to examine mitigating measures against child neglect, acceptance emerged as one of the mitigation measures. Most of the participants explained that the ability to accept the changes in their lives helped them to move on. In this regard, one of the participants had the following to say:

“At first, it was not easy at all, but eventually I had to accept that this child will be part of me for the rest of my life even though we’re partly separated now” (Mpeo).

One of the young mothers who was incarcerated as a result of child neglect shared the plans they had after being released from the correctional institution. It can be inferred

from this storyline that the institution had an influence on the young mother to accept her role as a mother:

“One day while seated alone, I told myself that after being released from this place, I am going to be there for my children as there is no one who would do that except me” (Matlakala).

From the findings of the study, it is evident that young mothers' acceptance of their roles as mothers changed how they look at parenting. It can therefore be concluded that acceptance serves as a mitigating measure against the neglect of children.

4.5.2 Provision of social support and community support

Participants mentioned that they get support from their family members and the people they met upon their arrival in the institution. These participants articulated that they get emotional support as well as materialistic support from friends they have made in the institution, family and the institution. They expressed feelings of appreciation from the support and the visits they get from their loved ones. This is what one participant had to say:

“I could not be happier and grateful for the support I get from my family. I never feel alone or lost for being in here, I still feel loved and cared for. They bring me toiletries, pictures of my son and sometimes food” (Fumane).

One participant mentioned that her family lives in a very remote area, however, she appreciates the effort they make to keep in touch with her by sending her the mails. This is what was uttered by the young mother:

“I receive mails from my family who cannot come here, and for that I am very grateful”
(Matlakala).

Some of the participants disclosed that the visits they get from their loved ones give them hope and courage to become better people:

“The words of encouragement I receive from my husband gives me the courage to turn my life around and become a changed person” (Mpeo).

Other participants showed that the visits from their loved ones help them cope better with the life of being institutionalized. They shared that support from family members helps in alleviating stress and loneliness they feel while incarcerated:

“Every time I get visits from my aunt, I feel like some weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I often worry about how things are at home during my absence, so every time she brings new information, I get relieved” (Moipone).

In like manner, concerning receiving support from the community, most of the participants narrated that it is important to depend on community members for support in raising children. In African culture, there is a common saying that goes *“It takes a village to raise a child”*, this is no exception in Lesotho. It is therefore, obvious that if support can be available from the community, children will not be neglected. One of the mothers had this to say:

“In my hometown, if I had errands to run in town or elsewhere, I would ask my neighbor to look after my children until I had gotten back. I knew that my children were safe in the hands of (...) participant mentions name” (Rethabile).

In contrast, one of the participants mentioned her family was very supportive in terms of looking after her child:

“When going to work, I would leave my child at a day care center, but after I was retrenched from work and could not afford the fees any longer, I would ask my sisters to look after my child while I went away to look for a job” (Matlakala).

It is essential to support young mothers through available resources. The acceptance and support of the child by community members will positively improve personal growth and development of the child and it will also benefit young mothers’ socio-emotional well-being.

The following is a narrative of one participant who shared the experience of having received negative judgment from the family, friends and the community. The young mother mentioned that becoming a mother at an early age has made her feel socially isolated owing to lack of support from family and friends.

“Jonna! It is hard. For example, the community and my family would be guarding me everywhere to see whether I am adequately looking after the child. At times I could feel that I am not doing enough to care for my child, but I would be trying. For them, there is nothing good that I do. No one has ever asked me how I was feeling, all that was ever done was to judge me. I felt so alone. Sometimes, before you judge someone, it is best to walk in their shoes and then judge them after” (Kabelo).

Judgmental attitudes towards young mothers affects their coping mechanisms and in turn affect their general well-being. Negative attitudes make it difficult for mothers to accept that they fell pregnant at an early age and to love themselves as well as their children.

Usually, the birth of a child brings joy to the family. On the other hand, when a child is born from a young mother, this may bring shocking reactions from the family. As a result, the family may become resistant to provide support.

4.5.3 Food and clothing supply

Food and clothing are vital basic needs for every individual. It is essential for community members through support groups to identify families at high risk of neglect in order to provide food parcels and clothing donations to such families:

“My child eats a lot. I would be happy if social workers can help with the provision of groceries” (Moipone).

Of the young mothers interviewed, one of them mentioned that the provision of child necessities was once a carried-out activity and showed concern but that no longer takes place:

“We should be provided with napkins and baby formula. I once heard that some clinics used to provide mothers with such but they would start by looking at a mother’s background if one was eligible to get them, but it seems as though that doesn’t happen anymore” (Kabelo).

In addition to what was elaborated by most of the participants, some mentioned that they would appreciate the donation of clothes for their children:

“I would like to be assisted with clothes for my child; she grows so quick” (Moipone).

As indicated in the above narratives, most of the participants’ views are consistent that social support is necessary in order to be able provide adequate care for their children. It

is in the opinion of the researcher that support be provided to families of children whose mothers are impoverished as a result of lack of support from families, communities and lack of paternal support.

4.5.4 Influence of father's involvement in their children's lives

From participants' narratives, it emerged that the presence of fathers in their children's lives is essential as child caregiving is not a walk in the park when carried out by one parent:

"In my opinion, I would want social workers to support young mothers by ensuring that fathers are involved and are supportive to their children. That is the most essential issue I want to see social workers working on" (Neo).

One of the social workers showed emphasis of the fathers' need to be involved in the upbringing of their children:

"Fathers of these children really need to step up and take part in taking the responsibility by helping mothers with the child upbringing role" (Mpho).

It is clear from the findings of the study that the involvement of fathers in their children's lives is necessary and that social workers need to help out in ensuring that fathers are involved and play their fatherly role.

4.5.4 Social work support

Most of the social workers highlighted that social workers who manage cases of children should uphold the responsibility of conducting home visits on a quarterly basis to assess

how the child is holding up, and observe the living conditions, be it that the child is institutionalized or under foster care. This is what one of the social workers had to say:

“Social workers need to come and check up on the child. Life becomes more meaningful when people come to visit at some point” (Leloko).

Majority of social workers mentioned that follow-ups on cases are not consistent and that should be taken into consideration:

“You see if after both the child and its mother are separated, thorough follow-ups should be conducted, specifically in the case of a child, to find out how a child is coping. This can be done telephonically, but the record of follow-ups should be maintained at all costs” (Lineo).

From the findings of the study, it is evident that the social workers advocate for regular home visits, consistent follow-ups on children as well as their mothers. In the opinion of the researcher, visiting and supporting the family and visiting children’s institutions should not happen only once but it should be a continuous process that social workers need take seriously in order to note the progress of children’s well-being.

4.6 Discussion of empirical findings

The discussion of themes that emerged during the process of analysis are presented in this section. The discussion follows the same order that was used in the previous section. The findings are discussed in line with the literature review and the theoretical framework that guided the study. The emergent themes are as follows; social factors contributing to child neglect, psychological factors heightening child neglect; economic factors related to child neglect and mitigation measures against child neglect.

4.6.1 Social factors contributing to child neglect

Social factors are any variables which arise from culture, environment, community, family organizations, society, government, the state, the media, technology, religion, ideology, discourse, language, communication which influences the individual to think and act in a certain way (ORJI, 2018). Ideally, social factors serve to shape, inform and influence people and groups perceptions of their surroundings. Marmot (2005) concurs, social factors are situations, attributes of humanity that influence and affect the way people live and behave. In this case, social factors include: maladaptive parenting styles, maternal history of childhood neglect, early motherhood, intentional neglect, spiritual attacks and poverty.

4.6.1.1 Maladaptive parenting styles

Through participants' lived experiences, they indicated that they have experienced maladaptive parenting from their parents. Further findings show that they were labelled and compared to their parents. It was found that exposure to these circumstances has a negative impact on the normal development of the children. In correspondence with these findings, Stith *et al.* (2009) found that maladaptive parenting styles is related to neglect. Furthermore, Parkinson *et al.* (2017) and Freisthler (2006) articulated that there are few studies on the association of maladaptive parenting styles and the neglect of children and the findings are inconsistent. Concurring with these findings, less research studies that focused on maladaptive parenting styles and child neglect were identified. This therefore implies that an absence of research or more likely a need for more research in this area is a need.

4.6.1.2 Maternal history of childhood neglect

This study has found that in terms of the social factors contributing to child neglect in young mothers, one of the biggest risk determinants is that of a history of childhood neglect experienced by the young mothers. These findings also are in alignment with the findings from Capaldi, Pears, Patterson and Owen (2003) who found that parents' factor increases risk for child neglect. Furthermore, it was revealed by the participants that the reason they neglect their children presently comes as a result of being neglected in their childhood by their parents. This was attested by Lounds *et al.* (2006), Seay, Jahromi, Umaña-Taylor and Updegraff (2016) that a history of neglect acts as a sort of priming agent because children who grow up in maltreated and neglected environments will act from their past experiences to raise their children. Research also shows that neglect in children affects their development in a negative way, affecting their cognitive development, brain development and emotional regulation (Logan-Greene and Semanchin Jones, 2017). In support of this, young mothers attested that they are very insensitive and impulsive when communicating with their peers, sharing that they do not put into consideration how their peers feel after sharing their views.

Generally, it can be concluded that neglected children present with behavioral problems, problematic thinking patterns as well as expressing themselves poorly and encounter attachment issues. This then explains why children affected by neglect end up repeating the same maladaptive parenting practices and continuing the neglectful behaviors.

4.6.1.3 Intentional neglect

Neglect implies failing to provide proper care and attention to a person (The New Penguin English Dictionary, 2001, p. 931). This neglect may be intentional, relating to the findings discussed in section 4.2.2.3.

As per the findings of the study, one of the young mothers revealed that she intentionally left for her intimate partner's place leaving behind her child unsupervised and unmonitored because of her uncontrollable behavior. The possibility of intentional neglect as a result of a child's unruly behavior has been noted in literature, for instance, by UNICEF (2005). The findings of the study showed the linkage of negative parental attitudes towards unruly children leads to child neglect. Apart from the intentional lack of supervision of a child, it was further elaborated that some of the participants neglected their children because of feelings of detachment. Literature on parental detachment from her child was not found in the literature despite efforts made by the researcher. It appears that while intentional neglect of any child is a possibility, the age of a child being neglect does not matter much. This is due to the findings that one mother left her 15-year-old daughter who was at the time pregnant unmonitored and unsupervised. Furthermore, it was revealed that another young mother felt detached from her 1 year 4 months old infant emotionally and physically neglected stating that she disrupted the plans she had for her future and for the fact that she was not ready to be a mother.

4.6.1.4 Early motherhood

Early motherhood counted as one of the contributing factors of child neglect as stipulated by young mothers and social workers. These revelations concur with Avdibegovic and

Brkic (2020) whose study found that children of young mothers (for example, adolescents) are at a greater risk of being neglected as a result of lack of parenting experience, lack of finances and a safe home environment. Parkinson *et al.* (2017) added that due to developmental conditioned poorer judgment and weaker affective regulations in young mothers serve as contributing factors to child neglect. In this study, young mothers expressed feelings of unpreparedness and loneliness in having to undertake the responsibility of raising a child alone and at an early age.

Equally important, it was found from social workers' perceptions that becoming a parent at an early age puts children at risk of being neglected as a result of young mothers' state of unemployment, limited education and general life skills. In line with these findings, in a study conducted by Brown *et al.* (2018) and Zuravin (2016), it was found that young mothers tend to come from lower Socio-Economic-Status (SES) families, as such they were found to be at a higher risk of neglecting their children. In like manner, a study conducted by Lounds *et al.* (2006) revealed that early motherhood, SES and education uniquely predicted child neglect potential.

On the one hand, social workers indicated that young mothers neglect their children as a result of lack of availability of support. It was further revealed that young mothers usually experience high levels of frustrations. They tend to lose their patience and consequently, children are left alone with no adult monitoring and supervising them. These findings concur with the findings of a study conducted by Schumacher *et al.* (2001) and Stith *et al.* (2009). It was found that lack of social support appears as a significant risk factor for child neglect.

In essence, the majority of participants mentioned that early motherhood serves as a major predictor of child neglect among young mothers. This was consistently uttered by both young mothers and social workers.

4.6.1.5 Spiritual attacks

Although the stipulated literature in chapter two did not indicate that spiritual attacks may contribute to the neglect of children, spiritual attacks in this study were found to be predictive of child neglect among young mothers. Young mothers who pointed that they were usually driven by ancestral spiritual attacks have unintentionally neglected their children. Therefore, the findings of the study are on the basis that some of the participants neglect their children as a result of their ancestral influences. The researcher found this revelation to be interesting as it was not anticipated. Also, it was highlighted that the neglect of children was never intentional as the occurrence of ancestral spiritual attacks happen uncontrollably and unaware. It is worth noting that no supporting systematic reviews were identified in this literature search that specifically focused on ancestral spiritual attacks and child neglect. This therefore indicates either an absence of research or more likely, a need for research studies in this area.

4.6.1.6 Poverty

Poverty and child neglect are related. This is supported by the revelations of this study. Poverty emerged as one of the social factors contributing to child neglect. Many of the participants pointed out that poverty is influential in the neglect of children. According to the findings of the study conducted by Berger and Waldfogel (2011); Cancian, Slack and

Yang (2010); DePanfilis (2006); Pelton (1978) and Schumaker (2012), it was found that poverty is a major risk factor for child neglect.

Furthermore, it was indicated that poverty is influenced by mothers dropping out of school, being single parents and receiving no support from friends and family. Findings from several studies are consistent regarding the contribution of poverty to the occurrence of child neglect (Coulton, Crampton, Irwin, Spilsbury and Korbin, 2007 and Freisthler, Merritt and Lascala, 2006).

Interestingly, it was discovered from this study's findings that not all of young mothers' neglectful behaviors were intentional, irrespective of the existence of poverty as a risk factor. Lamont and Price-Robertson (2013) concurred; it is essential to note that the presence of risk factors does not mean the parent intentionally neglected their children. Akerhurst (2015) also added that, it is vital that this difference is understood when interpreting the findings on risk factors for child neglect. Similarly, young mothers in this study who reported to be living in poverty highlighted that their neglectful behaviors were not intentional or to put a child at risk.

4.6.2 Psychological factors heightening child neglect

Bromfield, Lamont, Parker and Horsfall (2010) state that parental psychological problems or difficulties can have an effect on a wide range of their parenting abilities, thus, it was anticipated that psychological illnesses would heighten the occurrence of child neglect as per the study's research objectives.

4.6.2.1 Parental stress

When asked to state the psychological factors increasing child neglect among young mothers, social workers and young mothers mentioned parental stress as one of the contributing factors. The findings of the study revealed that young mothers come across various caregiving demands that weigh heavily on them to the extent that they experience stress. Majority of participants noted that the source of their stress stems from the demands of caregiving. However, few of the participants mentioned that the estranged relationships between them and their mothers as a result of conflict of interest causes them to develop stress. These findings concur with the findings of the study conducted by Akerhurst (2015); Schumacher *et al.* (2001) and Stith *et al.* (2009) that indicated that poor parental mental health and well-being is a potential predictor for child neglect. Furthermore, Akerhurst (2015) identified a small number of studies that revealed that children whose parents had poor emotional well-being were at a greater risk of experiencing neglect as this may impact their parenting abilities or behaviors. The overall findings of this study were that parental stress affects young mothers' parenting behaviors thus resulting in the neglect of children.

4.6.2.2 Depression and anxiety

As anticipated, the findings of the study indicated that mental illness of a parent is a potential predictor for child neglect. The study's findings are in line with Stith *et al.* (2009) who in their meta-analysis found that parent psychopathology and depression had effects on increasing the risk of a child experiencing neglect. Per the findings of the study, majority of participants indicated feelings of hopelessness and sadness and being

worried. It was revealed that young mothers grieve the loss of their dreams and aspirations as a result of becoming parents. Furthermore, in their state of hopelessness, it was discovered that they tend to neglect their children.

4.6.2.3 Substance abuse

Substance abuse emerged as an antecedent of child neglect. Participants reported that substance abuse is a big problem that affects the role of parenting negatively and also indicated that substance abusing parents misuse family resources and neglect their children who lack food, clothes, supervision and other basic necessities. Blumenthal (2015) concurs with these findings that parental characteristics that are associated with child neglect include substance abuse among many others.

Participants revealed that frustration with poverty was one reason for substance abuse as well as endangering their own health as young mothers and neglecting the well-being of their children. Social workers attested that substance abusing parents and spouses pose a serious challenge for those who wish to help their children, as they are reported to use any resources to buy alcohol or drugs.

Few of the participants mentioned that they neglected their children because they (young mothers and their intimate partners) spent most of their time spending and consuming alcohol. Blumenthal (2015) also concurs with these findings by stating that in his review, it was found that parents may emotionally neglect their children as a result of being preoccupied with their substance abusing intimate partner.

From a general viewpoint of this study's findings, substance abuse serves as a predictor of child neglect as it was found that parents' misuse of substances may impair their ability to attend to the children's needs.

4.6.3 Economic factors related to child neglect

The following is a discussion of how economic factors relate to the neglect of children.

4.6.3.1 Unemployment

When investigating how economic factors relate to the neglect of children, it was found that unemployment plays a huge role in the incidences of child neglect among young mothers. These findings concur with the literature that the state of unemployment of young mothers is associated with the high risk of child neglect (Parkinson *et al.* 2017). On the one hand, Blumenthal (2015) was of the view that the relation between unemployment status of parents and neglect is complex. Austin (2015), on the one hand, found that poverty is most often reported as a significant risk factor for neglect. Although there appears to be variations of findings in relation to unemployment and child neglect, consistent findings from the literature show that unemployment is the major contributing factor to child neglect (Coulton *et al.* 2007; Freisthler *et al.* 2006 and Maguire-Jack, 2014). From the findings of this study, the association appears to be particularly strong for child neglect. It was further found that extreme unemployment inhibits young mothers to provide for the basic needs of the child and thus places children at an increased risk of neglect.

4.6.4 Mitigation measures against child neglect

Participants of the study suggested some mitigations of the study that they believed would support young mothers and lessen the occurrences of child neglect if put in practice. These include; acceptance, provision of support, food and clothing supply, influence of father's involvement in their children's lives and social work support.

4.6.4.1 Acceptance

As per the findings of the study, acceptance was suggested as one of the mitigation measures of child neglect. Majority of young mothers shared their experiences of being able to accept what cannot be changed and cited that as a mitigation measure. In accordance with these findings, the findings of a study by Raphulu (2021) revealed that transition to motherhood and acceptance of the child needs time and as a parent one should be emotionally stable to accept the changes. Raphulu (2021) further found that the acceptance and support of the child by the community members will positively improve personal growth and development of the child. In this regard, in relation to the findings of the study, it is apparent that young mothers' acceptance of their new roles as mothers defeat the occurrence of child neglect.

4.6.4.2 Provision of social support and community support

Most of the participants narrated that they get support and visitation from their family and friends during their incarceration. This finding corroborates Meyers, Wright, Young and Tasca (2017) who revealed that prison visitation serves as a critical setting by which life interacts with civilian life. It was found that participants experience feelings of appreciation and contentment as a result of these visits. This finding is in accordance with Mohau

(2021) who found that visits alleviate stress and loneliness felt during their incarceration thus making their stay in prison less unbearable. In support, Datchi and Sexton (2013) found that provision of social support is a safeguarding tool for social constraints and adversities faced by inmates while incarcerated and of great help to alleviate mental illnesses and their effects. This finding may imply that young mothers receive more support from their families and friends than older inmates. Availability of support seems to play a vital role in the mental well-being and health of inmates during their period of incarceration. This authenticates Meyers *et al.* (2017) who noted that prison visitation and can lessen strain, alienation and pains of incarceration. Visher and O'Connel (2012) also showed that prison visitations have been demonstrated to improve inmates' mental health as well as their physical health.

In terms of receiving support from the community, participants suggested the importance of community support in raising their children during their stay in the correctional institution. This is in corroborate with Sawyer, Brittman, Greca, Grettenden, Borojevic, Raghavendra and Russo (2011) who found that it is important to support mothers of children who are incarcerated through community awareness campaigns to establish ways of providing the needs of their children in order to reduce the impact of neglect and being separated from their mothers. Raphulu (2021) concurs that these awareness campaigns may be facilitated by social workers. In support, it is in the opinion of the researcher that social workers work with support groups in the communities. Support groups will act as mediators and will be able to identify and provide support to the most vulnerable children.

There was however, one participant who mentioned that she received negative treatment from the family, friends and the community, articulating that she felt socially isolated owing to lack of support from friends and family. The participant's experience is supported by a study conducted in Zambia (Singogo, Mweshi and Rhoda, 2015) where mothers conveyed that having a child at an early age has made them feel socially isolated due to lack of support from family and the community.

4.6.4.3 Food and clothing supply

Participants noted the need for help for families at risk for neglecting their children in terms of food and clothes. This finding corroborates the Department of Social Development (2010); Sehlabane (2014) who found that social relief of distress is a form of social assistance aimed at helping needy or vulnerable people by providing food vouchers, food packages or clothes. The findings of Almari, Palisano, Dunst, Chiarello, O'Neill and Polansky (2011) authenticated that service providers may work collaboratively with families when providing services. Literature notes that feeding schemes are used in some locations. In support, social workers may help with fundraising campaigns to assist young mothers in meeting their basic needs, for example, source donations of clothing and food parcels.

4.6.4.4 Influence of father's involvement in their children's lives

From the findings of the study, it was suggested that the influence of fathers' involvement in their children's lives is essential as child caregiving by one parent is not an easy job. The findings of this study resemble with Kaufmann (2013) who revealed that the involvement of fathers in their children's lives and families has multiple benefits such as

empowering mothers financially, improved maternal health and promotion of positive child development. Additionally, Garip, Ozel, Tuncer, Kilinc, Seckin and Arasil (2016) concur that presented with the reality that child caregiving has psychological, social and financial impacts on mothers and families, father involvement will assist mothers to cope with the needs and demands of caring for children. From the findings of this study, social workers noted that fathers who are absent in their children's lives negatively affects the development and well-being of children. In accordance with this revelation, a study on a support program for young mothers in Ghana revealed that challenges experienced by children in school, academic performance, mental health, pubertal development, delinquent behavior and sexual behavior, were aggravated by the absence of their fathers (Zuurmond, Nyante, Baltussen, Seeley, Abanga, Shakespeare, Collumbien and Bernays, 2018).

4.6.4.5 Social work support

The study found that there is a need to carry out progressive home visits to assess the child's condition and to observe the living conditions. In line with this finding, Huang, Kellet and St. John (2010) noted that, to promote better understanding of the child's condition, follow-ups and visitations should be carried out by social workers. In addition, Rapodile (1998), in her study on guidelines for social work practice, emphasized the need for social workers to understand the importance psychosocial challenges affecting children and young mothers.

Table 4.4: A summary of the four principles of the Problem Behavior Theory that shows which theoretical framework principle relate to the themes that emerged from the study respectively.

Theoretical Framework	Principles of the theory	Theme and Sub-themes
Problem Behavior Theory	The Behavior	Theme One: Social factors contributing to child neglect Sub-themes: Maladaptive parenting styles, Maternal history of childhood neglect, Intentional child neglect, Early motherhood, Spiritual attacks and Poverty
Problem Behavior Theory	The Personality	Theme Two: Psychological factors heightening child neglect Sub-themes: Parental stress, Depression and anxiety and Substance abuse
Problem Behavior Theory	The Perceived Environment	Theme Three: Economic factors increasing child neglect Sub-themes: Unemployment
Problem Behavior Theory	The Control Principle	Theme four: establish mitigation measures against child neglect. Sub-themes: Acceptance, Provision of social and community support, Food and clothing supply, Influence of fathers' involvement in their children's lives and social work support

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the presentation and discussion of findings on factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho: A case of a Female Correctional Institution in Maseru, Lesotho. It presented the demographic characteristics of participants of social workers and young mothers, followed by the empirical findings that were presented using main themes that emerged during the process of data analysis as per the objectives of the study, from which sub themes that were derived during data analysis are also highlighted. To support the

findings presented, some of the storylines from the in-depth interview participants are included. Theme one investigated social factors contributing to child neglect. Theme two identified psychological factors heightening child neglect; theme three examined economic factors related to child neglect, followed by theme four which established mitigation measures against child neglect. Following presentation of findings was the discussion of the same findings that was done in line with the literature and theoretical framework adopted by the study. The following chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions of the study and recommendations made by the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions to the study and the recommendations as informed by the study's findings. The chapter outlines recommendations to specific agencies, social work practice, policy implications and future research, respectively, and the chapter summary that brings the research study to a close.

5.1 Summaries of findings

In this section, the findings as per the themes that emanated from the objectives of the study are discussed. The main objective of this research study was to explore the factors contributing to child neglect from the frame of reference of incarcerated young mothers and social workers in the Female Correctional Institution based in Maseru, Lesotho and to extend the mitigation measures against child neglect as a specific objective. The themes identified are as follows; social factors contributing to child neglect, psychological factors heightening child neglect, economic factors related to child neglect and mitigation measures against child neglect.

As previously mentioned in chapter four, these findings do not form part of the study's objectives, however, were found to be influential to the study's general findings.

5.1.1 Number of child neglect cases attended per year

The researcher aimed to find the number of child neglect cases attended yearly. It was noted that there are cases of child neglect reported, however, the rehabilitation officers had no statistical records to account for such cases. Some of the participants reported an average number of cases of child neglect, while one reported having not come across any child neglect cases before from their caseloads. The findings therefore revealed that about eleven cases of child neglect were reported during the year 2021 in the Female Correctional Institution.

The participants reported two subtypes of child neglect. As revealed by participants, the nature of child neglect cases reported were physical neglect and supervisory neglect. These incidences of child neglect were supported by evidence from the study participants.

5.1.2 Social factors contributing to child neglect

The study sought to explore social factors contributing to child neglect. In this regard, the findings revealed a number of factors, including maladaptive parenting styles, maternal history of childhood neglect, intentional child neglect, spiritual attacks, early motherhood and poverty.

With this premise, poverty was reported to be one of the major contributing factors of child neglect. It was reported that dropping out of school, single parenthood and lack of social support experienced by young mothers appeared as critical challenges to providing adequate care to children. From the findings, young mothers were unskilled or unable to parent children as a result of becoming parents at an early age and not having enough exposure of child rearing. Young mothers' own experience of childhood neglect

contributes to the neglect of children. It was indicated that there exists strained relationships between young mothers and their children. Children get involved with the wrong crowd that mothers disapprove, then this has a negative influence on the behavior of children as well as the relationship between the mother and the child.

Furthermore, young mothers confirmed that as a result of being neglected as children, they have less or no parent-child interaction with their own children. Access to parental nurturing is a basic need for infants, toddlers and young children. It is expected of mothers to provide the best possible care and opportunities for the development of their children. The researcher noticed that some of the participants did not feel comfortable to discuss the topic of trauma. Again, they lack adequate knowledge about the term trauma in order to talk about it openly.

Findings further revealed that young mothers were exposed to maladaptive parenting styles, as such, that has impacted their normal development thus resulting in problem behaviors in their roles as parents. Equally important, instances of intentional neglect and spiritual attacks on young mothers were highlighted.

Some of the participants revealed that they intentionally neglected their children because they stipulated that their children were unruly and therefore had exhausted all means of discipline, as a result, they neglected them. Also, some of the participants indicated that they experienced feelings of detachment from their children. It was therefore inferred that could be due to the pain or hardships encountered during the process of parenting.

It was revealed that young mothers' ancestral spiritual attacks have an influence on their neglectful tendencies, even though it was mentioned that the occurrence of neglect is not intentional but rather, as it happens, it is usually out of control of the young mother.

5.1.3 Psychological factors heightening child neglect

The researcher wanted to gain an understanding of the psychological factors heightening child neglect from the perspectives of young mothers and social workers. The findings in this theme revealed that participants experience several psychological encounters that serve as pathways to the neglect of children. Parental stress emerged as one of the core causes of child neglect among young mothers. According to the participants, stress comes as a result of the inability to provide for the basic needs of children which is then influenced by lack of finances or the state of unemployment. It also emerged that the absence of fathers in their children's lives weighs heavily on young mothers. One participant shared that parenting twins is too demanding as compared to parenting only one child. Therefore, with all the pressure experienced, they end up having backache, stressed and frustrated and at times blame themselves for falling pregnant at an early age.

The findings further indicated that young mothers are prone to depression and anxiety as a result of grieving the loss of their aspirations upon becoming parents at a young age. As a result of grieving, participants should be provided with outlets to vent their emotions, this can be a great platform to establish means to help them further their studies.

From the findings, substance abuse emerged as another contributing factor to neglectful behaviors of parents. It was revealed that substance abuse increases the vulnerability of children to be exposed to several risks.

5.1.4 Economic factors related to child neglect

The study sought to identify the economic factors related to child neglect. Supported by literature, it was established that young mothers' unemployment status paves way for the occurrence of child. It was revealed by the findings of the study that some parents do not intentionally neglect their children. The incident happens as a result of going out to seek for employment.

Social work participants noted that due to the high unemployment rate among young people, young mothers specifically date older men in order to get money for them to support their children. It was also indicated that parents' unemployment status negatively affects children's well-being in the sense that they miss on school and there is lack of provision of nutritious food and housing. It was also reported that children of unemployed mothers end up engaging with gangsters. Notably, parental unemployment status affects children's well-being negatively.

5.1.5 Mitigation measures of child neglect

The theme emanated from one of the study's objectives, which is to establish the mitigation measures against child neglect. The findings in this theme suggest that acceptance serves as one of the mitigation measures. It was revealed that young mothers' acceptance of their children is necessary so as to provide adequate parenting to their children. Participants further narrated that getting support from the community will

be helpful in providing care for children. It was indicated that members of the community practice giving supporting materials (food packages and clothes) to the families of young mothers who are less privileged. The findings further stated that getting support from the community will benefit both the child and its mother in several aspects of their lives.

However, it was also established that negative attitude from some of the community members, friends and family negatively affects young mothers in that they become socially isolated. It can be concluded that social support is a necessity in order to strengthen young mothers' resilience.

Findings of the study showed that provision of food and clothing seemed to be the requirement of many participants. They felt that if they are met halfway by social workers, their concerns will be lessened. In essence, support received from social workers, family members and the community was commended by some participants.

In this study, it was established that absent fathers in the lives of their children was a challenge. On average, participants shared that they received support from their children's biological fathers. On the other hand, other participants were sad to share that their children's biological fathers were not involved in their children's lives. Therefore, lack of paternal support not only affects a mother's well-being but even those of the children.

The findings revealed that there is a need to do more home-visits to keep track of the progress of families or institutions where neglected children are placed. Some ailments may be lessened with the consistent available support and visitation by social workers.

5.2 Conclusions

The objectives of the study were outlined in chapter 1, namely, to explore factors contributing to child neglect from the perspectives of incarcerated young mothers and social workers and to establish mitigation measures against child neglect. Factors that contribute to child neglect were identified within the social, psychological and economic aspects. Poverty, intentional neglect, spiritual attacks, maternal history of childhood neglect, parental stress, depression and anxiety, parental stress and unemployment were identified as the predictors of child neglect. The study further examined the mitigation measures against child neglect, some of the identified measures are as follows: acceptance, provision of community support and social support, food and clothing supply, influence of fathers' involvement in their children's lives and social work support. As such, the conclusions made by the study are as follows:

5.2.1 Objective one: Social factors contributing to child neglect

As per the research question, incarcerated young mothers and social workers were asked to elaborate on the social factors contributing to child neglect. Several social factors were outlined, however, those that appeared to be more common and dominant as mentioned by both parties were poverty, early motherhood and maternal history of childhood neglect. Based on the findings, it is concluded that child neglect occurs as a result of a young mother's state of poverty, becoming a mother at an early age and a mother's history of childhood adversities.

5.2.2 Objective two: Psychological factors heightening child neglect

When asked to mention the psychological factors heightening child neglect among incarcerated young mothers, social workers and incarcerated young mothers indicated that such factors include parental stress, depression and anxiety as well as substance abuse. It was found that these factors affect the parental abilities of understanding the needs of the child as well as establishing a stable and secure attachment that resulted in the neglect of children. Young mothers' state of psychological instability was therefore concluded to be the major risk factor of the neglect of children.

5.2.3 Objective three: Economic factors related to child neglect

The goal of the study was to identify the economic factors related to child neglect. From the frame of reference of incarcerated young mothers and social workers, the major contributing factor indicated was the state of unemployment of young mothers. It was found that children of young mothers who are unemployed, are at a greater risk of experiencing neglect. A conclusion was therefore made that young mothers' unemployment status relates to the neglect of children.

5.2.4 Objective four: Mitigation measures against child neglect

The purpose of the study was to establish the mitigation measures against child neglect. Participants were asked to provide those mitigation measures, they included acceptance, community support and influence of father's involvement in their children's lives, food and clothing supply and social work support. From the findings of the study, a spark of hope emerged that the occurrence of child neglect would cease if these were implemented. As per the findings of the study, it was concluded that young mothers are in dire need of

social support from the fathers of their children, their families, and the community as well as support from the social workers.

5.3 Challenges encountered

In the past, Lesotho Correctional Services has been exposed to social media negativity, and for this reason, there was much unwillingness to allow the researcher to conduct the study. This therefore, affected the researcher's data collection schedule. This was very stressful for the researcher as the institution was her only option as a result of the nature of the study. For safekeeping purposes, as revealed by the Commissioner of Lesotho Correctional Service, the researcher's request to use an audio recorder during interviews so as to help at the stage of data analysis was not approved. This presented several complications for the researcher because she had to depend on field notes only to carry out the analysis process.

The rehabilitation officers were assigned to help the researcher; however, they were not always readily available as they worked on shifts, and this made the researcher to wait for their availability at work. Out of five rehabilitation officers, only one refused to be interviewed, this then reduced the sample of the key informants. Upon arrival at the institution, the researcher was told to wait a little longer as some of the young mothers had gone for their educational lessons at Juvenile Training Centre (JTC). This tempered with the plan the researcher had considered for herself. Lack of funds presented some challenges for the researcher. The researcher used her own money to make ends meet for the study to be completed on time.

5.4 Recommendations

This section provides a presentation of recommendations to relevant stakeholders such as, specific agencies, social work practice, policy implications and future research in addressing factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers.

5.4.1 Recommendations for specific agencies

As guided by the study's findings, the study makes the following recommendations to specific agencies like the Ministry of Social Development, child welfare organizations and non-governmental organizations.

5.4.1.1 Recommendations for the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD)

- Social workers have a key role in identifying and referring cases of neglect and reporting suspected cases of neglect to the appropriate authorities.
- It is essential that cases of child neglect are detected early, so as to minimize the outcomes for the child and design the suitable intervention plan as soon as possible.
- It is recommended that the ministry set up programs that include therapy and education for the parents on child development and help them improve their skills in managing their children's behavior. From the study's findings, one participant reported that she neglected her child as a result of her unruly behavior.
- The ministry should devise services for mothers who were neglected as children and specifically in serving referrals to mental health services.
- MoSD must place the well-being of looked after children, including recovery from past trauma, at the center of all processes and decision-making. This will include

prioritizing affection, security and a sense of belonging and children's relations with those close to them.

5.4.1.2 Recommendations for child welfare organizations

- There is a need for development of specific, standard criteria to identify families and children at risk of neglect or those families in which child neglect has already taken place.
- It is recommended that the best practice in tackling neglect is to identify patterns of neglect early.
- Identify and tackle the main causes of certain family's challenges and behaviors and identifying practicing a strength-based perspective and motivations.
- Engaging the family effectively in a process of change.

5.4.1.3 Recommendations for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- It is recommended that NGOs provide various services to support high-risk families such as food packages and clothing, education about the occurrences of child neglect, awareness of child neglect as a criminal offence and strategies to mitigate against the phenomenon.
- They must provide in-home assistance, in which official assistants offer families with the prospect to consider each individual's perspective on parenting challenges and the formulation of new strategies of interaction.
- It is recommended that NGOs support families at risk and those that child neglect has occurred with budgeting, debt management and entrepreneurial skills and other practical help in the home.

- Provision of support and or treatment for parents experiencing poor mental health or substance abuse difficulties.
- Provision of support in addressing problems such as domestic violence, anger management or social isolation.
- Implementation of interventions planned to promote positive parenting or parent-child psychotherapy.

5.4.1.4 Recommendations for social work practice

Social work interventions range from the primarily person-focused psycho-social processes to involvement in social policy, planning and development. This therefore suggests that social workers have roles in regard to neglect at both a macro and micro level.

- At a macro level, social workers' national professional agencies must actively campaign for social justice aimed at improved children's health and welfare services.
- It is recommended that social workers move towards advocacy for the provision of essential public goods and accessible quality health care and quality education for high-risk families.
- At the micro level family intervention, social work practice needs to focus on poverty reduction strategies through facilitating ease of access to: supplementary food programs to support household food security; micro-credit to buy essential goods and clothing and weather crises; intermediate technologies to improve the

processing and preservation of food crops; and training in simple preventative health care and treatment of communal, but life-threatening infections.

- Young mothers require training in enhancing the level of care they can provide for their children. This training relates to these outlined aspects in their roles as mothers: the importance of attachment and how it helps in the healthy development of the child, self-care and skills to enhance young mothers' coping mechanisms, mother's understanding of neglect and its impact on children, children presenting with behavioral issues due to neglect and medical care provisions and emergencies concerning the children in their care.
- Social workers should step in and support children affected by neglect in several socio-emotional ways, through provision of much needed therapies for children.
- Children's cases must take priority and should be finalized as quickly as possible.
- It is recommended that social workers gather and provide adequate background information on the mother and her child or children in need of assistance in order to provide care according to the needs of the neglected child and the mother as the offender.
- Widespread prevention and educational campaigns are another approach to decreasing child neglect. These interventions stem from the idea that increasing awareness and understanding of the phenomenon among the general population will lead to lower levels of child neglect. This can take place directly with offenders realizing their own behavior as law-breaking or indirectly with increased recognition and reporting of child neglect by community members.

5.4.2 Recommendations towards policy implementations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to the government and the department of the correctional service.

5.4.2.1 Recommendations to the government

- As the governing body, it is essential for the government to acknowledge child neglect as a distinct form of child maltreatment, so that they can freely allocate the necessary resources which will lead to the reduced prevalence of the offence in the country.
- Government must prioritize reducing factors contributing to child neglect and ensure that resources reflect its prevalence and impact. Resources must be adequate for local areas to afford children and families to receive sufficient support at an early stage so that harm can be prevented.
- Attention should be given to adopting a public health approach to addressing neglect. This may entail population-based activity and targeted support, drawing more on information of need and focusing the causal factors of neglect.
- Support for households where child neglect has been identified should not focus on parenting only. Government officials and service providers should ensure therapeutic support and interventions are also provided to support children and young people recover from the impacts of neglect.

5.4.2.2 Reviewing and evaluation of existing programs

The discovery was made that the structure of rehabilitation and the programs had been formulated while the institutions were previously regarded as prisons.

- Review and evaluation of existing programs was not done when the transition from prisons to corrections was done. As such, the commissioner, the senior rehabilitation officer and principal rehabilitation officers are recommended to review and evaluate the existing programs.
- It can be concluded that the programs may be outdated thus minimizing their effectiveness in reformation of offenders. Reviewing and evaluating these programs will assist in developing suitable programs that will address offenders' criminogenic needs.
- The rehabilitation unit as the overseer must be informed and be properly guided so as to provide timely, adequate and effective rehabilitation services to the offenders.
- Courts of law should take into consideration the effects of separation on children, especially infants and toddlers, and it is recommended that relevant bodies finalize their cases as soon as possible.

5.4.2.3 Awards of certificates in program participation

- From the findings of the study, it was discovered that participation in recreational programs affords young mothers great opportunities for employment. As such, certificates should be awarded to those offenders who have successfully completed their recreational programs to increase their employment opportunities.
- Only tailoring programs offer certificates to offenders upon completion of training programs. These certificates will aid offenders in their job hunt, therefore, every training program available at the institution, should give offenders the awards upon completion of training.

5.4.2.4 Recommendations to the department of correctional service

The purpose for the transition from prisons to the correctional service was to ensure that the rate of recidivism is reduced through effective rehabilitation. As such, with the below suggestions, success could be achieved.

5.4.2.5 Sharing of information platforms

In this study, it was discovered that social support seemed to have an influence on the reformation of offenders. Therefore, department of correctional service should sensitize community members about the importance of social support in reformation of offenders, especially support from friends and families.

- Providing informative knowledge about the positive influence of social support visitations at the institution could help to improve the support systems for offenders thus help in their journey of reformation during public gatherings (Pitsos) or mass media.

5.4.2.6 Broadening services within the institutions

- Counselling programs should be broadened. Professionals with experience in various fields of work should be employed to deliver effective counselling counseling sessions which will address the needs of the offenders.
- Professionals should work on their schedule to accommodate offenders in counseling sessions to lessen burnout.
- The institution should hire more and experienced staff to reduce work overload to ensure effective service delivery.

5.4.2.7 Employment of qualified personnel in recreational skill training programs

- The recreational skills training programs require skilled and qualified personnel to provide proper training to offenders. For this reason, hiring people of this caliber will not only ensure good quality service provision but will also create new job opportunities for the unemployed Basotho, so as to reduce aspects of unemployment and poverty that were revealed as major sources of child neglect in the study's findings.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

The following suggestions are made for future research on the basis of stipulated challenges and scarcity of literature in the context of Lesotho.

- The social attitudes about children and violence were lacking in this study. However, in a broader sample of high and low risk parents, these two varying causal factors could prove to be essential influences on the prediction of child neglect.
- Population-based sampling would allow for the determination of common and distinctive causal factors of child neglect within a variety of groups of low and high-risk parents, thus enabling researchers to address a crucial question: are factors contributing to neglect and its impact on children, similar within and across multiple groups?
- Future research should be aimed at studying child neglect and examining its antecedents among young mothers and adult mothers, varying in degrees of risk, to distinguish the best strategies for prevention.

- Future research should also focus on the impacts of interventions with young mothers that are deemed to the parenting characteristics that puts them at risk for neglectful parenting. For example, programs might teach young mothers more positive and effective ways of interacting with their children as well as lessening severity in their attitudes towards parenting and their children.
- More qualitative studies on factors contributing to child neglect should be conducted which will increase the inclusion of the sample of family members, the neighbors and chiefs, police and prosecutors. These groups of people will help add more findings to the ones already established in this study hence more literature will surface, in the context of Lesotho.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the challenges encountered when conducting the study, conclusions reached about the study and recommendations suggested that address the challenges revealed that affects the understanding of child neglect. Suggestions for future research concluded this chapter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide for young mothers

In-depth Interview Guide for Young Mothers

Title of the research

Factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho: A case of a Female correctional institution.

Participant's Name: -----

Age: -----

Marital status-----

Residence: -----

Highest educational attainment: -----

Employment status: -----

Number of children: -----

Gender of child/ren: -----

Child/ren's age: -----

1. Which experiences made you feel like your parents did not love you, did not look out for you, support you or made you feel important?
2. What circumstances made you feel you did not have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes and your parents were too drunk to take care of you, or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
3. How is your relationship with your child/ren and the child's father?
4. Who do you rely on for support?
5. Growing up, what were your experiences of living with a family member who was an alcoholic?

6. What was/is like living with a family member is depressed or mentally ill?
7. What are some of the mental health issues do you usually encounter that you think affect you and your parenting?
8. What usually triggers these mental issues?
9. In what ways does your employment status affect you as a young mother?
10. What are some of the mechanisms that provide that provide support to young mothers in Lesotho?
11. What are your suggestions for minimizing factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers in Lesotho?

Appendix 2: Interview guide for social workers

Key Informant Interview guide (Social Workers)

Title of the research

Factors contributing to child neglect among young mothers incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho: A case of a Female Correctional Institution.

Participant's Name:

Age: -----

Residence: -----

Marital status-----

Highest educational attainment: -----

Place of employment: -----

Period of work experience: -----

1. What is the minimum number of child neglect cases attended per year?
2. What is the nature of child neglect cases normally attended to?
3. In what ways do limited parenting skills/or poor parenting techniques affect children of young mothers?
4. In what ways do limited parenting skills affect young mothers?
5. What are your views regarding lack of social support and young motherhood?
6. In your perception, how does a mother's diagnosis of mental illness affect her parenting abilities?
7. How does the severity of parental substance use relate to their children's risk of experiencing neglect?
8. How does a young mother's unemployment status relate to their children's risk of experiencing neglect?
9. Which resources does the institution rely on to support young mothers?
10. What recommendations for change would you make for better social work support for young mothers and their children?

Appendix 3: Request to conduct research

Manana Mothabeng
Ha-Tsolo
P.O. Box 12861
Maseru 100

O1/03/2022

Lesotho Correctional Service
The Commissioner
P.O. Box 41
Maseru 100
Lesotho

Dear Sir/ Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct research- Manana Mothabeng (Reg. No: 201401822)

My name is Manana Mothabeng, a postgraduate student in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work at the National University of Lesotho, studying towards obtaining a Master of Social Work degree. As per the degree programme requirements, we are supposed to carry out a research study. My research is titled "*Factors contributing to Child Neglect among Young Mothers Incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho: A case of a Female Correctional Institution*".

I am hereby requesting permission from your institution to conduct this research project. I am conducting this research to explore the social, psychological and economic factors contributing to child neglect among Maseru young incarcerated for neglecting their children in Maseru, Lesotho, as well as to establish the possible mitigating measures of child neglect. The institution has been selected on the basis of experience and insight that can be provided in true professional perceptions and experiences in dealing with cases of child neglect.

For data collection, the study will entail at least six face to face interviews with the allocated social workers the institution will provide access to. Data will be transcribed in a confidential and anonymous manner, not to implicate any social workers or the institution they work for. The institution will be provided with the results and suggestions obtained from the study first-hand, before the results are made available on a public platform. The researcher does not foresee potential risk for partaking in the study as all identifying information of participants and the participating institution will be kept confidential unless requested by the institution or participants otherwise. The researcher will keep regular contact with the Lesotho Correctional Service regarding concerns and progress of the study. In case of any additional information needed, feel free to contact the undersigned.

Yours Faithfully

Manana Mothabeng

Researcher: Master of Social Work

Email: mothabengmartha@gmail.com

Appendix 4: Letter of approval to conduct research

Telegrams: Rehabit MASERU
Telephone: (266) 63834360
Email: lcs.commissioner@gov.ls



Office of the Commissioner
of Correctional Service
P.O. Box 41
Maseru 100
Lesotho

CORR/HQ/Q/3

7TH MARCH 2022

Ms Manana Mothabeng
Student Ref No. 201401822
NUL
Roma

Dear Madam,

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The above subject matter bears reference.
Your request to conduct research study on "factors associated with child neglect among young mothers in Maseru, Lesotho" has been approved. Your study will be carried out at Female Correctional Institution.

You are to produce this letter and your student identification to the Officer Commanding Female Correctional Institution and make arrangements with her on data collection.

I hope you find this in order.

Yours faithfully,

**M. NKAHALA
COMMISSIONER**

**CC : Regional Commander- Central Region
Officer commanding Female Correctional Institution
Director Rehabilitation
Rehab Manager - Central Region**

Appendix 5: Informed consent form

Informed consent form

Consent to participate in the study

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that Ms. Mothabeng has asked for my consent and has told me everything I need to know about taking part in the study. I have understood the study as explained by the researcher. I have had enough opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report and journal publications and that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I agree to at least two face to face interviews with the researcher. I have received a copy of the informed consent form and signed it.


Participant Name & Surname.....

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

Appendix 6: Similarity Check Report

Similarity Report ID: oid:6524:117986344

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