

**A content evaluation of assessment frameworks
used for screening prospective foster parents in
the North West Province**

B Steyn



[orcid.org/ 0000-0003-145-268x](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-145-268x)

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Supervisor: Ms F Mmusi

Co-supervisor: Prof. W.J.H. Roestenburg

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Student number: 24123293

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

This certificate declares that the mini-dissertation **A content evaluation of assessment frameworks used for screening prospective foster parents in the North-West Province**

by Bianca Steyn was edited by:

Ann-Lize Grewar

BA Language and Literature Studies

BA Hons Translation Studies

SATI-membership number 1002647

SATI Accreditation: APSInterp Afr-Eng

Co-chairperson of SATI North-West Chapter Professional

Editor's Guild membership number BOS008 Language

Director at Language Matters PTY(Ltd)

annlizeboshoff@gmail.com / 072 758 5797



Signed on 23/05/2019

Ann-Lize Grewar
Language Practitioner
B.A. Language and Literature Studies
B.A. Hons. Translation Studies

Contact us:
info@languagematters.co.za
www.languagematters.co.za



Ann-Lize Grewar
Taalpraktisyn
B.A. Taal- en Literatuurstudies
B.A. Hons. Vertaalkunde

Kontak ons:
info@languagematters.co.za
www.languagematters.co.za

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the countless children who feel that the dark void of this world is constantly haunting them.

A poem written by James, aged 17

As I sit next to you and look up at the sky,
I gaze into the stars and often wonder, why?
Why was it me that this illness fell upon?
Why was it me that had to carry on?

For when I look into the sky now all I see is the void.
I see the fear, the darkness and the hope that is destroyed. The void stares back at me and
often it will laugh,
but then you turn to me and whisper 'this will pass'.

Your hand locks with mine and I begin to ignore the sky,
for I know there's still hope.
As long as I try



Non nobis solum ~ not for ourselves alone

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- Many thanks to Ann- Lize Grewar for her valuable language editing.
- My father and sister, for all their cups of tea and of course their encouragement, love and belief in me. It went a long way.

PREFACE

This article format was chosen in accordance with Regulation A.7.2.3 for the Degree Magister in Social Work in Child Protection. The article will comply with the requirements of the journal *Children and Youth Services Review*.

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DECLARATION

I, Bianca Steyn, hereby declare that the entirety of the work contained in this dissertation is my own, that I am the author thereof, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification. The work, or works, of others have been attributed, cited and referenced accordingly.



04/06/2019

Signature

Date

B. Steyn

May 2019

SUMMARY

TITLE: A content evaluation of assessment frameworks used for screening prospective foster parents in the North-West Province.

Key terms: Prospective foster parents; assessment and screening; assessment framework; content; North-West.

Within the South African context, literature indicated a severe lack in the utilisation of standardised assessment frameworks in the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. This is greatly due to the inconsistent usage of non-standardised documents and practitioners relying on accumulated practice wisdom and personal experience.

The aim of the research study was to identify possible assessment frameworks for future development and standardisation for prospective foster parents within Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Mompati districts in the North-West Province.

A quantitative research approach was followed, where social workers from designated welfare organisations had to evaluate specific assessment frameworks presented to them. A workshop was also held with the purpose of training the respondents on what the content of assessment frameworks should look like. A self-developed, paper-based survey questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale for rating purposes were utilised. Results from the questionnaires were captured on an Excel sheet and analysed through IBM SPSS Statistics. Prior to the aforementioned, respondents were requested to send the assessment frameworks they utilise within their respective organisations to the researcher for sifting purposes, where the researcher chose five assessment frameworks to be included for evaluation by the respondents.

Section A represents the introduction to the research study where the following aspects are discussed: the research problem, research questions, contribution of the study, research question aim and objectives, research methodology and ethical matters pertaining to the research study. Section B represents a literature review which entails a brief account of foster care in the South African context. It also includes the role of foster care screening, assessment frameworks, as well as what the content of assessment frameworks should represent, and ends off with an example of a good assessment framework. Section C represents the research article that forms the purpose of the dissertation. Section D represents the final conclusion, and the limitations and recommendations of the research study. Section E includes agenda that were relevant to the research study.

OPSOMMING

TITEL: 'n Inhoudsevaluering van assesseringsraamwerke wat gebruik word vir die keuring en assessering van voornemende pleegouers in die Noordwes Provinsie.

Sleuteltermes: Voornemende pleegouers; keuring en assessering; assesseringsraamwerk; inhoud, Noordwes.

Binne die konteks van Suid-Afrika het literatuur uitgewys dat daar 'n groot tekortkoming is rakende die gebruik van gestandaardiseerde assesseringsraamwerke tydens die keuring en assessering van voornemende pleegouers. Dit is grootliks weens die inkonsekwente gebruik van nie-gestandaardiseerde dokumente, sowel as praktisyns wat staat maak op versamelde praktykwysheid en persoonlike ervaring.

Die doel van die navorsingstudie was om potensiële assesseringsraamwerke te identifiseer vir die toekomstige ontwikkeling en standaardisering vir voornemende pleegouers binne die Dr. Kenneth Kaunda en Ruth Mompati distrikte in die Noordwes Provinsie.

'n Kwantitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is gevolg, waar maatskaplike werkers van aangewese welsynsorganisasies spesifieke assesseringsraamwerke moes evalueer wat aan hulle voorgelê is. 'n Werkswinkel is ook aangebied waar respondente opgelei is oor hoe die inhoud van 'n assesseringsraamwerk moet lyk. 'n Self-ontwerpte, papiergebaseerde opname vraelys met 'n 5-punt Likert skaal is gebruik vir graderingdoeleindes. Die data van die vraelys is oorgedra na 'n Excel-blad en is daarna geanaliseer deur IBM SPSS statistiek. Voordat die evaluering van die assesseringsraamwerke kon plaasvind, moes respondente die assesseringsraamwerke wat hulle by hulle spesifieke organisasie gebruik, aanstuur vir siftingsdoeleindes. Die navorser het vyf assesseringsraamwerke uitgekies vir die insluiting van evalueringdoeleindes deur die respondente.

Afdeling A verteenwoordig die inleiding tot die navorsingstudie waar die volgende aspekte bespreek word: die navorsingsprobleem; navorsingsvrae, bydrae van die studie, navorsingsvraag, doel en doelwitte, navorsingsmetodologie en die etiese kwessies relevant tot die studie. Afdeling B verteenwoordig die literatuurstudie. Dit begin deur 'n kort oorsig van pleegsorg binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te gee. Verder gee dit 'n uiteensetting oor die rol van keuring en assessering, assesseringsraamwerke, wat die inhoud van assesseringsraamwerke moet vervat, en sluit af met 'n voorbeeld van 'n goeie assesseringsraamwerk. Afdeling C verteenwoordig die navorsingsartikel, wat die uiteindelijke

doel van die verhandeling is. Afdeling D gee 'n uiteensetting van die finale gevolgtrekkings, beperkinge en aanbevelings aangaande die navorsingstudie. Afdeling E bevat verskeie addendums relevant tot die navorsingstudie.

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SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation and research problem

Globally foster care is regarded as the preferred integral component of alternative care. In South Africa children's basic needs and rights are protected through the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and for this reason the state takes responsibility to ensure that all children's needs in the country are not violated in any manner (Breen, 2015; Carter & Van Breda, 2015). The South African child care setting has and continues to encounter difficulties due to an increase in number of children in need of alternative care. Increases in HIV/AIDS prevalence has been identified as one of the contributing factors. Statistics indicate that between 2011 and 2017, 25 million deaths occurred as a result of HIV/AIDS and during 2016 an estimated number of 521 055 children were reported to be in foster care (Breen, 2015).

Given the aforementioned, it is likely that the safety net for children in foster care will become increasingly strenuous due to an increase in caseloads, which in turn will affect the quality of assessments conducted during the screening process of prospective foster parents (Freeman and Nkomo as cited in Carter & Van Breda, 2015; Manukuza, 2013). Foster placement assessment is a key activity performed by social workers rendering child protection services. The tasks of social workers in this field of practice consists of assessing the suitability of those families willing to take children into foster care, and monitoring this placement situation once the child is placed. For this purpose, social workers use their knowledge of family systems, assessment skills, and sometimes pre-developed, standardised assessment frameworks to guide them during these assessments. In some instances, these assessment frameworks include certain standardised assessment tools, such as quantitative scales, to assist the social worker in taking decisions regarding the case in question.

Assessment frameworks are therefore defined as reference instruments used to provide a thorough assessment of mental health and/or social-emotional functioning within family systems (Williams, 2008:4). Foster placement assessment is a bi-directional process of weighing and matching information about the child's own functional characteristics with foster parent characteristics. The placement "fit" is established only when the assessment shows consistency and congruence between these two sources of data. These assessments sometimes take place by using measurement scales that, because of their prior standardisation, add a quantitative dimension to the assessment process that is regarded as more objective, and a supplementation to traditional interviewing that is often more narrative in nature and therefore less objective (Roestenburg, 2007).

The assessment process enables the social worker to examine important aspects pertaining to the child's functional characteristics, which include attachment characteristics, developmental milestones, relationships and so forth. Van Schalkwyk (2015) highlights that foster parent factors such as attachment styles, motivation for fostering, stability and quality of interpersonal relationships, problem solving, resilience and coping mechanisms, as well as parenting styles, are significant dimensions of assessment to be considered during the screening and assessment process.

Attachment and bonding between foster parents and the child is regarded to be of significance as it is likely to influence the child's future psycho-social development, well-being and future relationships (Raudino, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2013 & Weiten, 2013).

The effectiveness of the eventual foster placement depends largely on the way in which the placement "fit" (the fit between the child and the foster family) was assessed in the case and how well the screening of prospective foster parents were done (Luke & Shebba, 2013). A plethora of evidence can be quoted relating the influence of lack of fit and inadequate screening as variables contributing to placement breakdown. The aim of well-informed, accountable assessment in general, but specifically in foster care placement assessment, is to use assessment frameworks in collaboration with other procedures, i.e. interviews, reference checks, and observations, to promote future placement sustainability (Luke & Shebba, 2013).

As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2018), screening is a process in which someone's previous jobs, personal activities, etc. are examined in order to assess if they are suitable or able to do a particular job. The same principle applies to foster parent screening. The screening process obtains the information necessary for the assessment process – for weighing and matching information about the child's own functional characteristics with foster parent characteristics. The exact nature of screening procedures used for assessing foster parent adequacy is important, as this may complement the child's best interests as principle and significantly informs the complex decision-making processes in securing the child's future placement (Baumann, Dalgleish, Fluke, & Kern, 2011; Zeijlmans, López, Grietens, & Knorth, 2017). Thus, screening is an important additional part of the assessment process, as it is likely to influence the outcome of foster care placements (Zeijlmans et al., 2017).

Given the aforementioned, it is apparent that the choice of assessment frameworks plays an important role in assessing the implications that the placement might have on both the child and prospective foster parents. This will in turn provide the social worker and prospective foster parents with insight into some of the difficulties the child might experience, as well as the foster parents' abilities to deal with such difficulties. In addition, the lack of proper knowledge regarding

the methodology and procedures for assessing prospective foster parents has been identified as a significant contributing factor in placement breakdown (Carter & Van Breda, 2015; Turney, Platt, & Selwyn, 2011; Zeijlmans et al., 2015).

Luke & Shebba (2013) points out that assessment frameworks vary in their predictive power regarding future-directed factors such as child safety, career retention, placement stability, ability to achieve permanency and child well-being, aspects generally difficult to predict in any way as these aspects only unfold post-placement. The cultural context in which the assessment frameworks are utilised are of significance. Unfortunately, most of the assessment frameworks that are available and used are structured in a manner that does not take the cultural context into account (Luke & Shebba, 2013).

In Tennessee, a multidisciplinary team, together with Case Family Programs, conducted a study on the Casey Foster Applicant Inventory-Worker Version (CFAI-W). In that study, two standardised assessment frameworks were identified, which includes Potential for Foster Parenthood Scale (PFPS) and Foster Parent Potential Scale (FPPS). These frameworks were designed to assess prospective foster parent's potential to foster successfully as part of a screening procedure. The findings suggests that the use of both scales proved to be exceptionally reliable. However, little evidence exists on its validity and it does not address the unique changes of contemporary foster care settings (Cuddeback, Buehler, Orme, & Le Prohn, 2007).

Specifically in South Africa, the outcome of a study conducted by Murray (2016) shows that there is a significant discrepancy in assessment procedures of prospective foster parents. This study further reveals that there are currently few standardised assessment frameworks used in screening the suitability of prospective foster parents, which is of great concern. Murray (2016) concludes that there is a need to consider specific instruments for introduction, testing and eventual adoption as standardised assessment frameworks. This will in turn reduce the process variation of foster care screening into standardised foster care screening (Carter, 2013; Murray, 2016; Simula, 2016; Zeijlmans et al., 2017). Taking a distinct stance from Murray (2016), the current study focuses on the content of assessment frameworks and not the availability thereof. It is therefore important to take into consideration that the content of this framework and its strengths were not known to the researcher prior to conducting this study.

Even though the Children's Act of 2005 stipulates what needs to happen to children in need of care, the Act does not clearly stipulate on how the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents should be conducted. This is largely left to the discretion of individual social workers (Carter & Van Breda, 2015). This was verified during preliminary discussions that the researcher had with representatives from different designated organisations involved in foster placement

assessment in the North-West Province. Feedback obtained from these discussions suggest that currently screening and assessment of prospective foster parents are conducted according to each organisation's disposition. It was further observed that none of these screening and assessment frameworks are standardised and that the content thereof differs from one organisation to the other.

It is of importance to take into consideration that the aforementioned organisations aim to achieve similar objectives. Therefore, developing a general screening and assessment framework will be of significance in an attempt to address the issue of inconsistency in the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. Based on the above discussion, there is a clear discrepancy between practice and theory regarding how foster placements are assessed. Most organisations decide and follow their own ways in conducting screening and assessments. As a result, the organisations lack standardised assessment frameworks that guide social workers in carrying out the screening and assessment of prospective foster care parents in a systematic and consistent manner.

There is a need for a study that aims to clarify assessment frameworks used by social workers in practice, as this will contribute to standardising and systematising the practice of foster care assessment. For that purpose, the current study aims to examine a range of existing assessment frameworks used by organisations in the North-West Province. The purpose thereof is to identify the most useful characteristics of these frameworks' contents. The current study adopted a quantitative research approach to enable the researcher to evaluate the content of assessment frameworks already available and in use within different designated welfare organisations. Thus, the aim of this study is to identify possible screening and assessment frameworks for future development and standardisation. This research approach assisted the researcher to quantitatively obtain inter-rater agreement from practicing social workers regarding those elements, factors, and measurement tools within current assessment frameworks, which are most likely used by foster care agencies in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati districts in the North-West Province.

Based on the argument in the contextualisation, it is clear that a need exists for the identification and adoption of a standardised assessment framework for South African welfare settings engaged in foster placement assessments. The outcome of this study has the potential to contribute towards gaining insight into the content of existing frameworks used by designated welfare organisations in the North West Province. The proposed study was conducted in North-West Province, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati districts. The identified districts consist of both semi-urban and rural areas and render welfare services to community members residing in these districts.

Through evaluating the current existing assessment frameworks, the researchers gained a common understanding of assessment frameworks used by designated welfare organisations in the North-West Province. In scientific terms the study thus improves the content validity of existing procedures, a necessary step towards standardising practices by social workers.

1.2 Contribution of the study

This study will contribute towards formulation of a common, uniform baseline framework for assessment of foster placements; identification of potential measurement tools for screening and improved structuring of assessment processes. Furthermore, by involving social workers from these organisations as respondents, this study will contribute towards active participation, contribution and equity regarding assessment systems amongst the social work community in North-West.

The outcome of this study will provide a foundation for future research that can be conducted as well as possibly consider the development of a standardised assessment framework. This data will assist in enhancing the screening process through ensuring that all important aspects concerning a child's well-being is taken into account when considering placement. Beyond this study, the results will assist in enhancing screening processes through ensuring that all important aspects concerning a child's well-being are taken into account when considering placement. It will also result in the emergence of commonly accepted, accountable assessment frameworks. This study will assist the researchers in identifying possible assessment frameworks for future development and standardisation.

1.3 Research question

What assessment frameworks can be identified for future development and standardisation for the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents in the North-West Province?

1.4 Aims and objectives

To identify possible assessment frameworks for future development and standardisation for prospective foster parents within Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati districts in the North-West Province.

The above aim was driven by the following study objective:

To quantitatively evaluate the relevancy and perceived adequacy of selected assessment frameworks through the rank ordering of four selected frameworks used during the assessment of prospective foster parents.

This objective will be achieved within the scope of a single application study for purposes of obtaining an MSW degree in Child Protection. The study will be conducted sequentially in two phases. After the collection of the portfolio consisting out of the different assessment frameworks, phase 1 outcome will be the four samples that has to be rated by the social workers in phase 2. A small panel, consisting of the researcher, her supervisor and a third expert panellist will select the four samples from the range of portfolios submitted by the various organisations.

Lastly, a rating scale to be used in phase 2 will be designed for evaluation purposes, therefore phase 1 is not a formal research phase, and is meant to prepare the instrumentation for phase 2, it will therefore not have a comprehensive, formally constructed methodology. Phase 2 is thus dominant, and phase 1 is supportive of phase 2.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Research approach and design

This study was guided by an evaluation research paradigm, defined as “a social science methodology to assess, among other things, the design, implementation and applicability of social intervention.” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2011). The current study was more interested in evaluating the different assessment frameworks utilised at various designated welfare organisations in the North-West Province within Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati districts. Utilising an evaluation paradigm that encompasses all three purposes of research, descriptive, exploration and explanatory, assisted the researchers in gaining the bigger picture with regards to what the content of the different assessment frameworks entails and to identify what relevant recommendations could be made in this regard (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). Furthermore, reference to the utilisation of different data collection methods were made as there were not one specific design that complied to all the specific needs of this study. The designs that were utilised were used as guidelines to strengthen one another.

Evaluations are not only used to make recommendations but to deliver observations as well (Austrian Development Agency, 2009). This was apparent and in line with the aim of the current study, which was to identify possible foster care placement assessment frameworks for future development and standardisation of such a framework. This was in line with the research aim of the study: “To identify possible assessment frameworks for future development and standardisation for prospective foster parents”. The evaluation criteria that was considered and justified according to the Austrian Development Agency (2009) were the relevancy and adequacy of the assessment frameworks. This study adopted the use of a quantitative approach in collecting and analysing data. The use of this approach assisted the researcher in starting the process of

content validation of the assessment frameworks as well as to draw a conclusion on whether the different assessment frameworks that were evaluated, accurately measured the capability of prospective foster parents.

(i) Type of design

A cross-sectional survey design was utilised, researchers collected data from a cross-section of research participants (practicing child protection social workers) at one point in time (Creswell, 2014). The advantage of using this design was that it provided useful information needed to guide decision making. The limitation, however, is that it could not be used by itself to evaluate the content of the assessment frameworks. The researcher used it as a guideline whilst utilising the fully-crossed design to fully evaluate the content of the assessment frameworks. The cross-sectional survey design assisted the researchers in obtaining information at one point in time where the fully-crossed design assisted in quantifying the degree of agreement between two or more coders who made independent ratings about the features of an assessment framework.

A workshop and a self-developed survey questionnaire was used to conduct the evaluation of the chosen assessment frameworks. Respondents all received their own evaluation form to be completed after the workshop. Upon completion of the evaluation form, respondents submitted their evaluation forms to the research assistants. Data from each of these forms was computed on an Excel spread sheet to be made available for analysis purposes.

In order to determine the relevancy and adequacy of the different assessment frameworks, respondents had access to the specifications of the content of assessment frameworks in general, before they were able to evaluate the presented assessment frameworks for comparison purposes. For this purpose, respondents were presented with a workshop regarding the content of assessment frameworks. Firstly, respondents were presented with five different assessment frameworks currently used by participating welfare organisations for assessing/screening prospective foster parents. Respondents were then requested to rate each assessment framework guided by their practical experiences as well as their newly acquired knowledge from the workshop. This was followed by respondents rating those different assessment frameworks' relevance and adequacy by reviewing each assessment framework as a whole and providing an overall rating on a self-developed five-point Likert scale.

Additionally, respondents were asked to recommend aspects/dimensions for inclusion or exclusion from the assessment frameworks. This formed part of the qualitative method that was utilised in the study. Evaluation of the assessment frameworks were therefore done framework by framework and not item by item.

In order to execute the cross sectional survey some preparation work was done to derive a suitable measurement instrument. The researchers designed a customised 5-point Likert scale as data collection instrument. This scale was utilised as a means to an end to gather data from the participants and evaluate inter-rater agreement across existing practices of child protection social workers. Although not directly the method of choice in this study, the rating measure was used for quantitatively rating most preferred practices in child protection assessment and developed on the strength of a meta-framework, based on that of scale development. The scale development process that guided researchers is proposed by De Vos et al., (2011). However, it only included a theory formulation phase and a developmental phase. The process and procedures embarked on is discussed in details below, under section 2.12.

In conclusion, the research design was used to describe research findings with regards to attributes that respondents identified as of significance and to be included in the content of the assessment frameworks.

1.5.2 Population

The population for this study are social workers, specifically those whose regular job it is to conduct foster placement assessments, and who performed this work at various agencies and organisations within the North-West Province that provide foster care services. With a specific focus on the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati Districts, which included Potchefstroom, Orkney, Klerksdorp, Lichtenburg, Coligny, Sannieshof, Delareyville and Zeerust. The study was restricted to the above-mentioned districts due to the nature of a limited scope for a mini-dissertation. Furthermore, the selected designated welfare organisations included in the population are representatives of the same organisations in other districts within the North-West Province and other provinces.

1.5.3 Sampling method

To achieve the main objective of this study, the study will be conducted in two phases, requiring two types of sampling.

Phase 1 of the study requires preparation for the cross-sectional survey, and is about the formulation of a suitable rating scale to be used in the cross-sectional survey (phase 2). This phase is not a formal research phase, but uses a sampling plan. For purposes of phase 1, sampling is non-probability, or a purposive sampling method that is based on the researcher's judgement and is required for phase 1 of the study – to identify and gather information regarding existing assessment frameworks used by social work organisations (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). The researcher's first task is to identify and select designated child protection organisations in the

North-West Province, to approach them and ask them to provide the researchers with evidence pertaining to their assessment frameworks. For phase 2, the second sampling method has random characteristics and can be described as availability sampling. This method is applicable to phase 2 of the study – rating of assessment frameworks. In this phase, social workers will be invited to a training session where they will receive training regarding assessment frameworks, and this will enable them to rate the content of frameworks according to criteria as set by the researchers. This will fit the sampling criterion stated above.

Phase 1 Sampling

The researchers identified all social welfare organisations in the North-West Province, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati districts rendering foster care services by means of a resource list from the Department of Social Development. An independent person was requested to send an advertisement to the senior person (manager or director) of each organisation, inviting them to participate in the study and outlining the requirements for participation, which is to submit a portfolio of assessment frameworks as outlined above. Participation was voluntary and the response of the director signified willingness to participate. Based on the responses to the advert received from directors at each organisation, an independent person telephonically contacted the representatives (director) and arranged for delivery of the portfolio via e-mail. A signed consent form allowing the researchers to review the portfolio of documents accompanied the completed assignment. Upon completion of the aforementioned, phase 1 of the study was successfully completed.

Phase 2 sampling

Sampling in this phase was focused upon individual social workers as units of analysis. A second advertisement was sent to the participating organisations and the purpose was to invite individual social workers to attend a one-day training event that was held at the Alumni Hall at the North-West University in Potchefstroom. Although the researchers relied on the goodwill of each organisation to distribute the advertisement to different social workers in the organisation, the intention was to reach individuals and not organisations. The information pertaining to the study was given along with the advertisement and prospective respondents were invited to RSVP their attendance at this event. Respondents were given informed consent forms to study participation requirements prior the event. They were further given seven days to consider participation and were encouraged to ask questions for clarification via e-mail.

On the day of the training, the independent person collected the informed consent forms where they were signed in her presence. An opportunity was also created that should potential

respondents who did not have the information beforehand be willing to take part, they will be given the same advertisement to consider participation. The researchers were available to provide any clarity that may have been required pertaining to the completion of consent forms. Upon completion of the aforementioned process, respondents attended a workshop in relation to the research process followed by the rating of the five (5) identified assessment frameworks.

1.5.4 Sample size and motivation

The phase 1 sample consisted of selected welfare organisations rendering foster care services in the North-West Province. Such organisations included: Child Welfare South Africa, NG Welfare; RATA and SAVF. It is also important to note that all of these organisations have different branches and satellite offices within the North-West Province. Based on the Department of Social Development's resource database, these amount to 15 organisations within the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati Districts. Purposive sampling was utilised during phase 1 and invitation advertisements were sent to these organisations.

The phase 2 sample consisted of social workers at the above sample of organisations. The estimated number of social work population in these organisations were about 65 social workers, and an all-inclusive sample was used. The researchers intended to realise a sample of about 40 respondents to ensure that reasonable results may be obtained. Unfortunately, the researchers were not able to realise a sample of 40 respondents. A statistical power calculation was not applicable to this study since a cross-sectional survey was used and the researchers were not interested in generalising results to the larger population through this study. Rater-agreement levels are furthermore less sensitive for sample size (Donner & Rotondi, 2010). Follow-up studies should furthermore utilise additional generalisation techniques to increase the validity of findings.

1.5.5 Sample inclusion criteria

Phase 1 sample:

- Designated organisations must be operating in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati districts.
- Organisations must be actively involved in performing foster care assessments and placements.

Phase 2 sample:

- Participants should be registered with SACSSP.
- Participants will be included irrespective of their gender, race, etc.
- Participants should be willing to participate voluntarily and give informed consent.
- Participants should be willing to receive one-day training on the content of assessment frameworks.
- At least two years of experience in utilising assessment procedures for foster placement assessment is required.

1.5.6 Sample exclusion criteria

Phase 1 sample:

- Organisations not willing to give permission for their assessment framework to be evaluated.

Phase 2 sample:

- Social workers with less than two years' experience in foster care.
- Social workers with experience in foster care but currently not rendering foster care services.

1.5.7 Process of sample recruitment

Recruitment process:

Firstly, researchers identified an independent person that played a facilitating role of communication between the researcher and the respondents. This communication included the initial promotion of the research study, the recruitment of the respondents, and the final compilation and selection of the respondents.

Phase 1 recruitment:

To recruit a sample, the independent person sent an advert to the selected organisations' directors providing detailed information on how the study will unfold, as well as the necessary requirements pertaining to the study. The directors were asked to respond to the independent person by means of an e-mail or telephone. After the directors expressed willingness to participate, an independent person sent a letter to the directors of the designated organisations as an acknowledgement of their participation and willingness to share their assessment frameworks. In instances where the directors were not physically present at an organisation, the

adverts were sent to the managers of those specific organisations. If, within a period of three to five days, no response was received, the independent person followed up telephonically with each organisation. The directors are initially seen as the gatekeepers in order to acquire willingness to participate in the study and to provide their assessment frameworks. Thereafter, the directors were seen as mediators who facilitated the communication and the distribution of information between the different social workers and the researchers.

Phase 2 recruitment:

The researchers relied on the director's goodwill to distribute the advertisement to the different social workers at the organisation. As the intention is to reach individuals and not organisations, a second advertisement was sent to the same organisations as before, this time inviting different social workers to attend a one-day training workshop, where the evaluation of assessment frameworks were conducted after the workshop. A list of potential respondents were compiled for further individual follow up. If the respondents expressed their voluntary willingness to participate in the study, an independent person sent a consent form to the respondents to be filled on the day of the workshop.

Furthermore, respondents were informed that choosing not to submit their assessment frameworks did not exclude them from the study as they were needed to rate the submitted and approved assessment frameworks. Respondents that have been confirmed by the independent person each received a confirmation e-mail with information pertaining to the entailment of the workshop with the time, date and venue accompanied with the process of rating the five (5) chosen assessment frameworks.

1.5.8 Description of procedures and data collection methods

(i) A detailed description of the planned procedures, methods, and techniques

The figure below was used during the study to guide the researcher with regards to the processes to be followed. This include two phases that will be explained in detail.

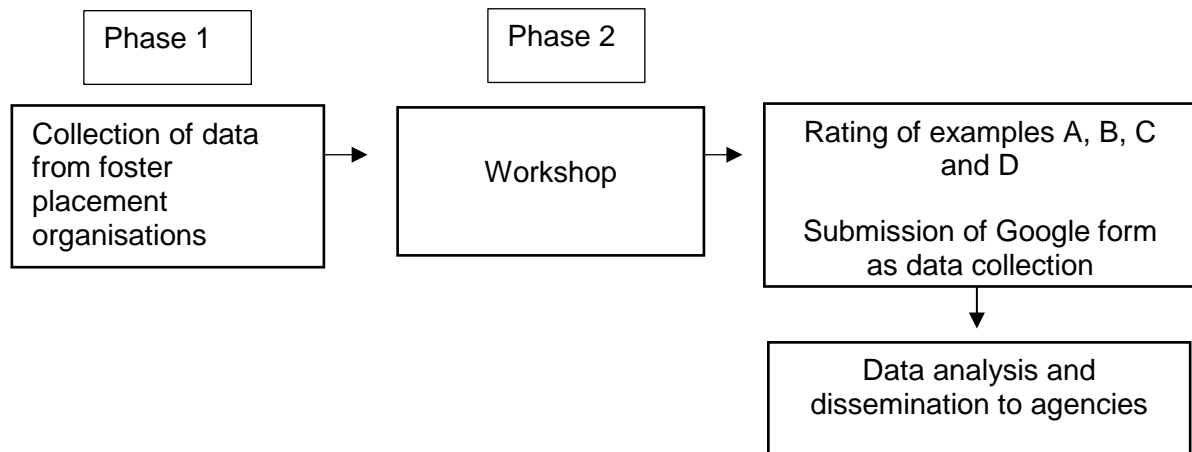


Figure 1--1: Proposed research process

The proposed study was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 consisted out of the collection of data of assessment frameworks currently used by different designated welfare organisations in the North-West Province. Foster care assessment frameworks used by different designated organisations may be in the form of questionnaires, measurement scales, procedures and frameworks. Organisations' representatives were requested to submit a copy of each participating organisation's assessment frameworks in the form of a portfolio of evidence. As part of the background work, the researcher sifted and sorted this material in preparation for phase 2. A small panel, consisting of the researcher and an expert panellist selected five (5) samples from the range of portfolios to be rated during phase 2 of the study. The criteria that was used by the small panel is discussed later on p. 24.

During phase 2, the researcher invited potential respondents who are social workers currently employed at any of the participating designated welfare organisations to attend a workshop. The role of the social workers was to rate the four assessment frameworks. The ratings of the four assessment frameworks was done on the same day as the workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to provide training regarding the necessity of assessment frameworks as well as how to evaluate the content of these frameworks in their own capacity at their organisations.

The workshop was presented by an expert on assessment frameworks and the evaluation thereof. After the workshop an explanation was given to the respondents on how to complete ratings for the five (5) samples of assessment frameworks obtained in phase 1. Ratings were conducted by means of a self-developed, paper-based survey questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Results were computed on an Excel-spread sheet and sent to the statistical services of the North-West University for analysis purposes.

For rating purposes, the respondents proceeded to the part of the venue where the five assessment frameworks were displayed as A, B, C, D and E, representing five different stations. At each station, a person representing the specific assessment framework was available to present the framework to the respondents, and answer questions regarding their use, the tools associated with it and any other questions respondents might have had. After familiarising themselves with the different assessment frameworks, respondents rated them by means of the survey questionnaire provided. For this objective the researcher made use of a venue at the NWU-Alumni Hall. The venue was big enough to accommodate well over a hundred people as well as the different stations that needed to be set up for rating purposes. The tables and chairs were provided by the university. The data projector needed for the training together with the coffee, tea and light lunch was provided by the researcher.

Data collection methods:

During data collection the researcher made use of different data collection methods as there were not one specific design that complied to all the specific needs of this study. The designs that were utilised were used as guidelines and to strengthen one another. The figure below depicts this process:

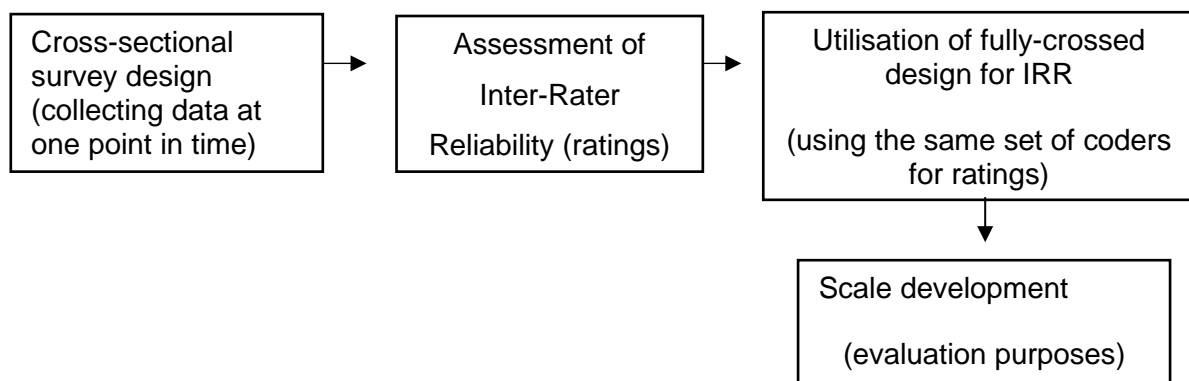


Figure 1-1: Data collection methods

The data is initially copied from the Excel spreadsheet to an SPSS data file and was analysed using parametric or non-parametric techniques, depending on the sample size. The researcher used the North-West University’s statistical services for analysis purpose. Upon completion of the study, the researcher compiled a summary on the findings of the study which was sent to all participating organisations and participants.

De Vos et al. (2011) points out that during content evaluation it is important that the researcher ensures that the instrument measure what it was intended to measure, as well as provide

adequate sample items that represent the concept being measured. In an attempt to address the aforementioned, the researcher assessed the Inter-Rater Reliability (IRR) of the assessment frameworks that, according to Hallgren (2012:1), “provides a way of quantifying the degree of agreement between two or more coders who make independent ratings about the features of a set of subjects”. For the purpose of this study subjects are regarded as the assessment frameworks used to assess prospective foster parents. This was done through utilising a fully-crossed design where the assessment frameworks of the different organisations were assessed by the same set of coders in each organisation. Assessment of the IRR of the assessment frameworks was done holistically. At the end of each assessment framework, the respondents were able to rate the assessment frameworks according to their relevancy and adequacy.

The criteria, i.e. (1) representativeness of the content domain; (2) clarity of the item; (3) factor structure; and (4) comprehensiveness of the measure as proposed by Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tebb, Lee and Rauch (2003) to assess content validity, was also used as a guideline together with Murray's (2016) findings to construct detailed conditions that the portfolio with different assessment frameworks should adhere to. For the purposes of this study only criteria number (1), (2) and (4) was utilised, not to determine content validity but to assist the researchers in formulating conditions the assessment frameworks should adhere to. For clarification, representativeness is seen as the capability of an item to represent the content domain as described in a theoretical definition (Rubio et al.,2003). The clarity of an item depicts how clearly an item is worded (Rubio et al.,2003). The researchers thus ensured that the designed items for the data collection instrument represented and were able to measure the components of the five (5) selected assessment frameworks.

For evaluation purposes, the researchers designed a scale using a five point Likert scale format. As previously mentioned the scale development process included a theory formulation phase and a developmental phase. During the theory formulation phase the researchers first formulated a working definition of the term “assessment frameworks” and then what they entail. The contents of the five (5) assessment frameworks were analysed qualitatively (thematic analysis) by means of the expert panel as indicated above. This guided the researcher to identify those components of assessment frameworks, which were to be evaluated by respondents. The developmental phase included the following steps:

(i) Design items – the researchers designed and arranged items for appraising each component of each assessment framework. These draft items formed the initial item pool from which the expert panel selected those items that most likely measure the assessment framework components. The panel used scaled design criteria such as including both positively and negatively worded items.

(ii) Determine scale length – this was determined when formulating a working definition for assessment frameworks.

(iii) Scale the items – in order to reduce the chance of response bias, the researchers included a mid-point item to provide participants with an option for indecision or neutrality (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). The labelling of the scale was done with regards to agreement, i.e. (5) Strongly agree; (4) Agree; (3) Undecided/Neutral; (2) Disagree; (1) Strongly disagree (De Vos et al., 2011). After the expert panel finalised the initial rating scale design, the final draft was submitted to Statistical consultation services to evaluate and confirm the rating scale's face validity in preparation for use in phase 2 of the study.

Phase 2 of the study entailed that respondents had to indicate on this self-developed rating scale the extent to which they are likely to use that component in their practice. This rating scale consisted out of different questions to assist the respondents for rating purposes. This was done by means of the order rule. This rule states that an individual can rank the possible aspects that the individual has characterised in a list from the most preferred to the least preferred (Abbas, 2010). Thus items measuring the framework components used ranking.

Next, respondents were requested to rate each component of assessment frameworks for relevancy and adequacy. Evaluation of the assessment frameworks were therefore done framework by framework (A, B, C, D, and E) and not item by item.

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to recommend aspects/dimensions to be included in or excluded from the assessment frameworks.

The proposed sequential flow of this research study was as follows: In phase 1 of the study the researchers received the different assessment frameworks from the relevant organisations. Designated organisations were invited to provide the researcher with their assessment frameworks. The invitation was accompanied with a list of detailed specifications that the assessment framework had to meet in order to be able to form part of the study. This list of detailed specifications was constructed in accordance with Murray's (2016) research findings on specifically the content of assessment frameworks being utilised in the Gauteng Province.

The researcher's supervisor and an additional staff member at the North-West University that has specialised knowledge on research as well as assessment instruments, conducted a small sifting process with the incoming assessment frameworks, to assess what assessment frameworks were valid to be chosen for evaluation. These decisions were made in accordance with detailed specifications set out prior to the sifting process. At the end of phase 1 the researchers selected five (5) assessment frameworks for evaluation purposes as outlined above. This was utilised to

design the rating scale to be used as a data collection instrument in phase 2 of the study. Phase 2 of the study entailed exposing recruited respondents to a workshop on assessment frameworks. This workshop orientated and informed respondents about the use of assessment frameworks and those key components considered essential within best practices in assessment. The workshop enabled respondents to evaluate existing frameworks. Finally, respondents proceeded to the evaluation of each of the five (5) selected assessment frameworks.

In order to motivate respondents to be part of the study a workshop was proposed. The overall objective of the workshop was to provide participants with insight pertaining to the evaluation of assessment frameworks. The focus was specifically on the type of indicators they have to look at when reviewing an assessment framework, specifically during the assessment of prospective foster parents. Conducting the workshop enhanced the capacity of the respondents to make informed decisions when they rated the different assessment frameworks, and also infer on the logic of change that has to be present during this process.

The training of the workshop was conducted by a competent person. It was therefore decided that a lecturer from the North-West University with experience in presenting numerous workshops and has specialised knowledge regarding the content of assessment frameworks, should conduct the training. Each respondent had the opportunity to rate the assessment frameworks. Five (5) assessment frameworks were available for evaluation and rating purposes, using the existing rating scale. Each of the assessment frameworks were printed and available at the five different stations at the venue. Each respondent was able to submit their ratings of validity the different assessment frameworks to the independent person. To ensure anonymity, the assessment frameworks were each allocated an alphabet letter.

Quantitatively the data was analysed through using the ratings on the evaluation criteria as an indicator of what assessment framework can be recommended to be validated for future studies.

1.5.9 Validity and reliability

The researcher used a self-developed rating scale with Likert type items for rating the examples of the assessment frameworks. The rating scale did not have psychometric properties but was checked by the study supervisors, a consultant within the subject group and a statistician from the University's statistical consultation services to determine face validity.

1.5.10 Trustworthiness

Not applicable for the purposes of this study. The research study was predominantly lead by a quantitative methodology. The researcher only made use of qualitative feedback at the end of the study that was combined with the quantitative results.

1.5.11 Data analysis methods

The research respondents acted as coders and assessed the different assessment frameworks. Coders are defined as individuals that assign ratings to the assessment frameworks, who can be trained research assistants or randomly selected respondents (Hallgren, 2012). For the purpose of this study, five (5) assessment frameworks were used. The content of each of the frameworks were evaluated in order to determine their relevancy and adequacy.

Quantitative data for this study was collected through a paper-based survey questionnaire where the data was analysed through the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25, Release 25.0 (SPSS) by the North-West University's Statistical Services. Descriptive and exploratory analysis were done, conducting nominal and ordinal levels of measurement. Furthermore, the focus was on obtaining the central tendencies and the dispersions located in the data. This enabled the researchers to conclude what assessment framework was rated and ranked the highest.

The choice of utilising a fully crossed design implies that all the respondents participating in the study will each rate all five (5) assessment frameworks against the knowledge they obtained from the workshop. The analysis entailed the use of Intra-class correlation as it is seen as a useful estimate of inter-rater reliability on quantitative data. The use of ICC stipulates clearly that there has to be the same number of ratings for every assessment framework to be rated. The researcher made use of the "Two-Way Fixed" method of ICC in SPSS. This method assumes a random effect of ratee (i.e. the assessment frameworks) and a fixed effect of rater (purposive sampling or respondents). The ICC was computed on the scale (assessment framework) mean and not on the individual items of the assessment frameworks (Landers, 2016).

The study also produced a qualitative component, where the different coders had the opportunity to recommend attributes to be added to the assessment frameworks at the end of the survey. These recommendations were analysed separately by the researcher and results obtained from this analysis were incorporated as feedback to the different organisations as well as recommendations for further content validation and changing of the assessment framework.

1.6 Ethical matters

1.6.1 Probable experience of participants:

The respondents lost a day of work and may have to put in extra time to catch up on their work. The researcher explained the benefits of participating in the study and gave each respondent a mini-speaker as a token of appreciation for taking the time to participate in the study.

Abovementioned experiences did not form part of the respondent's daily experiences.

1.6.2 Risks and benefits:

Participants were not exposed to unduly risks during their participation in the research. Participation was not more than what could be expected of them whilst performing their daily tasks. The risks were therefore low. Participants might have experienced slight discomfort for having to study the case examples, but received clear instructions on how to perform this task.

1.6.2.1 Direct benefits:

The respondents had the opportunity to attend a free workshop.

1.6.2.2 Indirect benefits:

The respondents had the opportunity to form part of a process aimed at enhancing the usage of assessment frameworks during the screening process of prospective foster parents for future reference. This was aimed at increasing their ownership of the processes they are involved in as part of their work.

1.6.2.3 Reimbursement:

Each respondent received a mini-speaker as a token of appreciation. Refreshments were served through the course of the workshop, which included tea/coffee and a light lunch.

1.6.2.4 Costs involved:

Respondents were expected to travel to the North-West University Potchefstroom campus, where the workshop was held. The aim of the workshop was to train, the respondents on the content of assessment frameworks. Respondents were reimbursed for time and travel costs.

The benefits outweighed the risks as respondents stood to gain more than the time they would have lost for work purposes.

1.6.3 Expertise, skills and legal competencies

1.6.3.1 Voluntary participation

In order to ensure voluntary participation of the respondents during the recruitment process, the researchers sent an e-mail to the respondents, explaining the aim of the study. Prior to the inception of the study, various ethical aspects were discussed with respondents. They were informed that if they felt that they would not benefit from the study, they did not have to participate. Participation was voluntary at all times and the respondents could have excused themselves from the study at any time.

1.6.4 Legal authorisation

To the researcher's current knowledge, no legal authorisation had to be obtained as most of the organisations were NGOs. Permission needed to be obtained from the organisation's directors depending on each organisation's rules and procedures.

1.6.5 Goodwill permission and consent

The researchers required permission from organisation directors to allow the researcher's access to social workers employed by the designated organisations. An independent person phoned each director explaining the aim of the study and asked for their goodwill and permission to use their assessment frameworks.

1.6.6 Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy

To ensure confidentiality, only the researcher and an independent person were aware of the identity of the respondents. The independent person signed a confidentiality agreement. Furthermore, the respondents were verbally informed that any information that they shared remained confidential.

The researcher made sure that no one, the researcher included, were able to identify any of the respondents. The respondents were informed that they should not write their names on any piece of document provided to them and that the researcher will use the information for analysis purposes. The completed questionnaires were filed according to the different organisations. Biographical information provided on the research findings therefore excluded the respondent's names.

All relevant information and data was to be kept on the researcher's computer that is password protected. Other documentation is kept in a safe in the researcher's private dwelling, ensuring privacy.

1.7 Provisional chapter division

The article format was used in the presentation of the research results as stipulated in Rule 5.1.1.2 of the Yearbook of the North-West University (NWU, 2015). The format of this article also corresponded with the guidelines for the Children and Youth Review Journal of which the article will be forwarded for publication.

The following chapter division was followed:

Section A: Introduction – Orientation and research problem.

Section B: Literature review.

Section C: Journal article to be sent to Children and Youth Review Journal.

Section D: Conclusion, limitations, recommendations and references.

Section E: Annexures.

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SECTION B: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A brief account of foster care within the South African context will be provided followed by an explanation and elaboration on the role of screening and assessment and assessment framework. This will further look into what the content of assessment frameworks should entail and provide readers with an example of a good assessment framework. This will be guided by the available literature on the subject matter.

2.2 Foster care in South Africa

South Africa's foster care system is characterised by a diverse set of circumstances. Within these circumstances a flow of negative contributing factors created a fragmented view and existence of the foster care system. Statistics show that the child population in South Africa is approximately 19.6 million children. Of these, nearly 2.8 million are orphans, which amount to 14% of children in South Africa (University of Cape Town. Children's institute, 2019). During 2016 an estimated number of 521, 055 children were reported to be in foster care (Breen, 2015). In a State where children make up to a third of the population and where more than half a million of children are in foster care, it is clear that South Africa's child care setting is under immense strain.

UNICEF and the UNHCR (2013) place emphasis on a rights-based child-focused orientation where: "the system prioritises the rights of the individual child to protection and the importance of supporting parents and other carers to achieve this". Literature highlights that this is one of the main approaches of foster care (Carter & Van Breda, 2015; Kennan, Keenaghan, O Connor, Kinlen, & McCord, 2011; UNICEF, 2008). However, the historic and current state of South Africa's foster care setting contradicts this due to an increase in the number of children in need of alternative care. Strain is also added as foster care is globally regarded as the preferred form of alternative care (Breen, 2015; Carter & Van Breda, 2015).

Specifically, within the South African context, HIV/AIDS has been characterised as the biggest driver of children in need of care and protection (Carter, 2013; Murray, 2016; Breen, 2015; Simelela & Venter, 2014). Additionally, child abandonment and placement breakdowns add to the increase of children being placed in foster care (Blackie, 2014; Luke & Shebba, 2013). Murray (2016) points out that those increased caseloads, combined with the lack of time, could be seen as stumbling blocks for social workers in systematically assessing foster parents. Given the aforementioned, it is likely that the safety net for children in foster care will become increasingly strenuous due to an increase in caseloads, which in turn has the potential to affect the quality of

assessments conducted during the screening and assessment process of prospective foster parents.

Carter (2013) voiced her concern regarding the level of specialisation of social workers conducting the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. Many social workers only receive in-service training by their supervisors, whom themselves have limited specialised training in the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents (Carter, 2013). Holland (2011) substantiate this concern by adding that the decision-making process during the screening and assessment process is hugely based upon the social worker's accumulated practice wisdom. Which is grounded on reproducing and institutionalising current working practices (Holland, 2011).

The screening and assessment of prospective foster parents is an intensive information gathering process characterised with rigour and a strong scientific element that is aimed at answering one important question: "Are the prospective foster parents suitable to foster a child?" (Carter, 2013). Accounting for human error, individual biases, personal histories, values and behaviours, it is necessary to introduce the usage of standardised assessment tools to support professional decisions (Hepworth, Rooney, Dewberry Rooney, & Strom-Gottfried, 2013; Murray, 2016). According to Roestenburg (2007) the South African social work context appears to lack "a level of standardisation in its processes" and "lacks a unifying language that is spoken by all social workers regardless of practice context".

Murray (2016) states the following: "In practice, the inconsistent use or variation of assessment procedures, methods and tools (frameworks) will contribute to inconsistent practice". In order to bring the different threads of the screening and assessment process of prospective foster parents together, standardisation and uniformity of this process is necessary. This calls for the introduction and utilisation of specific assessment frameworks that will enhance the quality of the screening and assessment process of prospective foster parents.

2.3 The role of screening, assessment and assessment frameworks in foster care

2.3.1 The difference between screening and assessment

The terms "screening" and "assessment" are used frequently specifically within the foster care context and are not to be seen as synonyms of each other. Assessment can be defined as a process occurring between a social worker and client, in which information is gathered, analysed, and synthesised (Hepworth et al., 2013). This process is investigative in nature where 'the developmental needs of a child, including his or her family environment or any other circumstances that may have a bearing on the child's need for protection and therapeutic

services”, are assessed (Children’s Act, 2005). The assessment process can be divided into two main stages. The purpose of the first stage of assessment (done by a designated social worker), is to gather relevant information pertaining to the prospective foster parents, which gives an indication of their suitability to care for the child. During the second stage of assessment more in depth information is gathered. A written report is prepared that includes the assessment of the suitability of the foster parents as well as proposals about any terms of approval. Stage one and two is done interdependently and will be used to present written reports to a foster panel for approval or disapproval (Department of Education, 2013).

Screening, however, is seen as a brief, focused inquiry, where information about the child’s own functional characteristics with that of the foster parent’s functional characteristics are weighed against each other to determine if (1) the prospective foster parents meet the stated requirements and (2) to identify critical areas for a comprehensive assessment (The Children’s Bureau & The Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). Furthermore, The Children’s Bureau and The Department of Health and Human Services (2014) assert that screening can assist caseworkers to “identify the types of events or situations that may trigger a child’s traumatic memories or symptoms and share this information with the foster parents to help them manage difficult behaviours”. The same principle applies when it comes to the screening of the prospective foster parents. More in depth information regarding the prospective foster parents’ intrinsic functioning is needed. Screening can assist with this process where again practitioners can evaluate the compatibility between the prospective foster parents and the child concerned. Screening is therefore the initial process which is followed by assessment.

2.3.2 The importance of utilising screening and assessment in conjunction with assessment frameworks

As with every method and process in Social Work, screening and assessment should be evidence-based. Drisko and Grady (2015) define evidence-based practice as: “a process for making practice decisions in which practitioners integrate the best research evidence available with their professional expertise and with client attributes, values, preferences and circumstances”. Standardised assessment strengthens the evidence-based practice of Social Work and is suggested to be used during the screening and assessment process. Adams, Cernantes, Jang and Dixon (2014) explain standardised assessment as a means of gathering information about individuals that is uniform across subjects, settings, and administrations. Moreover, standardised measures strive to “provide consistency of testing, allowing for comparisons to be made between the people whom the assessment has been administered and the general population” (Adams et al., 2014).

Measures used in standardised assessment are referred to as assessment tools or assessment instruments (assessment frameworks for the purposes of this study). Assessment frameworks are developed to assist practitioners during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. The overall aim of assessment frameworks is to assist in the prediction of long term placements (Luke & Shebba, 2013). Assessment frameworks have the ability to gather subtle information which would otherwise not have been picked up by the practitioner. During the screening and assessment process, most organisations make use of non-standardised measures, i.e. questionnaires. Prospective foster parents then have to answer certain questions related to different topics, for e.g. do they think they will be able to provide good nurturing for the foster child? Instead of relying on the possible biased answer of the prospective foster parents, assessment frameworks can be used to test their nurturing competency (Holland, 2011).

Assessment is a multidimensional process (Hepworth et al., 2013). Therefore, any screening or assessment conducted has to make use of different sources for gathering information, for e.g. interviews, direct observation, collateral information, tests or assessment frameworks and personal experiences of the practitioner based on direct interaction with the foster parents to draw conclusions (Hepworth et al., 2013; Luke & Shebba, 2013; Murray, 2016).

Assessment frameworks for foster care are used to assess the personal characteristics, circumstances and prospective foster parents' potential for fostering as a means of systematising the foster parent selection process (Simula, 2016). It is therefore of grave importance that the practitioner(s) utilising any assessment framework must have the necessary knowledge regarding test theory as well as what the characteristics of the assessment frameworks should look like (Hepworth et al., 2013; Khoza, 2011). The reason being that many assessment frameworks show biases, have poor reliability and validity and are ill-suited for specific contexts (Hepworth et al., 2013).

Consequently, research has shown that despite the immense advantages the usage of assessment frameworks has shown, few social workers choose to use it. This is problematic, especially taking into account the importance of evidence-based practice, the systematisation of foster care and the uniformity and standardisation of specifically the screening and assessment process of prospective foster parents across practice contexts. In a study conducted by Khoza (2011), the findings show that the factors inhibiting the use of assessment frameworks are located on macro and micro levels of intervention. Factors found on macro level included departmental bureaucracies, inaccessibility of assessment frameworks and the lack of capacity and resources to facilitate the process which, according to him, could have resulted in the lack of uniformity of the assessment services (Khoza, 2011).

Factors found on micro level included the lack of supervision, social workers experiencing burnout; the lack of skills and knowledge and, lastly, the lack and absence of techniques for using the assessment framework (Khoza, 2011). These factors strengthen the argument of social workers having to rely more on practice wisdom and experience. Moreover, these factors accentuate the lack of uniformity across practice contexts, specifically the type of assessment frameworks they utilise, if any, and how the content of these assessment frameworks compare with each other. Given South Africa's ever changing nature, it is clear that there are significant changes in the child protection system. Within the contemporary society it is important to take into account that a number of aspects which include the context, perspective and attitudes towards foster care, has changed significantly. Such changes also call for social work practices to acquire a different approach responsive to the needs of children in need of foster care placements.

Fortunately, change on macro level can create an enabling environment for the usage of assessment frameworks at micro levels of intervention. This environment can be influenced by synchronising assessment frameworks used by different governmental and non-governmental organisations for the purpose of uniformity (Khoza, 2011).

2.4 The ideal content of an assessment framework

2.4.1 The basic requirements for an assessment framework

Foster care has been around and utilised for many years. Certain events in history up until the present day have shaped the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of procedures and methods employed to ensure children's safety. In order to deal with a diverse set of factors and problems faced within assessment, literature suggests that a multi-dimensional approach to assessment has to be followed (Hepworth et al., 2013). Assessment frameworks can assist in the assessment of multiple domains of well-being in order to accumulate as much information needed about the prospective foster parent's functioning. The most common domains of well-being that are assessed during screening and assessment are the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual domains (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2013). Within these domains foster parent's capacities to provide unconditional love, safety and security, and stability and nurturing are measured (Carter & Van Breda, 2015). The assumption made in the current research study is that these domains vary over different practice contexts.

In the contemporary society foster families face unique challenges, and therefore need a unique assessment framework. Few studies have reported measurements with promising psychometric properties used for assessment in both families and parents in the general population and foster families (Adams, Cervantes, Jang & Dixon, 2014; Cuddeback et al., 2007; Skillmark & Oscarsson,

2018; UNICEF & UNHCR, 2013). The problem is that these measures were not designed to address many of the unique challenges of fostering (Cuddeback et al., 2007). In order to effectively use an assessment framework within the foster care context, certain requirements have to be met before it can be used.

For the purposes of this study, the aforementioned requirements have been clustered into three areas: functional requirements, technical requirements and usability requirements. Each of these areas represent findings in literature regarding the requirements of a good assessment framework. Requirements here are numbered only for easing the reading process. Numbering in these areas do not indicate a specific order of preference.

2.4.2 Functional requirements

(1) First and foremost a basic model of what constitutes “good” foster parents and “bad” foster parents (also known as behavioural profiles) has to be developed beforehand (Hepworth et al., 2013; Carter & Van Breda, 2015). It is critical in this regard that clear characteristics are given as it will assist in the prediction of more successful placement outcomes (Luke & Shebba, 2013).

(2) The scope and focus of the assessment framework has to be clear. This will vary depending on the role of the social worker; the setting on which he or she works, and the needs presented by the client (Hepworth et al., 2013). (3) The assessment framework has to be culturally competent (Hepworth et al., 2013; Khoza, 2011) and (4) able to make use of different sources to gather information for assessment, permitting triangulation (Holland, 2011; Hepworth et al., 2013; Rubin & Babbie, 2013), (5) where it combines the use of quantitative and qualitative components (Rubin & Babbie, 2013; Maruster & Gijzenberg, 2012).

(6) The quantitative and qualitative components have to augment one other; some questions are actually a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions. A list of responses are provided, but foster applicants should also be given the opportunity to create his/her own response (i.e. “other” or “comments” must be an option). The advantage of this type of question is that if the options given are not adequate, the respondent can still record an appropriate response (Stats NZ, 2019). (7) The assessment framework has to have a strong theoretical base and has to make use of a specific or combination of theoretical orientations to guide the assessment, for e.g. solution-focused therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, systems theory, etc. (Hepworth et al., 2013; Carter & Van Breda, 2015). (8) Intervention options has to be given to the prospective foster parents if any risks were identified (Holland, 2011; Luke & Shebba, 2013). (9) It has to utilise a specific method for evaluation or scoring (Hepworth et al., 2013; Holland, 2011).

2.4.3 Technical requirements

Technical requirements relate to the following: (1) The assessment framework demonstrates valid psychometric properties (Borsboom & Molenaar; Russel, 2012, 2015). (2) Face validity and content validity has to be demonstrated (Hepworth et al., 2013:175; Rubin & Babbie, 2013; Simula, 2016). (3) Reliability of the assessment framework has to be demonstrated (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). (4) A guideline is given with clear performance criteria that the prospective foster parents must meet (Australian Government, 2015). (5) Performance evidence has to be gathered from prospective foster parents, where they have to demonstrate their competency by saying, doing or writing something (Australian Government, 2015). (6) Lastly, the assessment framework has to make use of clear assessment decision-making rules that will be used to judge whether competency has been achieved or not (Australian Government, 2015).

2.4.4 Usability requirements

Usability indicates that users of the assessment framework will be able to access the functions of the assessment framework and successfully use it. Requirements in this regard are: (1) The assessment framework has to be clearly constructed (Krosnick & Presser, 2009). (2) The assessment framework has to be user-friendly (National Research Council, 2013). (3) Visual clarity should be present – the information displayed should be quick and easy to read without causing confusion (Khoza, 2011; Simões-Marques & Nunes, 2012). (4) The assessment framework has to be explicit – it should offer tips on the functionality and operation method(s) used (Simões-Marques & Nunes, 2012). (5) The assessment framework has to be compatible with the expectations of the prospective foster parents (Simões-Marques & Nunes, 2012). (6) The assessment framework must be accessible over different practice contexts (Simões-Marques & Nunes, 2012). (7) Finally, the assessment framework must prove to be efficient to allow for high productivity (Simões-Marques & Nunes, 2012).

Different assessment frameworks present their own unique set of strengths and weaknesses. It is therefore especially important to make sure that an assessment framework promotes evidence-based practice and is not used without careful consideration. The requirements mentioned above prove that there is a body of literature corroborating on how assessment frameworks should look like and the significance of standardisation in this regard.

2.4.5 Example of a good assessment framework

Internationally, the University of Tennessee has collaborated with Casey Family Programs in the development of two standardised assessment tools (frameworks) to assess the potential for foster family applicants to foster successfully: The Casey Foster Applicant Inventory (CFAI) and the

Casey Home Assessment Protocol (CHAP). These measures were developed to complement each other to assess a broad range of characteristics of foster parents. The assessment frameworks also demonstrate good validity and reliability and their psychometric properties are available (Cuddeback et al., 2007). Evidently, these assessment frameworks have provided a sound reference base for the possible construction and adoption of an ideal assessment framework to be used across different practice contexts for future reference.

The development of the assessment frameworks was directed by principles that guide foster care: a specific theoretical model used for the assessment frameworks; a model for good and bad fostering; and 12 competency domains to be assessed with a description of the entailment of each competency domain. The potential for fostering is therefore characterised by these competency domains. Finally, technical manuals were developed separately for both assessment frameworks explaining how evaluation and scoring were executed.

They included the following 21 domains for assessment: (1) adequate resources; (2) knowledge of child background; (3) child focused attitudes; (4) ability to deal with ambiguity; (5) ability to deal with authority; (6) use of effective discipline; (7) flexibility; (8) interpersonal skills; (9) methods for handling loss; (10) structural organisation of family; (11) ability to handle parent/worker/agency relationships; (12) ability to promote development; (13) readiness to foster; (14) ability to deal with separation/attachment; (15) adequacy of social support; (16) willingness to participate in training; (17) expression of warmth; (18) ability to work with birth parents; (19) methods for co-parenting; (20) integration of foster children with birth/adopted children; and (21) providing kinship care (Cuddeback et al., 2006). It is clear that the choice of these domains were not selective but comprehensive. These 21 domains illustrate the extensive and intensive nature of assessing prospective foster parents.

According to Cuddeback et al., (2007) effective methods for assessing prospective foster parents are paramount to the decision making process and included the following principles with regards to the use of assessment frameworks: "Inform applicants about foster care in a way that builds enthusiasm, competence, and commitment; support applicants' self-assessment about their abilities to care for children and to work in partnerships; guide the information-gathering process in a thorough, efficient way; identify applicants who will provide safe, stable family environments for foster children; identify areas in which applicants will need additional support and training to formulate plans for ongoing foster home development; identify applicants who are less suited for fostering and respectfully enable them to withdraw from the process."

The aforementioned assessment frameworks are an excellent example of how an ideal assessment framework should and could look like. It further exhibits the dire need of a context specific, standardised assessment framework in South Africa.

2.5 Conclusion

Selecting the most suitable foster parents for a child is imperative to the safety and stability of the child and the placement (Simula, 2016). Especially in a context characterised with a changing and erupting nature of risk factors. Among these risk factors HIV and AIDS are the most prevalent cause of orphaned and vulnerable children (Carter, 2013; Murray, 2016; Breen, 2015; Simelela & Venter, 2014). Social workers partner with prospective foster parents and the vulnerable child in question to decide on and arrange the best possible placement fit. Unfortunately, within the South African context, this sensitive and complex decision-making process is under scrutiny due to the fragmented existence of the foster care system (Carter, 2013).

Throughout literature emphasis is placed on the lack of the utilisation of standardised assessment frameworks during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents (Carter, 2013; Hepworth et al., 2013; Holland, 2011; Khoza, 2011; Murray, 2016; Roestenburg, 2007). Literature furthermore supports concerns regarding social workers relying on practice wisdom and personal experiences to assist them during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents (Holland, 2011; Murray, 2016; Cuddeback et al., 2006). These concerns account for the inconsistent use of assessment frameworks on macro and micro level of intervention over various practice contexts (Khoza, 2011). The importance of utilising standardised assessment frameworks cannot be stressed enough as the overall aim of standardised assessment frameworks are to assist in the prediction of long term placements (Luke & Shebba, 2013). Regrettably, few practitioners choose to utilise assessment frameworks as they lack the knowledge on what is available and how these assessment frameworks function (Khoza, 2011). Consequently, when assessment frameworks are to be utilised it is important for practitioners to consider basic requirements of validation, reliability and psychometric properties for quality and standardisation purposes (Khoza, 2011).

Due to the complex and ever-changing nature of societies the foster care context finds itself in, social workers will have to adapt through continuous professional development. According to Skillmark and Oscarsson (2018) organisational professionalism relies on instrumental knowledge facilitated by assessment frameworks and routines that standardises governance and public services. This directly contradicts the functioning of various practice contexts as organisational conditions are most of the time not compatible with what social work actually entails and expects. This theory holds a notion that when a new assessment framework is introduced for usage within a specific organisation, the relevant role players need to be willing to implement the assessment framework, as well as also show the necessary capacity of knowledge and skills to use the assessment framework accompanied by organisational support (Skillmark & Oscarsson, 2018). This is especially significant when the concept of uniformity comes into play. Without practitioners

understanding the seriousness and weight of introducing uniform and context specific standardised assessment frameworks into the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents, practitioners' professional knowledge base will become smaller and the gap in service delivery bigger (Skillmark & Oscarsson, 2018).

There will always be an increasing demand for efficiency and rationality in social work. The only option is to broaden the knowledge base of social work by sharing and staying on track with changes (Skillmark & Oscarsson, 2018). Based on the literature review, the findings indicate that there is a significant lack of standardised assessment frameworks. The present study aims to fulfil an integral role to empower social workers on what the content of assessment frameworks should represent, as well as the absolute necessity of the inclusion of standardised assessment frameworks in their screening and assessments of prospective foster parents.

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SECTION C: RESEARCH ARTICLE

A CONTENT EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS USED FOR SCREENING PROSPECTIVE FOSTER PARENTS IN THE NORTH- WEST PROVINCE

Bianca Steyn^a, Fatima Mmusi

^a *Master student, North-West University of Potchefstroom, Department of Social Work, 11 Hoffman St. Potchefstroom 2531, South Africa. E-mail: steynbinx@gmail.com*

Abstract

Assessment is one of the most significant processes and may have a great impact on the total functioning and the developmental processes of children in foster care. Therefore, lack of effective or proper assessment may compromise the very need that children in foster care require. The ineffective use of non-standardised and even standardised assessment frameworks during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents, has become the result of social workers not having access to standardised assessment frameworks or the knowledge base to effectively use the few standardised assessment frameworks available. This study utilises a cross-sectional survey design to evaluate and compare the content of five selected assessment frameworks utilised by various welfare organisations during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. Results indicate that none of the selected assessment frameworks utilised are standardised and that there is a huge variance with regards to the content found in the assessment frameworks. These results provide evidence of the lack of standardisation and uniformity of assessment frameworks used during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. The findings of this study recommends an assessment framework for further development and standardisation.

Keywords

Prospective foster parents; assessment and screening; assessment framework; content; standardised.

3.1 Introduction

Placement in out-of-home care is one of the main interventions used in foster care to keep children safe. Grievously, research have shown that the removal of a child is a significant

traumatic event in a child's life (Casey Family Programs, 2018). When a child is separated from his/her parents to keep the child safe, it is paramount to ensure that these children are placed in better circumstances than the one they were removed from (Casey Family Programs, 2018). Across literature there is a widespread agreement that in order to enhance placement stability, the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents need to be done with rigour (Carter, 2013). The foster care system in South Africa has reached a critical point. This is due to increasing risk factors such as the prevalence of HIV/AIDS resulting in a high number of orphaned and vulnerable children to be placed in foster care, high caseloads and case worker turnovers, and the lack of time to conduct proper screening and assessment of prospective foster parents (Breen, 2015; Freeman and Nkomo as cited in Carter & Van Breda; 2015, Manukuza, 2013; Murray, 2016).

In light of the aforementioned impediments that seem to exist in the foster care context, social workers started to rely mainly on their personal experience and practice wisdom to keep up with ongoing changes (Holland, 2011). Factually, the Social Work profession is grounded on evidence-based practice which supports the use of scientific methods to accumulate, analyse and disseminate information pertaining to clients (Drisko & Grady, 2015). Additionally, screening and assessment is strongly associated with successful placement within foster care and can therefore not entirely be executed to the discretion of the individual social worker (Pollack, 2012). The screening and assessment of prospective foster parents should be done in conjunction with the usage of different sources to gather information, specifically standardised assessment frameworks (Hepworth et al., 2013; Luke & Shebba, 2013; Murray, 2016). It is of much concern that most welfare organisations make use of non-standardised assessment frameworks that lack consistency in their content and their implementation over various practice contexts (Murray, 2016).

The screening and assessment of prospective foster parents is a demanding process with a lot of information to be gathered and analysed, but the safety of the child cannot be compromised (Pollack, 2012). Assessment frameworks can provide consistency of testing and gather information from the prospective foster parent's functioning that would have otherwise been unknown to the practitioner (Holland, 2011). More importantly, assessment frameworks assist in the prediction of long-term placements and potential special needs that the child might require (Luke & Shebba, 2013), contributing to foster care's evidence-based practice. In this context, the present research study brings empirical evidence to social workers regarding the necessity of utilising uniform and standardised assessment frameworks, as well as what the content of these assessment frameworks should consist of.

3.2 Contribution of the study

This study proposes to contribute to the enhancement of evidence-based practice in foster care, specifically in the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. It is hypothesised that the utilisation of uniform, standardised assessment frameworks, together with other sources used for gathering information, will improve placement decisions. The outcome of the study will (1) assist in the recommendation of an assessment framework for further development and standardisation and (2) expand social workers' knowledge base regarding the significance of assessment frameworks and their content.

3.3 Research question

The following research question informs the study:

What assessment frameworks can be identified for future development and standardisation for the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents in the North-West Province?

3.4 Research methodology

3.4.1 Research approach

The research study adopted a quantitative approach guided by an evaluation paradigm that was largely used in a descriptive and exploratory manner. This was done in order to establish the content of the different assessment frameworks and to provide recommendations for future development and standardisation purposes. The evaluation criteria that were mainly used as a point of departure for further evaluation were the degree of (1) relevancy and (2) adequacy the assessment frameworks presented. The study was divided into two phases. *Phase one* of the study consisted out of the collection of the different assessment frameworks from the designated welfare organisations. *Phase two* consisted of a workshop that was held which was followed by an evaluation stage of the various selected assessment frameworks.

3.4.2 Research design

The use of a cross-sectional survey design supported the abovementioned approach (Creswell, 2014). However, this design could not be used in isolation for the purposes of this research study. It was used as a guideline whilst utilising a fully-crossed design to fully determine what the content of the assessment frameworks represent. The cross-sectional survey design assisted the researcher in obtaining the necessary information from the respondents. The fully-crossed design assisted the researcher in quantifying the degree of agreement between two or more respondents. Data were retrieved from respondents at one point in time, utilising a self-developed,

paper based survey with a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the inter-rater agreement of the five selected assessment frameworks.

3.4.3 Population

The population represented various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) within the North West Province in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati districts that were involved in the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents.

Table 3-1: Population

Name of organisation	Town	Number of respondents
CWSA (Child Welfare South Africa)	Potchefstroom & Rustenburg	5
NG Welfare	Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp & Schweizer-Reneke	5
RATA Social Solutions	Potchefstroom & Klerksdorp	2
SAVF (Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie)	Delareyville, Klerksdorp, Lichtenburg, Potchefstroom & Zeerust	6
<u>TOTAL</u>		18

3.4.4 Sampling

The current study was conducted in two phases and therefore made use of a two-fold sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling was adopted for *phase one* (1) of the study. The objective was to identify and gather assessment frameworks currently utilised by different welfare organisations during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents (Rubin & Babbie, 2013).

To build the sample, the researchers identified and selected designated welfare organisations within the North-West Province. This sample was further demarcated to only include welfare organisations within the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati districts. Representative towns included Coligny, Delareyville, Klerksdorp, Lichtenburg, Orkney,

Potchefstroom, Rustenburg, Sannieshof, Vryburg and Zeerust. Schweizer-Reneke was included in the sample as the researchers did not have enough respondents.

The selected welfare organisations included CWSA, NG Welfare, RATA Social Solutions and SAVF. All of the mentioned welfare organisations have satellite offices located in the different towns mentioned. Formal written approval were obtained from these organisations to participate in the study.

Sampling for *phase two* (2) of the study used an availability sampling method that included individual social workers from the participating welfare organisations in phase one (1). The researchers aimed for at least two social workers per organisation as well as one director from each organisation to participate in the study. That would have amounted to a sample of at least 40 respondents. Unfortunately, the researchers were not able to realise a sample of 40 respondents. This was largely due to the fact that most organisations are one-man or two-man offices and cannot afford to send two or more social workers to participate in the study. Therefore a sample of 18 participants were realised. It is, however, of significance to take into account that the design utilised in the study for acquiring rater-agreement levels are not sensitive to sample size and it did therefore not influence the aim of the study (Donner & Rotondi, 2010).

3.5 Method of data collection

The researcher made use of two data sources. For the first data source, welfare organisations had to send any and all assessment frameworks they utilised during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. This is in congruence with phase one (1) of the study. This can be viewed as a portfolio of evidence. These portfolios were evaluated by a small panel against specifications they should adhere to for inclusion in phase two (2) of the study. Five portfolios (assessment frameworks) were selected.

For the second data source, a self-developed, paper-based survey was used as a data collection tool for the rating and evaluation of the five selected assessment frameworks (See Annexure 5). This is in congruence with Phase two of the study. Prior to the rating of the assessment frameworks, a workshop was held with the aim of providing training with regards to the use of assessment frameworks and how to differentiate between a good assessment framework and a bad assessment framework, based on their content. Finally, the workshop assisted in helping participants to make well-informed decisions regarding the evaluation and rating of the assessment frameworks. During the rating of the five (5) assessment frameworks, the survey assisted in assessing the Inter-Rater Reliability of the selected assessment frameworks. For this purpose, each respondent had to evaluate and rate all five (5) different assessment frameworks

(Hallgren, 2012). Lastly, the survey also gave the respondents the opportunity to rate the assessment frameworks according to their relevancy and adequacy.

3.6 Method of data analysis

Data retrieved from the survey were analysed by means of the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25, Release 25.0 (SPSS) by the North-West University's Statistical Services. The analysis delivered descriptive and frequency results that were used to describe the basic profile of the sample population. The reliability of each section of the survey was evaluated through the utilisation of Cronbach's alpha. In order to determine the inter-rater reliability of the different assessment frameworks, Intra-class correlation was conducted. This assisted the researchers to determine what assessment frameworks were rated the highest and lowest. Mean scores yielded from the descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to make valuable comparisons with regards to specific statements correlating with specific assessment frameworks.

3.7 Validity and reliability

Prior to the utilisation of any scale or assessment framework, it has to be tested for validity. One cannot prematurely assume that the assessment framework in question measures what it intends to measure (Tay & Jebb, 2017). This study concentrated on the content validity and face validity of the five assessment frameworks. The determination of content validity of the assessment frameworks were done on an introductory basis as the whole process is too extensive for a Master's study. The rest of the content validation process will be recommended for future studies. De Vellis (2017) defines content validity as the extent to which a specific set of items reflects a content domain. For the purpose of the present study, scale items were clustered into three sections, i.e. (1) functionality, (2) technicality and (3) usability. Each section represented the requirements the five assessment frameworks should have met. Face validity of the survey was determined by the North-West University Statistical Services as well as an expert in quantitative research and statistical data analysis. With regards to the determination of face validity of the five assessment frameworks, the process was interested in the manner in which the assessment frameworks appeared to the respondents (Krabbe, 2017).

In contrast, reliability focused on the consistency of the content represented within the assessment frameworks, as well as their ability to be adapted and used over various practice contexts (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). For the purposes of this study reliability was examined by means of Cronbach's Alpha.

3.8 Ethical matters

Ethical approval was applied for and received by the University's Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 1 April 2019, prior to the commencement of data collection. Ethics number: NWU-00118-18-S1. Written permission from participating designated welfare organisations were obtained. The researcher was guided by and maintained the following key ethical principles throughout the entire process of the study: informed consent and the use of a consent form; voluntary participation; anonymity and confidentiality; and the goodwill of the respondents. The storage of the data that were collected was organised and managed in a way that prevented loss, and only access by the first researcher was authorised.

3.9 Results

A convenience sample (of n=18) was realised of social workers conducting screening and assessment of prospective foster parents within the North-West Province. The level of agreement of the respondents indicating "*agree or strongly agree*" between the five assessment frameworks indicated what assessment framework was rated most favourable. In contrast, the level of disagreement of respondents indicating "*disagree or strongly disagree*" between the five assessment frameworks indicated the least favourable assessment framework(s). Statistics compiled for this study were done to answer the research question: "What assessment frameworks can be identified for future development and standardisation for the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents in the North-West Province?" This was achieved. No further statistics were compiled as it was not necessary for the purposes of this study.

3.9.1 Profile of the welfare organisations

The following bar graph gives a representation of the study population. This includes the four welfare organisations that represent satellite offices in other provinces. Additionally, the graph gives an indication of the number of respondents that took part in the study as per organisation.

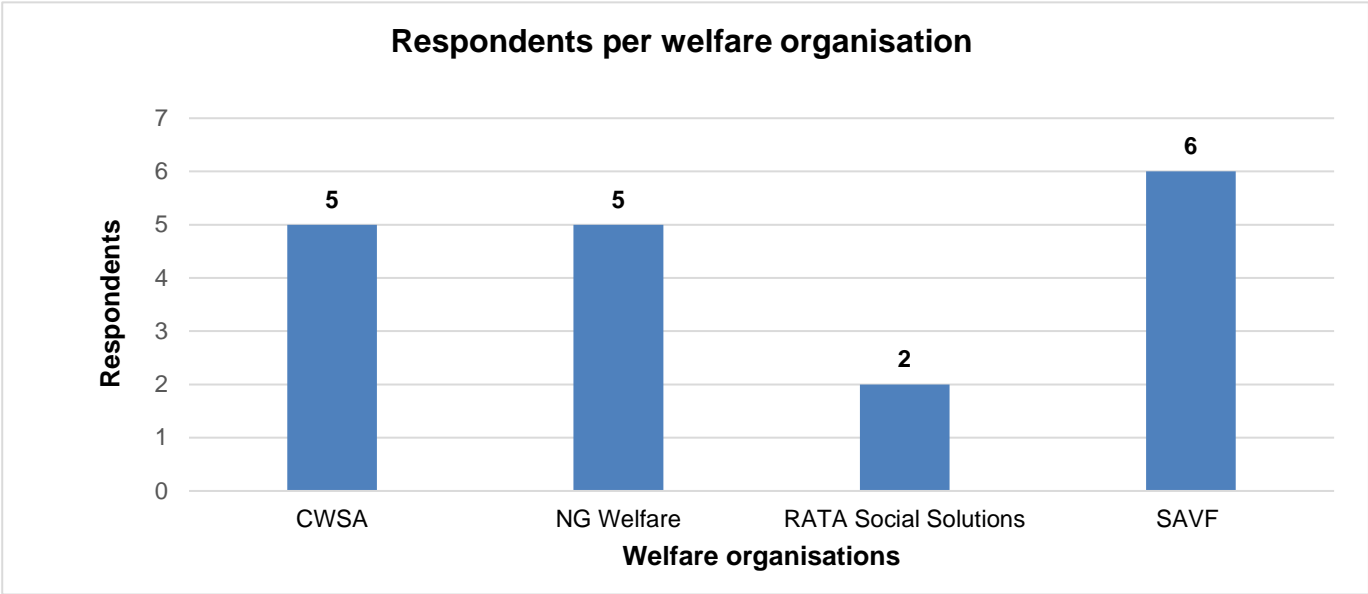


Figure 3-1: Total respondents per welfare organisation

The survey questionnaires were distributed amongst four different welfare organisations within CWSA, NG Welfare, RATA Social Solutions and SAVF. The graph above indicates that SAVF had the most respondents that participated, CWSA and NG Welfare both had 5 respondents and RATA had 2 respondents that participated in the study.

3.9.2 Demographical information of participants

The following demographical information were obtained from the respondents: (1) gender, (2) age, (3) educational qualification, (4) years’ experience as a social worker, (5) years in conducting screening and assessment of prospective foster parents, and (6) their organisation.

Table 3-2: Gender

Gender					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Male	1	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Female	17	94.4	94.4	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

Table 3-3: Age of respondents

		Age			
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	1 (18-25)	2	11.1	11.1	11.1
	2 (26-35)	7	38.9	38.9	50.0
	3 (36-45)	3	16.7	16.7	66.7
	4 (46-55)	4	22.2	22.2	88.9
	5 (56-65)	2	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

The sample of the study consisted of 94.4% females and 5.6% male. The respondents who took part in the study ranged from a younger generation (18-25) and an older generation (56-65), both representing 11.1 % of the respondents. Respondents aged 46 to 55 represented the highest percentage of 22.2%



Figure 3-2: Years’ experience in conducting foster care screening and assessment

The majority of respondents have little to average experience in conducting screening and assessments of prospective foster parents. With six respondents having between (1-6) years’ experience in the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents and six respondents having between (20-26) years’ experience in the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. This indicates to the variety of opinions present in the range of experience from one month to 26 years.

3.9.3 Respondents’ willingness to change their assessment frameworks

The question whether respondents were willing to change their organisation’s assessment framework gave a clear indication of the level of change needed in their respective organisations.

Table 3-4: Willingness to change assessment frameworks

Willingness to change assessment frameworks					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	1 (Yes)	16	88.9	94.1	94.1
	2 (No)	1	5.6	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	94.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	5.6		
Total		18	100.0		

There was a high indication of 88.9% of respondents willing to change their organisation’s assessment framework in relation to 5.6% of the respondents that were not willing to change their organisation’s assessment frameworks. One respondent did not complete the question.

3.9.4 Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics were compiled separately for all three dimensions of the self-compiled rating instrument and for all five assessment frameworks independently (Assessment frameworks A – E). The survey questionnaire evaluated different content requirements of the five assessment frameworks. Additionally, the survey questionnaire was divided into three sections to evaluate different areas of requirements, i.e. (B) framework objectives; (C) technical standards and (D) utility value. Cronbach alpha values and descriptive statistics resulting from the different assessment frameworks accompanied by the three sections are represented below. The guideline value of Cronbach alpha that the assessment frameworks should meet are between 0.5 and 0.9 (Mohajan, 2017).

Table 3-5: Cronbach alpha values

Sections	Questions	Framework A	Framework B	Framework C	Framework D	Framework E
Section B	B1-B9	0.878	0.883	0.861	0.937	0.688
Section C¹	C2-C7	0.635	0.791	0.608	0.576	0.806
Section D	D1-D7	0.880	0.838	0.872	0.914	0.904

Reported Cronbach alphas are as follows: Section B: all assessment frameworks adhere to the guideline value. Section C: all assessment frameworks adhere to the guideline value. Section D: all assessment frameworks adhere to the guideline value. It can therefore be reported that the survey questionnaire is deemed reliable. Reported Cronbach alphas are deemed to be positive results. It is important to take note that this can also be due to the small population as α is sensitive high or low numbers.

3.9.5 Frequency and descriptive statistics

Frequency and descriptive statistics were given separately for the five different assessment frameworks (Assessment framework A – E). It enabled the researcher to make conclusions regarding the distribution of variables as well as to identify relevant trends in the data.

3.9.5.1 Comparisons between assessment frameworks

Results including the mean and standard deviation of the different assessment frameworks accompanied by the following three sections: (B) Framework objectives; (C) Technical standards and (D) Utility value, are represented below.

¹ Item C1 was excluded from the final reliability analysis due to its negative influence on overall reliability.

Table 3-6: Framework objectives

Questions	Framework A	Framework B	Framework C	Framework D	Framework E
1. A clear scope of assessment?	3.67 SD=1.085	3.39 SD=0.979	3.39 SD=0.850	3.22 SD=0.943	3.83 SD=0.618
2. A clear focus?	3.94 SD=0.873	3.28 SD=1.074	3.39 SD=0.916	3.22 SD=0.808	3.72 SD=0.669
3. Is culturally competent?	3.61 SD=0.698	3.39 SD=0.778	3.56 SD=0.784	3.39 SD=0.850	3.56 SD=0.856
4. Is able to make use of different sources of data for assessment?	3.61 SD=0.698	3.22 SD=1.003	3.28 SD=0.895	3.33 SD=0.907	3.67 SD=0.767
5. Combines the use of quantitative and qualitative methods?	3.39 SD=0.916	2.78 SD=0.808	3.33 SD=0.840	3.18 SD=1.074	3.35 SD=0.702
6. Has a clear theoretical base?	2.94 SD=0.938	3.06 SD=0.983	2.83 SD=0.707	3.06 SD=1.056	3.28 SD=0.895
7. Gives intervention options should a risk be identified?	3.06 SD=0.873	2.78 SD=1.003	2.72 SD=0.669	2.83 SD=0.857	3.11 SD=0.900
8. Utilises a specific method for evaluation or scoring?	2.78 SD=1.060	2.61 SD=0.979	2.67 SD=0.840	3.00 SD=1.237	3.17 SD=0.924
9. Is a formalised document.	3.94 SD=0.659	3.59 SD=0.939	3.47 SD=0.717	3.53 SD=0.943	3.71 SD=0.920
Overall	3.44 SD=0.612	3.12 SD=0.661	3.18 SD=0.545	3.20 SD=0.723	3.49 SD=0.429
Overall ranking	2	5	4	3	1

Mean scores and standard deviation were used to determine the ranking of the five assessment frameworks. Assessment Framework E closely met the most framework objectives, followed by Assessment Framework A. Assessment Framework E showed the best results especially with regards to *having a clear scope of assessment* and *being able to make use of different sources of data for assessment*. In comparison, Assessment Framework A obtained the highest results for having a *clear focus* and *being a formalised document*. Assessment Frameworks B and D

both showed a high number in standard deviation in multiple scale items, i.e. above 1. Assessment Framework D had the highest number of standard deviation (SD=1.237) for utilising a specific method for evaluation or scoring (scale item 8), showing that respondents were uncertain about Assessment Framework D meeting this requirement.

Table 3-7: Technical standards

Questions	Framework A	Framework B	Framework C	Framework D	Framework E
1. Any psychometric properties? (statistical/numerical testing of the assessment framework)	2.24 SD=0.831	2.18 SD=0.883	2.24 SD=0.970	2.65 SD=1.222	2.88 SD=0.993
2. Face validity (The assessment framework measures what it intends to measure).	3.39 SD=0.778	3.11 SD=0.900	2.89 SD=0.832	3.28 SD=0.826	3.50 SD=0.924
3. Whether framework items represent everything we need to know about prospective foster parents (content validity)	3.72 SD=0.895	3.39 SD=1.145	3.39 SD=0.916	3.50 SD=0.924	3.72 SD=0.958
4. Framework items are applicable to different client situations (reliability)	3.67 SD=0.686	3.56 SD=0.856	3.28 SD=0.826	3.50 SD=0.707	3.72 SD=0.826
5. Specific criteria that qualifies/disqualifies a prospective foster parent	3.06 SD=0.802	3.11 SD=1.023	2.72 SD=0.895	2.67 SD=0.840	3.11 SD=0.963
6. Things a prospective foster parent must say/write/do to demonstrate competency to parent (Performance evidence)	3.50 SD=0.985	3.11 SD=1.183	3.00 SD=0.970	2.67 SD=1.138	3.11 SD=1.132
7. Decision-making rules that enables one to make judgements about parenting competency?	3.06 SD=1.056	2.89 SD=1.023	2.78 SD=0.943	2.61 SD=1.037	3.00 SD=1.237
Overall	3.40 SD=0.521	3.19 SD=0.719	3.01 SD=0.522	3.04 SD=0.523	3.36 SD=0.724
Overall ranking	1	3	5	4	2

Assessment Framework A closely met the most technical standards followed by Assessment Framework E. Assessment Framework A showed the highest results, especially with regards to demonstrating *content validity* (SD=0.895) and *reliability* (SD=0.686). In comparison, Assessment

Framework E obtained higher results for demonstrating *face validity* and having *specific criteria that qualifies/disqualifies a prospective foster parent*. Assessment Framework B demonstrated to have the most standard deviation results above 1. This is a clear indication that respondents were overall uncertain about its technical standards. Assessment Framework B. and D both showed a high number in standard deviation in multiple scale items above 1. Assessment Framework E had the highest number of standard deviation (SD=1.237) for having decision-making rules (scale item 7), showing that respondents were uncertain about Assessment Framework E meeting this requirement.

Table 3-8: Utility value

Questions	Framework A	Framework B	Framework C	Framework D	Framework E
1. Clearly constructed?	3.94	3.53	3.39	3.39	3.61
	SD=0.873	SD=0.874	SD=0.916	SD=1.145	SD=1.092
2. User friendly?	4.06	3.82	3.78	3.39	3.72
	SD=0.639	SD=0.809	SD=0.808	SD=0.850	SD=0.958
3. Visually clear? (the information displayed can be read quickly and easily without causing confusion).	4.06	3.71	3.67	3.39	3.56
	SD=0.802	SD=0.920	SD=0.907	SD=0.979	SD=1.042
4. Explicitly states what needs to be done? (it offers tips on what to do and operation method(s) used).	3.67	3.18	2.94	3.06	3.22
	SD=0.840	SD=0.883	SD=0.639	SD=0.938	SD=0.732
5. How the assessment is done is compatible to both social worker and client expectations?	3.72	3.41	3.33	3.17	3.61
	SD=0.669	SD=0.712	SD=0.686	SD=0.857	SD=0.916
6. Universally accessible? (Social workers from different organisations will be able to use it equally well).	3.94	3.53	3.67	3.39	3.61
	SD=0.802	SD=1.007	SD=0.907	SD=0.916	SD=1.195
7. Efficient? (Is it simple to complete and highly productive).	3.78	3.50	3.41	3.00	3.35
	SD=0.647	SD=0.857	SD=0.712	SD=1.061	SD=1.057
Overall	3.88	3.45	3.46	3.26	3.53
	SD=0.578	SD=0.697	SD=0.601	SD=0.771	SD=0.796
Overall ranking	1	4	3	5	2

Assessment Framework A demonstrated the overall best *utility value* with high results of being most *user friendly* and *visually clear* as well as *universally accessible*. In comparison, Assessment Framework E obtained high results for being *user friendly* and *compatible to both social worker and client expectations* and lower results *in explicitly stating what needs to be done* (scale item 4). Assessment Framework D demonstrated the lowest result for *efficiency* in comparison to Assessment Framework C that demonstrated the lowest result for *explicitly stating what needs to be done* (scale item 4). Assessment Framework D and E demonstrated to have standard deviation results above 1, indicating that respondents were uncertain with regards to both assessment frameworks' efficiency.

Table 3-9: Ranking of assessment frameworks

	Assessment Framework	Assessment Framework	Assessment Framework	Assessment Framework	Assessment Framework
	A	B	C	D	E
Section B	2	5	4	3	1
Section C	1	3	5	4	2
Section D	1	4	3	5	2
Overall ranking	1	5	3	4	2

Results indicate that Assessment Framework A was ranked no. 1, Assessment Framework E no. 2, Assessment Framework C no. 3, Assessment Framework D no. 4, and Assessment Framework B no. 5. The final determination of ranking Assessment Frameworks B, C and D were done with the assistance of cross-checking results of standard deviation of all three assessment frameworks. Lower standard deviations indicated a higher level of uniformity, whereas larger standard deviations indicated a lower level of uniformity.

3.9.6 Qualitative results

The last two questions of the questionnaire were qualitative of nature. Respondents had the opportunity to give recommendations of dimensions of assessment to be included in any of the five assessment frameworks. Three respondents gave an overall recommendation with regards to assessment frameworks:

Respondent 7: “There is a lot of requirements/ questions, but tools to measure these requirements are limited. I am of the opinion that more quantitative tools are needed to substantiate and support qualitative data.”

Respondent 8: “There is definitely a need for improvement towards a better framework. There could be made use of a better quantitative and qualitative tools that can be used to improve and better the frameworks of foster care screening.”

Respondent 18: “Currently we only draw up a report based on an interview with prospective foster parents. We need an assessment tool that will ensure that there is a universal decision on prospective foster parents.”

In the study of Murray (2016) none of the participants indicated that they use any quantitative assessment frameworks during the screening process. The researchers support these findings as the above recommendations show a definitive existence of congruence with regards to the lack of assessment frameworks used (quantitative practices) during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. Further qualitative results were included as recommendations.

3.10 Discussion

In this section, the researchers discuss the orientation and the research problem, the research methodology and the ethical aspects in conducting the study. The aim of the research study was to recommend assessment frameworks for future development and standardisation. Data was collected through a self-developed paper-based survey questionnaire that was distributed at a workshop held with the respondents. Assessment frameworks were ranked in order of agreement or disagreement of scale items representing requirements that the assessment frameworks should meet. In addition, this study was interested in asking respondents to identify areas of domains to be included for screening and assessment purposes. Areas of domains refers to that aspect to which respondents would like more information about, for e.g. family background. The researchers will include the domains in the recommendations section.

The research results of the study included demographical information of the respondents who partook in the study. Subsequently, this information assisted the researchers in determining the profile of the respondents. Moreover, it allowed the researchers to determine whether respondents are willing to explore or perhaps even consider changing or reconsidering their current screening and assessment frameworks. Respondents were more than willing to do so.

Reliability statistics were performed using Cronbach alpha values and descriptive statistics to determine the reliability of the survey questionnaire. All assessment frameworks, as well as the survey questionnaire, were determined to be reliable. Descriptive and frequency statistics were compiled to make conclusions regarding the distribution of variables as well as to identify relevant trends in the data. The mean and standard deviation were used to determine the ranking of the five assessment frameworks. Results indicate that Assessment Framework A is ranked no. 1 and Assessment Framework E no. 2. Both these assessment frameworks will be recommended for further development and standardisation.

The respondents who took part in the research study expressed their willingness to change their assessment frameworks at their respective organisations. This was a clear indication of the change that is needed with regards to the organisations' screening and assessment frameworks utilised during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents.

SECTION D: FINAL CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The demand of creating an enabling environment of conducting screening and assessments of prospective foster parents continues to increase. Given the challenges experienced in the foster care system, this demand has to be met with the implementation of evidence-based practice. In this article the researchers presented, analysed and interpreted findings based on data obtained from 18 participants from four different welfare organisations in the North-West Province. Participants were presented with a workshop and a self-developed paper-based survey questionnaire which they had to complete for evaluation and rating purposes. The overall aim was to identify assessment frameworks for future development and standardisation based on the rating of content contained in the assessment frameworks. Assessment Framework A (no. 1) and Assessment Framework E (no. 2) were ranked the highest by respondents.

The research findings indicate a lack in the use of uniform standardised assessment frameworks during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents. Findings further support the previous statements that most foster care social workers tend to rely mainly on their accumulated practice wisdom and personal experience, resulting in the inconsistent use of screening and assessment frameworks. Additionally, findings also reported that the knowledge base of social workers do not fit into the requirements of the use of standardised assessment frameworks (Skillmark & Oscarsson, 2018). This speaks to the significance of social workers' willingness to change their organisation's screening and assessment frameworks and adapt to the usage of standardised assessment frameworks.

Furthermore, research findings have indicated that none of the assessment frameworks included in the study were standardised. Consequently, findings demonstrated the absolute necessity of establishing validity and reliability before an assessment framework can be considered for implementation. The reason for this being that validity and reliability essentially ensure that data is sound, can be replicated, and that the results are accurate (Mohajan, 2017). It furthermore assists in the development and application of assessment frameworks. Finally, results concluded that the ideal assessment framework has to meet certain requirements with respect to its functionality, technicality and utility as they appeared to be central to the improvement of assessment frameworks.

4.2 Limitations

The following limitations were relevant to the study:

Within the research study the method of data collection was a self-developed paper-based survey questionnaire with the purpose of quantifying the degree of agreement or disagreement between participants. This methodology was feasible with regards to the aim of the study. Unfortunately, the researcher could only realise a sample population of 18, which limited the researcher's findings as a data set of 30 would have been preferred.

The researcher further acknowledges that research findings might be further limited due to the demarcation of the study to Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Dr. Ruth Segomotsi districts in the North-West Province. The four selected welfare organisations had satellite offices in various towns and could therefore send their screening and assessment frameworks as well. Giving the researchers a total of eight assessment frameworks to sift through. The expansion to other districts might have delivered a larger number of participants and more screening and assessment frameworks to work with.

The participants from the research study represented the inclusion of non-governmental organisations rendering foster care services. Thus, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the entire population and organisations in the North-West Province rendering welfare services.

4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 Recommendations for practice

To use uniform standardised assessment frameworks in the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents.

Data collection during the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents should be done in conjunction with other methods, i.e. assessment frameworks, interviews, home visits, etc. Integrating the use of quantitative and qualitative measurements in the determination of prospective foster parents' capacity to foster.

The ideal assessment framework with regards to *functional requirements* have to have a clear scope and focus of assessment, must be culturally competent, be able to make use of different sources of data for assessment, combines the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, has a

clear theoretical base, gives intervention options should a risk be identified, utilises a specific method for evaluation or scoring, and is a formalised document.

With regards to *technical requirements* it has to demonstrate psychometric properties, face validity, content validity (whether framework items represent everything we need to know about prospective foster parents), reliability, has specific criteria that qualifies/disqualifies a prospective foster parent, requires a prospective foster parent to say/write/do something to demonstrate competency (performance evidence), and has decision-making rules that enables social workers to make judgements about parenting competency.

With regards to *usability requirements*, the assessment framework should be clearly constructed, user friendly and visually clear. It should explicitly state what needs to be done, clearly indicate how assessment is done, and be compatible to both the social worker and client's expectations. Finally, it should be universally accessible, and efficient.

Recommendations from the respondents indicate that the following domains of assessment should be included in assessment frameworks:

- The inclusion of the relevant sections of The Children's Act 38 of 2005- to assist prospective foster parents to understand why certain information is needed.
- Parenting skills criteria- especially for prospective foster parents who has no children of their own.
- Expectations of prospective foster parents- this must be given before the application is completed and include different types of foster care. Prospective foster parents should fully understand the implications of foster care.
- Temperaments and psychological functioning.
- Outline of the prospective foster parents' expenditure with regards to the foster care grant- prospective foster parents must be able to account for the allocation of the funds (it should be towards the care of the child concerned).
- A list of all required information and documentation needed for application as well as a list of assessment frameworks that will be used to obtain some of this information.

* Foster parent training should be implemented, not as a domain of assessment but as an additional tool to increase the efficiency of the screening and assessment of prospective foster parents.

4.3.2 Recommendations for further studies

To further develop Assessment Framework A and Assessment Framework E for standardisation purposes.

To further develop the survey questionnaire to assist in future evaluation of new and different assessment frameworks.

To replicate this study in a different setting with a larger population.

4.3.3 Funding

A part-time post-graduate bursary was received from the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus. No other funding were reported to carry this study.

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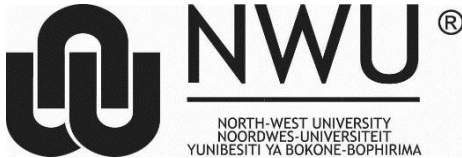
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SECTION E: ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1: ETHICAL APPROVAL



Ms FI Mmusi
Social Work
COMPRES

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

**Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research,
Training and Support**

**North-West University Health Research Ethics
Committee (NWU-HREC)**

Tel: 018-285 2291
Email: Wayne.Towers@nwu.ac.za

10 March 2019

Dear Ms Mmusi

APPROVAL OF YOUR APPLICATION BY THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NWU- HREC) OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

5 Ethics number: NWU-00118-18-S1

Kindly use the ethics reference number provided above in all future correspondence or documents submitted to the administrative assistant of the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) secretariat.

6 Study title: A content evaluation of assessment frameworks used for screening prospective foster parents in the North-West Province

Study leader: Ms FI

Mmusi Student: B

Steyn-24123293

Application type:

Single study

Risk level: Minimal (monitoring report required annually)

Expiry date: 31 March 2020 (monitoring report is due at the end of March annually until completion of study)

You are kindly informed that after review by the NWU-HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, your ethics approval application has been successful and was determined to fulfil all requirements for approval. Your study is approved for a year and may commence from 10/03/2019. Continuation of the study is dependent on receipt of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. A monitoring report should be submitted two months prior to the reporting dates as indicated i.e. annually for minimal risk studies, six-monthly for medium risk studies and three-monthly for high risk studies, to ensure timely renewal of the study. A final report must be provided at completion of the study or the NWU-HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences must be notified if the study is temporarily suspended or terminated. The monitoring report

template is obtainable from the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za. Annually, a number of studies may be randomly selected for an internal audit.

The NWU-HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences requires immediate reporting of any aspects that warrants a change of ethical approval. Any amendments, extensions or other modifications to the proposal or other associated documentation must be submitted to the NWU-HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences prior to implementing these changes. These requests should be submitted to Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating, "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, the nature of the amendment/s being made (indicating what changes have been made as well as where they have been made), which documents have been attached and any further explanation to clarify the amendment request being submitted. The amendments made should be indicated in **yellow highlight** in the amended documents. The *e-mail*, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a *specific subject line* indicating that it is an amendment request e.g. "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". This e-mail should indicate the nature of the amendment. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

Any adverse/unexpected/unforeseen events or incidents must be reported on either an adverse event report form or incident report form to Ethics-HRECIncident-SAE@nwu.ac.za. The *e-mail*, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a specific subject line indicating that it is a notification of a serious adverse event or incident in a specific project e.g. "SAE/Incident notification: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". Please note that the NWU-HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.

The NWU-HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences complies with the South African National Health Act 61 (2003), the Regulations on Research with Human Participants (2014), the Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (2015), the Belmont Report and the Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely



Digitally signed by Wayne Towers
Date: 2019.03.10
16:56:07 +02'00'

Prof Wayne Towers
Chairperson: NWU-HREC



Digitally signed by Prof Minrie Greeff
DN: cn=Prof Minrie Greeff, o, ou, email=minrie.greeff@nwu.ac.za, c=US
Date: 2019.03.13
07:23:17 +02'

Prof Minrie Greeff
Head of Health Sciences Ethics
Office for Research, Training and
Support

Current details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.3 Letters
Templates\9.1.5.4.1_Approval_Letter_HREC.docm 30 April 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.1

**ANNEXURE 2: PROOF OF ATTENDANCE OF
ETHICS TRAINING**



TRREE

Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Clinical Trials Centre
The University of Hong Kong

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Bianca Steyn

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Introduction to Research Ethics

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

September 4, 2017
cid : PROJETS1



Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



FMH
Continuing Education Program (5 Credits)
Programme de Formation continue (5 Crédits)



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Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/ASSIM/SAMW) (www.samw.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.crpw.ch)

(RUV - 20170310)



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Bianca Steyn

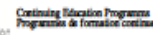
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Research Ethics Evaluation

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

September 4, 2017
010 - issa@hku.hk

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



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(REV - 20170310)



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

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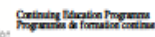
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Informed Consent

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

September 10, 2017
CID : 2641321e2

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



Ce programme est soutenu par - This program is supported by :

European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) (www.edctp.org) - Swiss National Science Foundation (www.snf.ch) - Canadian Institutes of Health Research (<http://www.cihr-irac.gc.ca/2891.html>) - Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/SSMS/AMW) (www.ssmv.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpc.ch)

(REV - 20170310)



Zertifikat
Certificat

Certificado
Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Bianca Steyn

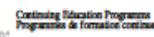
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Good Clinical Practice (GCP)

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

September 10th, 2017
CID: 3498DETAC

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator

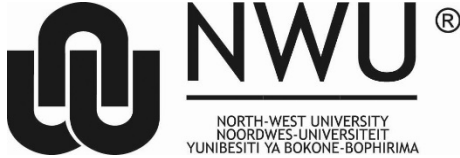


Ce programme est soutenu par - This program is supported by:

European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) (www.edctp.org) - Swiss National Science Foundation (www.snf.ch) - Canadian Institutes of Health Research (<http://www.cihr-irac.gc.ca/2891.html>) - Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/ASSM/AMW) (www.samw.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpe.ch)

(REV - 20170310)

ANNEXURE 3: REQUEST TO OBTAIN ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS



Privaat sak X1290, Potchefstroom
Suid-Afrika 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Faks: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Social Work
Tel: 084 517 4580
E-mail: steynbinx@gmail.com

25 March 2019

Dear respondent,

RESEARCH-THE ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTIVE FOSTER PARENTS

The conversation conducted between you and Bianca Steyn refers.

As agreed with you, I kindly request the following from your organisation:

- All documentation that is being used during the assessment and screening of foster parents. It can be self- developed documents that assist in easing the assessment process or any official documentation that is used by the organisation.
- Any instruments (for e.g. personality tests) or questionnaires that are used to assess the capacities of the foster parents for e.g. conflict management; emotional functioning etc.
- To send me this document by **28 March 2019** for sifting purposes.

If the documents are only available on hard copy, I kindly request that you scan it in and sent it via email to me.

For your convenience, I would like to remind you that the workshop and research opportunity will be conducted on **8 April 2019** at the NWU. I am aware of the fact that there are a couple of social workers that would have to travel. **Your traveling expenses will be paid.** A claimform for your information is included in the email.

Attached is a formal invitation to the workshop and research opportunity.

Kind regards

Bianca Steyn

You are hereby formally invited to attend the “Content of Assessment Frameworks”--workshop and research study

When: 8 April 2019

Time: 08:00-13:30

(Registration starts 08:00-08:30)

Where: Potchefstroom, NWU, Alumni Hall

RSVP before or on 26 March 2019

(The workshop will specifically focus on what the content of assessment frameworks should be)



“Non nobis solum--not for ourselves alone”

ANNEXURE 4: WRITTEN CONSENT FORM



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222
Fax: +2718 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



INFORMED CONSENT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: A content evaluation of assessment frameworks used for screening prospective foster parents in the North-West Province.

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00118-18-S1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ms. Fatima Mmusi

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Bianca Steyn

ADDRESS: 7 Storm Street, Kannonierspark, Potchefstroom

CONTACT NUMBER: 084 517 4580

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a master's degree in social work. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00118-18-S1)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- We plan to evaluate the content of different assessment frameworks used during the screening of prospective foster parents of various social welfare organisations in order to propose a universal assessment and screening framework for prospective foster carers.
- This study will be conducted via a workshop accompanied with Google forms to be filled in and will be done by experienced health researchers trained in Social Work.

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You have been invited to be part of this research study, because you are a social worker and part of your work is to carry out assessments in screening prospective foster parents.
- You are willing to receive one-day training on the content of assessment frameworks.
- You are able to speak and understand English fluently as the workshop will be presented in English
- Respondents can be male or female.

What will be expected of you?

- Firstly, it will be expected of you to receive training on the content of assessment frameworks.
- Secondly, it will be expected of you to rate four different assessment frameworks separately on a Google form. Computers and basic training on how to complete ratings will be provided for your convenience.
- Taking part in this study will at least require of you to put aside one working day to participate in the study.
- Lastly, it will be expected of you to travel from your organisation to the North West University, Potchefstroom Campus in order to participate in the study.
- You will be provided with a meal for the day and in instances where you travel with your own car and not that of the organisation, you will be reimbursed for travelling expenses.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- The gains for you if you take part in this study will include receiving training on the content of assessment frameworks.
- Indirect benefits will include the opportunity to form part of a process aimed at enhancing the usage of assessment frameworks during the screening process of prospective foster parents for future reference.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

- The risks to you in this study are low. You may experience slight discomfort for having to study the case examples, but will receive clear instructions regarding how to perform this task.
- There are more gains for you in joining this study than there are risks.

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

- Anonymity of your findings will be protected by ensuring that no one, the researcher included, are able to identify you.
- Furthermore, the completed questionnaires (Google forms) will only be filed according to the different organisations. Biographical information will therefore exclude your names.
- To ensure confidentiality, only the researcher and an independent person will be aware of your identity. The independent person will sign a confidentiality agreement.
- Any information that you share will stay confidential.
- All relevant information and data will be kept on the researcher's computer that is password protected. Other documentation will be kept in a safe in the researcher's private dwelling. Ensuring privacy.
- Data will be stored for 5 years

What will happen with the findings?

- The information you shared with the researcher will be written in a report and published in an article format. No one will use the information that you shared with the researcher for any other purpose.
- The findings of this study can be used for further studies, however, if any other person would like to use the information for other reasons than that of this study, such a person will need to get permission in writing from the North West University Health Research Ethics Committee.
- At completion of the study, electronic data will be stored at the COMPRES office for a period of five years.

How will you know about the results of this research?

- We will give you the results of this research study as soon as the research and research report is completed via e-mail.
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings by the researcher via e-mail.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

- This study is not funded; therefore you will not be paid to take part in the study.
- Refreshments will be served after the workshop.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact the researcher, Bianca Steyn, at 084 517 4580 if you have any further questions or have any problems.
- You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled: A content evaluation of assessment frameworks used for screening prospective foster parents in the North-West Province.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

ANNEXURE 5: GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER

Heleen Scholtz <heleen@ngwelsyn.co.za>
to me ▾

Wed, Feb 13, 9:24 AM



Geagte me Steyn

TOEGANG TOT ORGANISASIE VIR NAVORSINGSDOELEINDES

Graag verleen ek hiermee toestemming dat u NG Welsyn se gesinsorg takke in Noordwes mag nader vir navorsingsdoeleindes. Ek is van mening dat u navorsingsonderwerp relevant is en die resultate 'n positiewe bydrae kan maak tot dienslewering.

Sterkte met u studies.

Groete



Mev HE Scholtz

Provinsiale Bestuurder

Geregistreerde maatskaplike werker (10-14964)

Posbus 1570, Potchefstroom, 2520

NG Welsyn Hoofkantoor

☎ 082 451 7684

☎ 086 433 7974

ANNEXURE 6: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Content Evaluation of Assessment Frameworks

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. You have specifically been selected to participate in the evaluation of four different assessment frameworks used during the *screening and assessment of prospective foster parents*. Taking part in this evaluation is your opportunity to create a platform for bettering assessment. If you have any questions about the survey, please don't hesitate to ask.

This survey is divided into 3 Sections. In these sections we'd like to learn more about your opinion of the four assessment frameworks as a whole. The sections are going to focus on the overall functions that an assessment framework should have.

Please tell us a little about yourself.

1. What is your gender?

Male Female

2. How old are you?

18–25

26–35 36–45

46–55 56–65

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Four-year or bachelor's degree

Graduate or master's degree

Postgraduate degree or PhD

4. Number of years' experience as a social worker?

5. How long have you been conducting assessment and screenings of prospective foster parents?

6. Please indicate your organisation for e.g. FAMSA, Potchefstroom.

Instructions-

To answer the following questions, please familiarize yourself about the four assessment frameworks presented to you. Please indicate in every section at each statement to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement. (5) Strongly agree; (4) Agree; (3) Undecided/Neutral; (2) Disagree; (1) Strongly disagree.

Section 1 Framework objectives:

Evaluate to what extent each assessment framework has the following elements...

Statements	Frameworks																								
	Assessment Framework A					Assessment Framework B					Assessment Framework C					Assessment Framework D					Assessment Framework E				
10. A clear scope of assessment?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
11. A clear focus?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
12. Is culturally competent?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
13. Is able to make use of different sources of data for assessment.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
14. Combines the use of quantitative and qualitative methods?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
15. Has a clear theoretical base?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

16. Gives direction about intervention options should a risk be identified.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
17. Utilises a specific method for evaluation or scoring?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
18. Is a formalised document.	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

Considering all the above aspects. Which one of the assessment frameworks do you prefer?

A	B	C	D	E
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Please rate this assessment framework on an overall scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 = poor; 2= fair; 3= average; 4= good; 5= excellent.

1	2	3	4	5
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Section 2: Technical standards:

To what extent do the sample frameworks provide information about...

Statements	Frameworks																								
	Assessment Framework A					Assessment Framework B					Assessment Framework C					Assessment Framework D					Assessment Framework E				
1. Any psychometric properties? (statistical/numerical testing of the assessment framework)	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
2. Face validity (The assessment framework measures what it intends to measure).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
3. Whether framework items represent everything we need to know about prospective foster parents? (content validity)	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
4. Framework items are applicable to different client situations? (reliability)	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
5. Specific criteria that qualifies/dis-qualifies a prospective foster parent?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
6. Things a prospective foster parent must say/write/do to demonstrate competency to parent? (Performance evidence)	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
7. Decision-making rules that enables one to make judgements about parenting competency?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

Considering all aspects evaluated in the above section. Which assessment framework do you prefer most?

A	B	C	D	E
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Please rate the technical standard of this assessment framework on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 = poor; 2= fair; 3= average; 4=good; 5=excellent.

1	2	3	4	5
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Section 3 Utility value.

To what extent is each assessment framework...

Statements	Frameworks																								
	Assessment Framework A					Assessment Framework B					Assessment Framework C					Assessment Framework D					Assessment Framework E				
1. Clearly constructed?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
2. User friendly?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
3. Visually clear? (the information displayed can be read quickly and easily without causing confusion).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
4. Explicitly states what needs to be done? (it offers tips on what to do and operation method(s) used).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
5. How the assessment is done is compatible to both social worker and client expectations?	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
6. Universally accessible? (Social workers from different organisations will be able to use it equally well).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
7. Efficient? (Is it simple to complete and highly productive).	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

Considering all aspects of utility, what assessment framework do you prefer?

A	B	C	D	E
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Please rate the total utility of this assessment framework on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 = poor; 2= fair; 3= average; 4=good; 5=excellent.

1	2	3	4	5
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Please see next page.

(1). What recommendations do you have regarding any of the areas or dimensions of assessment in any of the assessment frameworks?

***Area/dimension of assessment:** That aspect to which you would like more information about for e.g. family background.

(2). Would you consider changing your organisations' assessment framework?

Yes

No

Please motivate in both cases:

Thank you for your valuable input!

Definition of concepts:

Specific method for evaluation: For e.g. assessing the results achieved against the criteria for acceptable foster parents”

Culturally competent: the initiative to seek out needed information so that evaluations are not biased and services are culturally appropriate.

Quantitative and qualitative components: mixture of open and close-ended questions.

Method for evaluation or scoring: how is information and characteristics/capacities of prospective foster parents evaluated or scored?

Psychometric properties: the numerical description of information gathered regarding the prospective foster parent’s capacities to foster.

Triangulation: The process of seeking corroboration between two or more sources of data and interpretations.

Assessment formulation: the focus of the assessment. Each assessment is structured according to the specifics of what is in front of the social worker as well as the theoretical framework used by the social worker.

Performance criteria: The required performance in relevant tasks, roles and skills to demonstrate achievement of being prospective foster parents.

Performance evidence: Prospective foster parents must provide demonstrated evidence of their competency i.e. simulation or real-time assessment.

Assessment decision-making rules: These rules are used to make judgements about whether competency has been achieved. They are not open to interpretation.

User- friendliness: The assessment framework is simple and easy to understand/ complete. It is of reasonable length