

DECLARATION

I, Khanyisile B. Manukuza, declare that legal placement of orphaned children with relatives: The perspectives of Social Workers, is my own unaided work and assistance obtained has been in the form of professional supervision. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any university.

Khanyisile B. Manukuza

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family that is my parents Mr and Mrs Manukuza for their untiring support throughout, my lovely sister Mrs Dumi Manukuza-Nkosi and my little Brother Sabelo Manukuza. I had a lot of challenges during the course of study and they have been there throughout to support and encourage me up until I achieved my endeavour.

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ABSTRACT

After the transition from apartheid to democracy, the South African government embarked on designing policies and laws to address social problems and protect vulnerable groups in communities. Orphaned children are regarded as being vulnerable. The Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (as amended) is a legal document set to address issues related to vulnerable children and to ensure that their best interests are met. In terms of Section 150 of the said Act, orphaned children could be identified as children in need of care and protection if they are without visible means of support. However, this section of the Act is open to various interpretations and expectations. Social Workers at the Department of Social Development are currently under pressure to recommend to presiding officers of the Children's Court that an orphaned child be legally placed in the foster care of the relative. However, presiding officers often question such recommendations because in their opinion the child does not present as a child in need of care and protection and as a result the recommendation made is rejected. This response lowers work morale because it displays disregard for the professional integrity of Social Workers and also increases their already high caseloads. This research study explored the perspectives of Social Workers regarding the legal placement of children in the foster care of relatives. Purposive sampling was used to recruit research participants, 30 foster care Social Work based at Department of Social Development in the Johannesburg Metro Region. A qualitative research design was adopted. Data was gathered using personal interviews and focus groups. A semi-structured interview schedule was utilized to guide the structure of the personal interviews and focus groups. Data gathered was analyzed using thematic content analysis. Findings has provided insight into what intervention strategies are deemed to be in the best interests of vulnerable orphaned children from the perspective of social workers and possible recommendations for policy changes.

Keywords: Foster care, orphans; Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (as amended) and statutory social worker.

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