

**PERCEPTIONS OF FIRST TIME CHILD OFFENDERS REGARDING THEIR
ADJUSTMENT TO A CORRECTIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

Thembelihle F. Zwane

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Supervisor: Dr. J. Jordaan

November 2020

DECLARATION

I, *Thembelihle F. Zwane 2016327716* hereby declare that the dissertation titled *Perceptions of first-time child offenders regarding their adjustment to a correctional environment* is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another university or for another qualification. Furthermore, I cede copyright of this dissertation and the data in favour of the University of the Free State.



Thembelihle F. Zwane

30 November 2020

SUPERVISOR'S PERMISSION TO SUBMIT



Reference: → Dr. J. Jordaan
Psychology Building, 204
University of the Free State
BLOEMFONTEIN
9301

Telephone: → 051 -- 401-2890
E-mail: → jordaanj1@ufs.ac.za

30 November 2020

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT

Student: Ms. Thembelihle F. Zwane
Student number: 2016327716
Degree: Master of Social Science (Clinical Psychology)
Department: Psychology

Title: Perceptions of first-time child offenders regarding their adjustment to a correctional environment

I hereby provide permission that this dissertation be submitted for examination – in fulfilment of the requirements for a Master's in Psychology (Clinical Psychology), in the Department of Psychology, Faculty of the Humanities, at the University of the Free State.

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Kind regards,

Dr. J. Jordaan
Supervisor

PROOF OF LANGAUGE EDITING

LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER: Anneke Denobili

BA Communication Science (Corporate and Marketing Communications)*
BA Hons Communication Science (Corporate and Marketing Communications)*
* Cum Laude

6 Carl van Heerden Street
Universitas Ridge, Bloemfontein

Tel: 084 244 8961
annekedenobili@gmail.com

November 2020

DECLARATION

I, Anneke Denobili, hereby declare that I did the language and APA editing of the dissertation of Thembelihle F. Zwane titled, *Perceptions of first time child offenders regarding their adjustment to a correctional environment*, for submission purposes in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters of Social Sciences (Clinical Psychology) in the Department of Psychology, Faculty of the Humanities at the University of the Free State. As per the student's request, the transcripts and appendices were not edited. All the suggested changes, including the implementation thereof, were left to the discretion of the student.

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Abstract

The impact of incarceration on offenders' psychological well-being and functioning can be detrimental. Literature on incarceration identifies significant stressors such as loss of freedom, homesickness, isolation, and exposure to intimidation. Child offenders have been described as particularly vulnerable to the impact of incarceration on their well-being and functioning. This study aimed at exploring and describing first-time child offenders' perceptions of adjustment in a correctional environment. The transactional model of stress and coping and lifestyle exposure model of offending within the correctional environment served as the theoretical lens, guiding the understanding behind the participants' perceptions and the subsequent impacting factors.

A qualitative research approach with a multiple case study design was used to gain a deeper understanding of these child offenders' perceptions of adjustment in a correctional environment. Eight participants were obtained through the purposive sampling method, and individual semi-structured interviews were conducted, including a focus group with four of the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, concurrently with the hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development.

Findings indicated three prominent main themes, namely (i) contributing factors to maladjustment, (ii) protective factors to success in adjusting, and (iii) child offenders' adjustment strategies. Previous perceptions of life in incarceration, deprivations of incarceration, and the correctional centre's perceived legitimacy appeared to contribute towards the child offenders' maladjustment. Rehabilitation and emotional support, however, aided in adjustment. Lastly, child offenders employed strategies such as self-discipline and seeking social support.

Key terms: child offender, adjustment, incarceration, correctional environment, coping strategies

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter briefly outlines the contents of this study. The trajectory of this chapter begins with a discussion of the research background, the research aim, research methodology, research design, ethical considerations, and value of the study. The chapter concludes with the synopsis of chapters discussed in this paper, including the key terms relevant in this study.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Incarceration is perceived as a painful and punishing experience (Anderson, 2016; Sykes, 1958), and this experience may account for the psychological difficulties that offenders tend to experience in the correctional environment (Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005). Some of the identified psychological difficulties include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), diminished self-worth (Haney, 2001), self-harm, anxiety, aggressive behaviour (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013), depression, antisocial behaviour (Cesaroni & Peterson-Badali, 2013), suicidality, maladaptive personality traits, bullying (Brown & Ireland, 2006 Ireland, 2005), and substance abuse (Monahan et al., 2011). Dhami et al. (2007) focused on offenders' adjustment as they tend to struggle to adjust to the correctional environment. In their study, it was found that time spent in a correctional centre directly impacted the offenders' participation in programmes, their thoughts of needing control over their lives, their feelings of hopelessness, and their

disciplinary infringements in the correctional environment (Dhami et al., 2007). Research has identified some main concerns pertaining to the adjustment of offenders.

Haney (2001) reports that due to the psychological impact of incarceration, offenders develop habits of thinking that hinder their re-integration into society. Such habits include hypervigilance, interpersonal mistrust, psychological distancing, social withdrawal, and lack of self-sufficiency and planning skills due to dependence on the institutional structure (Arditti & Parkman, 2011; Haney, 2001). Furthermore, first-time offenders are placed at a higher risk of re-offending, with first-time child offenders being at a higher risk of re-offending in adulthood, and once incarcerated, first-time child offenders' educational achievement is negatively impacted (Mahler et al., 2018). According to Lee et al. (2017), youth contact with law enforcement could trigger formal or informal labelling, increasing the likelihood of later engagement with criminal activities, as hypothesised in the labelling theory. Therefore, this could account for the noted recidivism. Regarding educational achievement, Magano (2016) reported academic challenges discovered in a disciplinary school in South Africa's Gauteng Province. These included incarcerated child offenders who lacked reading skills, inadequate material to aid in learning within the correctional school, and other negative influences exerted by non-schooling child offenders to discontinue schooling. Incarceration also increases the likelihood of school dropout and decreases college enrolment possibilities (Kirk & Simpson, 2013). Furthermore, ex-child offenders may assess that the benefits of education may not materialise due to having a criminal record, thus leading to school dropout (Kirk & Simpson, 2013). This may also be attributed to the increased vulnerability related to arrest and how arrest impacts attitudes and beliefs of a better future (Mahler et al., 2018). Other noted negative implications are stigma (Keene et al., 2018), attachment disruptions (Arditti, 2016), and a high prevalence of adolescent school

dropout related to parental incarceration (Nichols et al., 2016). According to Miles et al. (2012), when there is noted symptomatology during incarceration, it could indicate adjustment difficulties. This could negatively impact functioning within the correctional environment, overall mental health, as well as access to pro-social skills development and opportunities for offending behaviour programmes (Miles et al., 2012). Inversely, when adjustment is mediated by contact with family, offenders present with lower rates of mental health symptoms, reoffending, and alcohol dependence, and tend to display adaptive aspects of community functioning post release (Folk et al., 2019).

In South Africa, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) defines a child offender as a person below the age of 18 years (DCS, 2016), while juvenile offenders are categorised as being between the ages of 18 and 20 (DCS, 2016). According to the DCS annual reports (DCS-AR), as of the year 2015/2016 until 2018/2019 annually, more than 120 children are being sentenced and more than 60 in remand detention (RD), with 185 sentenced (DCS, 16), 110 in RD and 148 sentences (DCS, 2016), 110 in RD and 126 sentenced (DCS, 2017), and 64 in RD and 123 sentenced (DCS, 2018). An adolescent's first arrest signifies a heightened vulnerability to poor outcomes, as this may lead the child offenders to question the possibility of meeting future goals and thus diminish their motivation (Mahler et al., 2018). Adolescents entering correctional institutions represent a population that is significantly disposed to severe psychological distress (Brown & Ireland, 2006), as child offenders have been found to lack the necessary coping skills to efficiently adjust in the correctional environment (Ireland et al., 2005). This is due to their young age, inexperience, and immaturity, as they are often ill-equipped for the life inside (Gooch, 2016). Shulman and Cauffman (2011) state that adolescence is a critical period in which one starts developing coping skills, as it is characterised by novel stressors such as school

transitions, bodily changes, and evolving relationships. Incarcerated adolescents also experience difficulties such as stigma related to incarceration (Lee et al., 2017), the pressure of imitating a “macho-culture” within the correctional environment (Miles et al., 2012), family separation (Gooch, 2016), and psychiatric morbidity (Karnik et al., 2009).

Young offenders up to the age of 21 tend to experience mental health disorders at a higher prevalence compared to their counterparts in the general population (Miles et al., 2012). Furthermore, entry into and even exit out of the correctional environment increase the risk of mental illness (Miles et al., 2012). They also tend to present with limited coping strategies, low self-esteem, and vulnerability to stressful circumstances, among others (Anderson et al., 2004; Gooch, 2016). The correctional environment poses significant stressors, namely reduced personal freedom (Shulman & Cauffman, 2011), lack of or limited parental visitation (Monahan et al., 2011), loss of childhood, bullying and victimisation (Gooch, 2016), with coping styles being limited (Ireland et al., 2005; Shulman & Cauffman, 2011).

According to Erikson (1968), an adolescent’s presiding developmental task is identity development. In adolescence, psychosocial maturity increases and is marked by perspective, responsibility, and temperance, which is purported to also be “arrested” when adolescents are incarcerated (Dmitrieva et al., 2012). Dmitrieva et al. (2012) found that varying forms of confinement and age at incarceration often negatively impact the trajectory of psychosocial maturity. Peacock (2008) argue that adolescents in contact with the criminal justice system are labelled as ‘deviant’ or ‘criminal. Negative labelling creates a set of expectations that could encourage negative identity formation as the adolescent incorporates it into his identity, and societal reactions towards delinquent behaviour being negative (Peacock, 2008). According to the labelling theory, the experience of negative social labels such as “delinquent”, “deviant”, or

“criminal” leads to future deviant behaviour (Lee et al., 2017). The developmental task, and devalued correctional centre, including a negative identity, are factors that may negatively influence the offenders’ adjustment to the correctional environment (Peacock, 2008). The incarcerated adolescent with a low level of personal identity is prone to be drawn into correctional centre gang memberships to fulfil emotional and security needs; they could lack purpose, value, and direction (Peacock & Theron, 2007).

The literature cites various models employed to understand adjustment within the correctional setting, such as the deprivation and importation models (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). The deprivation model attributes low adjustment to the correctional environment, while the importation model discusses the offender’s characteristics preceding incarceration, and when brought into the correctional environment, results in maladjustment (Adams, 1992; De Wet, 2005; Parisi, 1982; Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). The deprivation model states that the correctional environment itself discomforts the offenders as it deprives them of basic human needs in social interactions (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). Contrasting, the basic premise of the importation model is that the offenders come into the correctional environment with dysfunctional attitudes and coping mechanisms that clash with the institutions' values, resulting in a struggle to adjust properly (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). Hochstetle and DeLisi (2005) further developed an integrated lifestyle exposure model of offending in the correctional environment, asserting the saliency of the above models and emphasising that correctional centre violence or misconduct resulted from both institutional and individual variables. The model highlights aspects that tap into both models, such as correctional environment conditions and controls (deprivation-environmental variables), self-control and attitudes (importation-individual variables), among others. It posits that offenders’ behaviours are mediated by their lifestyle while

incarcerated, specifically, their participation in the offender economy (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005).

The transactional theory of stress and coping will help understand the perceptions of adjustment of first-time child offenders in the correctional environment. Stress, according to the transactional theory, refers to an encounter between an individual and their environment that necessitates an evaluation of the consequences of such an encounter and coping by cognitive or behavioural means to ensure that the demands of the encounter are met (Hershcovis et al., 2017; Scherer et al., 1993). However, stress is not regarded as only external stimulation or specific patterns of reaction, but rather refers to a relation between the individual and their environment (Lazarus, 1966). The demands of the environment thus exceed the available coping strategies (Lazarus, 1993). Different appraisals can lead to varying coping strategies, namely problem-focused or emotion-focused coping (Li et al., 2018). Within the transactional theory, incarceration could be regarded as the stressor, with which each individual offender has to cope (Brown & Ireland, 2006; Eytan, 2011; Kirchner et al., 2008; Miles et al., 2012; Mohino et al., 2004). It requires the identified appraisal process in which the offender determines the demands of incarceration vis-à-vis their available coping or rather adjustment resources.

Literature indicates that child offenders, especially in the early stages of their incarceration, could expectantly encounter significant difficulties and experience vulnerability to psychological distress (Monahan et al., 2011). Their adjustment to their incarceration is also related to their conduct or misconduct within the system (Amemiya et al., 2016; Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005). However, within South Africa, limited research has been invested in the process and experience of adjustment of these child offenders. This is based on the results yielded by an EbscoHost and Acta Criminologica search that started in June 2017 and continued periodically until August

2020 to accumulate literature for this study. Keywords used included, for example, “adjustment of child offenders (to incarceration) in South Africa, adjustment of first-time child offenders (to incarceration) in South Africa, and incarcerated child offenders in South Africa”. The search indicated how profoundly life-changing and potentially wounding the experience of incarceration is to offenders (Abdullah, 2006; Anderson, 2016; Arditi, 2016; Flanagan, 1980a; Howard, 1999; Sykes, 1958), specifically, child offenders who are vulnerable (Brown & Ireland, 2006; Ireland, 2005; Kirk & Simpons, 2013; Magano, 2016; Peacock, 2008; Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). Chagnon (2007) reported that youth in the justice system experience it as a particularly stressful event. Therefore, there is a distinguished need to expand knowledge available on child offenders' adjustment in the correctional environment in the South African context. With this study, the researcher aspires to inspire inception into further research relating to the adjustment and coping strategies of child offenders for the benefit of child offenders and practitioners who play a prominent role in their support and rehabilitation, such as social workers, psychologists, correctional officers, educators, as well as academics.

1.2 RESEARCH AIM

This research study aims to explore and describe the perceptions of adjustment to a correctional environment by child offenders. The study's objective is to uncover common patterns in child offenders' perceptions in adjusting to the correctional environment, specifically first-time child offenders.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Research Design

An interpretative research paradigm within a qualitative approach (Howitt & Cramer, 2011) will be used to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of the child offenders' adjustment to the correctional environment. As interpretive research is hermeneutic and phenomenological in nature, the researcher fulfils the role of a participant observer. Thus, the researcher engages and discerns the meanings of actions expressed within their context (Biggam, 2017). According to Dean (2018), the distinctive entanglement of the researcher, with the researched, is central to the reflexive research practice in an interpretivist study. This study will employ a multiple case studies design (Yin, 2003). The researcher will make use of the hybrid approach detailed by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) to code and aid in theme development; a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development.

1.3.2 Sample and sampling method

Initially, the sample for this research study had to consist of 10-15 child offenders (below the age of 17) at Ekuseni Correctional Centre in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. The inclusion criteria were that the participants must currently be incarcerated, are first-time child offenders, and have served six months or less of their sentence. Participation, therefore, was open to willing offenders; varying backgrounds could provide rich data, although no preference was given to race, socio-economic status or type of offence. Vulnerable offenders with psychiatric disorders were excluded. This was achieved through the facilitation of the social worker who screened potential participants. Purposive sampling was identified as the favourable sampling method to

use as this method is suitable in instances where a non-representative sample of the population is required (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling refers to the sampling method in which the potential participants who are proficient and well informed about the phenomenon of interest are identified and approached (Etikan et al., 2016).

1.3.3 Data collection

Data collection comprised three methods, namely biographical questionnaires, individual in-depth interviews, and focus groups (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Biographical questionnaires were used before interacting with the participants to ensure that they meet the criteria and to establish the sample profile or description. In-depth individual semi-structured interviews followed and were utilised at an early research stage to explore and identify significant themes. The participants from the sample that participated in the semi-structured interviews formed part of the focus group. Howitt and Cramer (2011) define in-depth interviews as a highly specialised conversation in a peculiar environment in which the interviewee provides more input into the conversation. In-depth interviews are unusual due to their conversational characteristics that aim to provide a one-sided account with detail beyond normal daily conversations (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). A focus group was conducted for an extensive discussion related to themes that arose. Focus groups, according to Varga-Atkins et al. (2017), are small face-to-face group techniques employed to ascertain the perception of participants on a given topic. Krueger and Casey (2015) stated that the ideal composition of the focus group is 5-8 members to allow sufficient opportunity for members to share insights and for better group control.

1.3.4 Data Analysis

This study utilised thematic analysis (Crowe et al., 2015) to analyse the data. Themes relating to the research topic were identified to categorise and/or emphasise any patterns from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which assisted in understanding the perceptions of adjustment of child offenders in incarceration. The thematic analysis followed six steps, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), namely Step 1: familiarisation with data, Step 2: coding, Step 3: searching for themes, Step 4: reviewing themes, Step 5: defining and naming themes, and Step 6: writing up. Braun and Clarke's (2006) familiarisation with the data is vital, as it aids in understanding the depth and breadth of the content, achieved by listening to recorded interviews and transcribing them. After becoming familiar with the data, the researcher generated a list of factors that appeared to be prominent in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Searching for themes refocuses the analysis on a broader level and captures vital information about the data that relates to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke's (2006) fourth phase incorporate the refinement of the identified themes, with the fifth phase of analysis involving the analysis and identification of the core of each theme. Lastly, the final identified themes need to be documented (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, the hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development need to be incorporated to aid in coding, theme development, and promoting scientific rigour when using thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Subsequently, it reflects the overarching themes that capture the perceptions of adjustment as described by the participants.

1.3.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness aspects were considered (Billups, 2014), including credibility through participant validation or member-checking, where the participants were given an opportunity to question and/or rectify the researcher's assumptions from the findings (Billups, 2014). The participants could assess whether the findings correlated to what they intended to express to the researcher. Reflexivity, an aspect of confirmability, was employed to record preconceptions the researcher might have, and which could have interfered with the data analysis process (Shufutinsky, 2020). To improve transferability, thick descriptions and comprehensiveness were utilised (Amankwa, 2016). Lastly, as a means for dependability, the research findings and procedures were reviewed by external auditors (Billups, 2014).

1.3.6 Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Research Committee of the Department of Psychology and the General Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities at the University of the Free State (ethical clearance number UFS-HSD2018/0489) (see Appendix A). Furthermore, approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the DCS to conduct this study at the correctional centre stated above (see Appendix B). Ethical considerations included but were not limited to (1) informed consent and assent, (2) confidentiality and anonymity, (3) rapport, and (4) debriefing (Allan, 2011). Other aspects of confidentiality, such as voluntary participation and incentives, among others, will be discussed in greater detail at a later stage.

1.4 SUMMARY OF ALL CHAPTERS

This study consists of five chapters. An outline of each chapter follows.

Chapter 1: Contains a summary of all the chapters in this study, as well as important key terms. Also included, is a brief discussion of the research background, research aim, and methodology.

Chapter 2: Presents a discussion of local and international relevant literature on incarceration and specifically that of child offenders, its outcomes, and adjustment. This involves relevant seminal as well as current discussions. The theoretical framework is also included in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Focuses on the research design, sampling method, data gathering, data collection, and data analysis. Trustworthiness and the ethical considerations related to this study are also discussed.

Chapter 4: Outlines the results of the study.

Chapter 5: Entails a discussion of the results of the study, linking the themes to relevant literature.

Chapter 6: Outlines the summary of the study's findings, including the limitations, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. The researcher will also include a brief personal reflection.

1.5 KEY TERMS

Child offender in this study refers to any persons under the age of 18 years, although in certain instances could also include a person aged between 18 and 21, whose matter is dealt with in terms of Section 4 (2) (Child Justice Act 75, 2008).

Adjustment refers to the changes in life that are made continuously when one is faced with a change in life or an unfamiliar stance or circumstance. Adjustment is not static but dynamic; a process, and an outcome (Larsen, 2014). Regarding incarceration, the operational definition for adjustment will refer to the continuous changes the offenders are required to make and or are making to cope with stressors in the correctional environment (Busko & Kulenovic, 1995).

Incarceration in this study and the South African context, as indicated by the 2005 White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, is defined as ensuring public safety, creating a controlled environment for intense and needs-based rehabilitation, correction, and development of offenders (DCS, 2005).

Correctional environment or centre is defined as using the provisions of the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998, more specifically:

It means any place established under this Act as a place for the reception, detention, confinement, training or treatment of persons liable to detention in custody or to placement under protective custody and all land, outbuildings, and premises adjacent to any such place and used in addition to that. And all land, branches, outstations, camps, buildings, premises or places to which any such persons have been sent for incarceration, detention, protection, labour, treatment or otherwise, and all quarters of correctional officials used in connection with any such correctional centre, and for the purpose of

sections 115 and 117 includes every place used as a police cell or lock-up. (Correctional Services Act 111, 1998, p. 14)

1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a concise overview of the study. It provided a synopsis of the background to the research and methodology. Chapter 2 will explore literature relevant to incarceration adjustment focusing on first-time child offenders and the relevant theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of child offenders' adjustment to incarceration. The chapter includes a broad discussion regarding incarceration adjustment, followed by the adjustment of child offenders and first-time child offenders to incarceration in the South African context. This chapter will also cover the theories utilised in this study to better understand the phenomenon of adjustment to a correctional environment amongst child offenders, namely the transactional model of stress and coping and the integrated lifestyle exposure model of offending within the correctional environment.

2.2 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.2.1 Theoretical lenses

Incarceration is perceived as a painful and punishing experience (Anderson, 2016; Sykes, 1958). This experience may account for the psychological difficulties that offenders tend to experience in the correctional environment (Johnson & Dobrzanska, 2005). Incarceration is a disruptive process that introduces significant losses for offenders and their families (Holligan, 2016). Some of the identified difficulties include PTSD, diminished self-worth (Haney, 2001), self-harm,

anxiety, aggressive behaviour (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013), depression and antisocial behaviour (Cesaroni & Peterson-Badali, 2013), suicidality, maladaptive personality traits, as well as bullying (Brown & Ireland, 2006; Ireland, 2005) and substance abuse (Monahan et al., 2011). In addition to boredom and violence, evidence exists that incarceration can have a detrimental effect on offenders' psychological well-being and functioning (Putwain & Sammons, 2002; Sugie & Turney, 2017). The literature on incarceration suggests that loss of freedom, homesickness, isolation, and exposure to intimidation represent significant stressors (Greve, 2001; Ireland & Archer, 2000; Porporino & Zamble, 1984). Literature provides various models for understanding adjustment within the correctional environment, such as the deprivation and importation models (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013).

The deprivation model attributes poor adjustment to the correctional environment, while the importation model discusses the characteristics of the offender that precedes incarceration that is brought into the correctional environment resulting in maladjustment (Adams, 1992; De Wet, 2005; Parisi, 1982; Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). The deprivation model states that the correctional environment itself discomforts the offenders as it deprives them of basic human needs in social interactions (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). It supposes that when offenders are incarcerated, they face social and psychological inconvenience that results from the loss of freedom, status, dignity, possessions, autonomy, security, and personal relationships (De Wet, 2005). The argument of this model suggests that deprivation features of the incarceration experience such as the "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960), dictate offenders' behaviour and adjustment. Strain in correctional environments is abundant and comes from many sources, including fear of social isolation, apprehension of or actual victimisation, and exposure to violence, among others (Adams, 1992).

Contrasting, the basic premise of the importation model is that offenders come into the correctional environment with dysfunctional attitudes and coping mechanisms that clash with the institutions' values, resulting in a struggle to adjust properly (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). Offenders bring their own attitudes, norms, values, and attributes into the correctional environment, which evidently become part of the offender culture (Inciardi, 1993). Offender characteristics and experiences are thus imported into the correctional environment and impact their future behaviour (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Wright, 1991). Studies confirm that characteristics and experiences impact the behaviour and adjustment of offenders. These include security and classification levels, staff behaviour, correctional centre design types, the unpredictable nature of the environment, including programme availability influencing offender adjustment and correctional centre social order, as well as offender characteristics such as age, gender, race, prior record, and cultural values (Adams, 1992; Mears et al., 2013). Thus, literature shows support for both models and the models are viewed as complementary to each other.

Hochstetle and DeLisi (2005) further developed an integrated lifestyle exposure model of offending in the correctional environment in which they assert the saliency of the above models. They emphasise that correctional centre violence or misconduct result from both institutional and individual variables (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005). The model highlights aspects that tap into both models, such as correctional environment conditions and controls (deprivation-environmental variables) and self-control and attitudes (importation-individual variables). The integrated lifestyle exposure model posits that offenders' behaviours are mediated by their lifestyle while incarcerated, specifically, their participation in the offender economy (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005). In a review of studies (Beauregard & Brochu, 2013; Haney, 2001; Nkosi & Maweni, 2020), institutional factors and antisocial attitudes and behaviours were identified as being the

most significant predictors of misconduct. Also, some offenders presented with a crime-conducive identity and used to acting criminal; these offenders were likely to engage in crime and dangerous interactions in the correctional centre (Irwin, 1970). By the time offenders committed institutional misconduct, they might be thoroughly entrenched in a lifestyle where offending, deviant beliefs and risky activities were common (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005). Lifestyle theories clearly indicated that demographics such as general strain, self-control, and lifestyle correlated with different risks of offending and victimisation (Jillian, 2013). According to Hochstetle and DeLisi (2005), the lifestyle exposure model assesses the relationship between several psychological variables and the structure between the variables. These noted variables include self-control (risk-taking and temper), perceived prison environment, criminal attitudes, and beliefs, witnessing victimisation (sexual or physical assaults, assault with a weapon), offending (fights with or retaliation against another offender, keeping possible weapons nearby), correctional centre and participating in the inmate economy (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005).

Furthermore, the transactional model of stress and coping will help understand the perceptions of adjustment of first-time child offenders in the correctional environment. According to the transactional theory, stress is defined as an encounter between an individual and their environment that necessitates an assessment of the encounter's consequences and coping by cognitive or behavioural means to meet the demands of the encounter (Herscovis et al., 2017; Scherer et al., 1993). However, stress is not only an external stimulation or specific patterns of reactions, but also refers to a relation between the individual and their environment (Lazarus, 1993). The environment's demands are deemed to exceed the available coping strategies resulting in stress (Lazarus, 1993). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) coping was viewed in two aspects; animal mode that focuses on the fight-flight response for survival that primarily focuses

on neutralizing dangerous or obnoxious conditions thus reducing arousal. Secondly, coping according to ego psychology is defined as the flexible and realistic thoughts and acts that alleviate stress by solving the problem. Different appraisals can lead to varying coping strategies, namely problem-focused or emotion-focused coping (Li et al., 2018). Within the transactional model, incarceration could thus be the stressor with which each individual offender has to cope (Brown & Ireland, 2006; Eytan, 2011; Kirchner et al., 2008; Miles et al., 2012; Mohino et al., 2004). Effectiveness of coping depends on incarceration and situational factors vis-à-vis their available coping or rather adjustment resources (personal factors) (Talík & Skowronski, 2018). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) there are personal (commitment and beliefs) and situational factors (e.g., novelty, predictability) that influence the appraisal of situations. Light (2018) states that this model acknowledges the unique and individualised adjustment of offenders in the correctional context, depending on their hierarchy of goals, beliefs, and prior experiences. Appraisals alongside coping strategies affect quality of life through resulting adaptational outcomes; pathology due to maladaptive or deleterious coping and life satisfaction and somatic health through adaptational coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Often, problem-focused coping is associated with reduced psychological distress (e.g. Brissette et al., 2002). Problem-focused coping includes attempts to reduce the level of stress experienced and to find solutions to address the problem causing the stress (Baker & Berenbaum, 2007). When stressors are difficult to control, acceptance and reinterpretation of the particular stressor appear adaptive (Busko & Kulenovic, 2003), especially when an individual has no control over their sentence length, as well as other surrounding circumstances. Avoidance or denial of stressors encompasses poorer outcomes (Brissette et al., 2002), although it has been found to be effective in the short-term (Holohan et al., 1995). Carver (2011) indicated that

problem-focused coping is a healthy and effective form of coping with real world problems. However, research has also found that problem-focused coping might at times be unproductive and unsatisfying within the correctional context (Chahal et al., 2016; Picken, 2012). This seems to be the case as problem-focused coping usually requires offenders to remove the source of stress or to remove themselves from the stress-inducing situation (Carroll, 2013), which is impractical for incarcerated offenders.

Emotion-focused coping is the strongest mediator in the stress–illness relationship, as it is strongly associated with poorer levels of health (Rector & Roger, 1996) and increased emotional distress (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987). It has been argued that emotion-focused coping might be the most efficient coping strategy in a correctional environment (Van Herreveld et al., 2007). This is especially true considering offenders have low control over negative outcomes with the correctional environment (Chahal et al., 2016). Emotion-focused coping involve strategies such as support from loved ones and significant others (Baker & Berenbaum, 2007).

Thus, when offenders know how to overcome their stress, they function more efficiently in the correctional environment and are more effective in their engagement with the rehabilitative programmes they are exposed to. Coping with stress is among the key skills in successful rehabilitation and promotes the safety of correctional staff and offenders (Talik & Skowronski, 2018).

2.2.2 Child Offenders in the South African Context

In South Africa, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) defines a child offender as a person below the age of 18 years (DCS, 2016), while juvenile offenders are categorised as being

between 18 and 20 (DCS, 2016). According to the DCS annual reports (DCS-AR), as of the year 2015/2016 until 2018/2019 annually, more than 120 children are being sentenced and more than 60 are in remand detention (RD), with 185 sentenced (DCS, 16), 110 in RD and 148 sentences (DCS, 17), 110 in RD and 126 sentenced (DCS-AR, 2018), and 64 in RD and 123 sentenced (DCS-AR, 2019).

Section 69 of the Child Justice Act (CJA) defines the objectives of sentencing as using incarceration as a measure of last resort for the shortest appropriate period (Child Justice Act, 2008). The CJA governs the establishment of a criminal justice system for children who conflict with the law, under the values underpinning our Constitution and international obligations. According to the CJA (2008), the new criminal justice system for children should create the possibility of diverting matters involving children who committed crimes away from the criminal justice system, into more appropriate circumstances; those whose matters are not diverted, should be dealt with in child justice courts. Thus, expand and establish the principles of restorative justice for children who commit offences while simultaneously ensuring that they take responsibility and are held accountable for crimes committed (Child Justice Act, 2008).

According to Section 28(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 108 (1996), every child has the right not to be detained except when it is a measure of last resort, although detainment should only be for the shortest appropriate period; the child has the right to be kept separately from detained persons (those over the age of 18), and should be treated and kept in conditions appropriate to the child's age. A child justice court imposing a sentence of imprisonment must antedate the term of imprisonment by the number of days that the child has spent in a correctional centre or child and youth care centre before imposing the sentence. The CJA's Section 77(5 and 6) further states that no law or sentence of imprisonment imposed on a

child, including a sentence of imprisonment for life, may directly or indirectly deny, restrict or limit the possibility of an earlier release (Child Justice Act, 2008).

Section 19(1) of the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998 stipulates that every offender who is a child and subject to compulsory education must attend and have access to such educational programmes. Also, all child offenders not subject to compulsory education must, if possible, be allowed access to educational programmes (Correctional Services Act 111, 1998). The National Commissioner is required to provide every child offender with social work services, religious care, recreational programmes, and psychological services, also ensuring that offenders remain in contact with their families through additional visits and any other means possible (Correctional Services Act 111, 1998). Section 41 of the Correctional Services Act requires that the DCS provide a range of programmes and activities, including needs-based programmes, to meet the educational and training needs of sentenced offenders. Sentenced child offenders are required to participate in the education programmes offered. Section 38(1A)(a) further requires developing a “correctional sentence plan” for those serving a sentence of 24 months or more.

Muntingh and Ballard (2012) conducted a survey in eight correctional centres that accommodate child offenders in South Africa and found that although most centres accommodating sentenced children provided either daily or weekly educational programmes, there were deviations. Inconsistent practices were found, such as not all sentenced children having access to educational services as required by the Correctional Services Act. For example, at Estcourt children serving long-term sentences are transferred to Ekuseni to access education services. Excluding children of compulsory school-going age from education is in contravention of the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998 and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

Ekuseni Youth Development Centre occupied child offenders beyond capacity on some occasions. In the survey, the overwhelming majority of responses indicated that the cells where sentenced children were housed are clean, well ventilated, free of odour and insects. All the centres reported that hot water is always available, except for Durban Westville, Ekuseni Youth, and Emthonjeni that reported some problems in this regard. All sentenced children were reported to have a bed and mattress, and at least one blanket and two sheets. However, at Ekuseni, these were reported to be old and worn.

2.2.3 Incarceration and adjustment

According to Chui (2010), the traditional concepts of justice were primarily about punitive ends. Punishment was one of the primary functions of correctional centres and permeated its daily structure (Sexton, 2012). Wermik et al. (2013) found that among the multiple goals of incarceration, incapacitation intends to impose a period of "time out" from the criminal career by removing the opportunity for an individual to commit a crime in the community for the duration of their sentence. Fleisher and Decker (2001), in the years prior to this literature, indicated that there had been a call for harsher punishment in correctional centres, including stripping colour televisions, removing weightlifting equipment, and weakening educational programmes. The motivation behind this is to punish offenders further, force them to straighten out their lives and deter others from crime (Fleisher & Decker, 2001). Al-Fijawi et al. (2019) state that sexual abuse of offenders, enforcement of labour laws, poor health care, inadequate educational facilities, and overcrowding still persists in correctional centres. Correctional policies and practices reinforce a loss of freedom and personhood for offenders, known as the pains of imprisonment (Foster, 2012; Sykes, 1958). It is evident that the now correctional centres were places of punishment

rather than rehabilitation designed and managed to pain offenders. The White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (DCS, 2005) requires the DCS to develop into an institution of rehabilitation and social reintegration, offering care, development, security, facilities, correction, and aftercare to offenders. Thus, indicating a focus on rehabilitation rather than punitive ends.

Similar to the outside world, offenders form a society with traditions, norms, and a leadership structure (Sykes, 1958). The offender subculture assists offenders in coping with the deprivations of incarcerated life by providing communal ways of thinking, feeling, and acting for all aspects of life inside (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Correctional centres are known as places where violent crimes, drug violations, illegal gambling, and illicit sexual behaviour occur daily (Beauregard & Brochu, 2013; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Peacock (2006) informs that child offenders in South African correctional centres are faced with overcrowding, poor health care, poor sanitation and nutrition, degradation, and violence. Various factors affect the extent of offenders' integration into the correctional environment culture. Included are characteristics such as age, race, marital status, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and extent of criminal involvement (Drowns & Hess, 1995).

According to Crank (2010), the "Ghetto" exposure is posited to have preparatory components to incarceration for African-American offenders due to the violence and hostility that is associated with it, thus assisting with adjustment to incarceration as violence and hostility is not a novel experience. Incarceration has been linked with the propensity towards divorce or separation for married couples (Apel et al., 2010). Maintaining healthy spousal relationships offers support (Siennick et al., 2014) while other offenders tackle unobtainable yet desired affection from a spouse (Chui, 2010). Therefore, the dynamics of the spousal unit can prompt adjustment or maladjustment. Regarding criminal involvement, Crank (2010) states that

commitment to a criminal lifestyle results in incarceration being perceived as an enhancement of the offender's status, making incarceration bearable.

Overcrowding is one of the serious issues in South African correctional centres, depriving the right to privacy, leading to violence, deaths, uncontrolled homosexual assaults, and poor hygienic conditions (Shabangu, 2006). Overpopulation in correctional centres has negative aspects that make survival extremely difficult. Nkosi and Maweni (2020) inform that overcrowding leads to scarcity of resources, poor health care, inadequate nutritional meals, and persistent violent behaviour. Despite overcrowding and forced proximity with others, correctional environments impose emotional isolation, which some see as the most debilitating confinement aspect (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Furthermore, during incarceration, pervasive stressors include isolation, boredom, bullying, and potential victimisation from physical and sexual assault (Greve, 2001).

The offender subculture incorporates gang activity and membership. Generally, gangs refer to organisations operating within the correctional settings as a self-perpetuating criminally oriented entity aimed at controlling the correctional environment through intimidation and violence against other members (Beare & Hogg, 2013). According to Beare and Hogg (2013), offenders do not enter the correctional centre as gang members but often are by the time they are released. Many offenders fail to survive incarceration in the absence protection of a gang. However, some offenders that reported joining a gang for protection from victimisation found that gang membership also protects them from general violent victimisation (e.g., simple assault), although increasing their likelihood of being a victim of serious violence (e.g., aggravated assault or robbery) (Fox et al., 2012). DeLisi et al. (2013) found that gang activity is a robust predictor of noncompliance, and continued antisocial behaviour within the correctional environment, with

offenders involved in gangs being at an increased risk of serious forms of misconduct and continuing to offend within the correctional centre. Offenders that self-identified as gang members are significantly more likely to assault other offenders and correctional officers and staff than their non-gang peers (DeLisi et al., 2013). Fox et al. (2012) found that the risk among gang members to commit crimes are higher than non-gang members, but they are also more victimised by crime at higher rates than the general population.

Wood and Dennard (2017) explored gang membership's impact on the offenders' mental health. These researchers found that gang membership tends to undermine gang members' mental health and those with existing mental health problems are usually attracted to gang membership. Furthermore, justice responses, via policies and intervention strategies, need to identify and address the mental health needs of gang members to achieve successful rehabilitation (Wood & Dennard, 2017). Compared to non-gang offenders, gang offenders presented with higher levels of exposure to violence, paranoia symptoms, PTSD, anxiety, and forced control of their behaviour in the correctional centre (Wood & Dennard, 2017). Therefore, gang membership results in a heightening vulnerability to maladjustment through its premise of sanction violations, increased exposure to violence and victimisation, and a propensity towards poor mental health.

Distress is elevated during the initial weeks of incarceration and declines as offenders adapt to incarcerated life (Porporino & Zamble, 1984). However, some offenders maintain significant distress levels during incarceration, leading to a higher risk of attempted and completed suicide, self-harm, and high anxiety levels and depression (Cohen & Taylor, 1981; Zamble & Porporino, 1988). Time spent in a correctional centre directly affected the offenders' participation in programmes, their thoughts of needing control over their lives, their feelings of hopelessness,

and their disciplinary infringements in the correctional environment (Dhami et al., 2007).

Offenders often experience low personal control, cannot escape stressors, and lack empathic social and emotional support (Cohen & Taylor, 1981; Dhami et al., 2007; Murray, 2005; Roberts et al., 2017; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Regardless of the changes in modern correctional environments and the discarding of physical suffering as punishment, incarcerated offenders persistently experience equivalent pain (Anderson, 2016).

Research has identified some main concerns pertaining to the adjustment of offenders. For example, Haney (2001) reports that due to the psychological impact of incarceration, offenders develop habits of thinking that hinder their re-integration into society. Such habits include hypervigilance, interpersonal mistrust, psychological distancing, social withdrawal, and lack of self-sufficiency and planning skills due to dependence on the institutional structure (Haney, 2001). Incarceration has the potential outcome of psychological damage because of persisting tension, frustration, harassment, stress, and strain of living in an abnormal environment amongst various personalities and behaviours (Abdullah, 2006). Abdullah (2006) further stated that the length of time being incarcerated and the conditions being lived under while incarcerated, determines the extent of the psychological damage; incarceration is viewed as an aversive experience.

Adjustment of Child Offenders

Literature indicates that it is expected that child offenders, especially in the early stages of their incarceration, would encounter significant difficulties and vulnerability to psychological distress (Monahan et al., 2011). Their adjustment to their incarceration is also related to their conduct or misconduct within the system (Amemiya et al., 2016; Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005). Incarceration is profoundly life-changing and potentially wounding to offenders (Abdullah, 2006; Anderson,

2016; Arditi, 2016; Howard, 1999; Sykes, 1958), especially child offenders who are vulnerable (Brown & Ireland, 2006; Ireland, 2005; Kirk & Simpons, 2013; Magano, 2016; Peacock, 2008; Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). According to Chagnon (2007), youth in the justice system experienced it as particularly stressful.

According to Erikson (1968), an adolescent's presiding developmental task is identity development. In adolescence, psychosocial maturity tends to increase and is marked by perspective (the ability to see things from multiple temporal and social vantage points), responsibility (the ability to function autonomously), and temperance (the ability to curb impulsive and aggressive behaviour), which is purported to also be "arrested" when adolescents are incarcerated (Dmitrieva et al., 2012). Varying forms of confinement and age at incarceration negatively impacts the trajectory of psychosocial maturity (Dmitrieva et al., 2012). Personal identity, self-concept, and self-esteem are closely related concepts (Baumeister, 2015), which aid an individual in coping with stress, trauma, and misfortune (Haesen et al., 2018). Peacock (2008) argued that adolescents in contact with the criminal justice system are labelled as 'deviant' or 'criminal'. Negative labelling creates a set of expectations that encourage negative identity formation as the adolescent incorporates it into his identity state, influencing societal reactions towards delinquent behaviour (Peacock, 2008).

The labelling theory indicates that the experience of negative social labels such as "delinquent", "deviant", or "criminal" leads to future deviant behaviour (Lee et al., 2017). Furthermore, youth contact with law enforcement could trigger formal or informal labelling, thus increasing the likelihood of later engagement with criminal activities, as hypothesised in the labelling theory (Lee et al., 2017). The developmental task devalued correctional centre, and negative identity are factors that may negatively influence offenders' adjustment to the

correctional environment (Peacock, 2008). The incarcerated adolescent with a low level of personal identity is prone to be drawn into correctional centre gang membership to fulfil emotional and security needs as they could lack purpose, value, and direction (Peacock & Theron, 2007). This literature explores the significance of the impact of incarceration on child offenders in their development, most especially regarding their identity, coping skills, as well as their emotional intelligence.

Adolescents, often first and/or economic offenders, are commonly incarcerated in conditions of overcrowding, irrespective of their vulnerable and unique developmental stage (Peacock & Theron, 2007). Despite the deprived and hostile correctional environment, incarcerated adolescents are also confronted with developing a unique sense of personal identity (Peacock & Theron, 2007). Even if an incarcerated offender has adapted to the hardship, challenges and stresses of incarceration, adolescent offenders face this situation with the added disadvantage of immaturity (Dmitrieva et al., 2012). Incarceration separates youth from their parents when their well-being (Helsen et al., 2000) and the acquisition of coping skills (Patterson & McCubbin, 1987) are still significantly influenced by the family.

During this developmental stage, adolescents also view their friendships as important (Helsen et al., 2000), but the environment of incarcerated adolescents comprises antisocial youth (Schaefer et al., 2017; Shulman & Cauffman, 2011). Compounding the social isolation from typical contexts is the high rate of psychological disorders among adolescent offenders, which may render them particularly vulnerable to the stresses of incarceration. Depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicidality are common among incarcerated adolescents (Brown & Ireland, 2006; Gooch, 2016). Exposure to positive parent-child relationships, prosocial peers, and nurturing school and extracurricular contexts are linked to greater psychosocial maturity during the

adolescent years (Steinberg et al., 2004) which are not always available within a correctional environment. Emotional well-being can be mediated through access to positive relationships and environments, subsequently promoting psychosocial maturity, which is important for engaging in stressful situations.

An adolescent's first arrest signifies a heightened vulnerability to poor outcomes, as this may lead the child offender to question the possibility of meeting future goals and evidently diminish their motivation (Mahler et al., 2018). Adolescents entering correctional institutions represent a population that is significantly disposed to severe psychological distress (Brown & Ireland, 2006), as child offenders lack the necessary coping skills to efficiently adjust in the correctional environment (Ireland et al., 2005). Due to their youthful age, inexperience, and immaturity, they are often ill-equipped for the life inside (Gooch, 2016). Shulman and Cauffman (2011) state that adolescence is a critical period in which one starts developing coping skills, as it is characterised by novel stressors such as school transitions, bodily changes, and evolving relationships. Uniquely, incarcerated adolescents also experience difficulties such as stigma related to incarceration (Lee et al., 2017), the pressure of imitating a "macho-culture" within the correctional environment (Miles et al., 2012), family separation (Gooch, 2016), and psychiatric morbidity (Karnik et al., 2009).

Young offenders up to the age of 21 tend to experience mental health disorders at a higher prevalence than their counterparts in the general population (Miles et al., 2012). Entry into and even exit out of the correctional environment increases the risk of mental illness (Miles et al., 2012). Furthermore, child offenders tend to present with limited coping strategies, low self-esteem, and vulnerability to stressful circumstances (Anderson et al., 2004; Gooch, 2016). The correctional environment poses significant stressors, including reduced personal freedom

(Shulman & Cauffman, 2011), lack of or limited parental visitation (Monahan et al., 2011), loss of childhood, bullying and victimisation (Gooch, 2016), with incarcerated adolescents' coping styles being grossly limited (Ireland et al., 2005; Shulman & Cauffman, 2011).

Regarding educational achievement, Magano (2016) reported academic challenges discovered in a disciplinary school in South Africa's Gauteng Province. These included incarcerated child offenders who lacked reading skills, inadequate material to aid in learning within the correctional school, and other negative influences exerted by non-schooling child offenders to discontinue schooling. Rosario et al. (2016) found that education in the correctional context allows offenders an opportunity to reflect on their offences, which are essential for offenders as they need to utilise their time beneficially and positively. Furthermore, incarceration increases the likelihood of school dropout and decreases the possibilities of college enrolment (Kirk & Simpson, 2013). Regular or intense juvenile court involvement negatively affects educational outcomes (Hjalmarsson, 2008) and prospects for employment (Apel & Sweeten, 2010), subsequently affecting earning power in adulthood (Kena et al., 2015). This may be attributed to the increased vulnerability related to arrest and how arrest impacts attitudes and beliefs of a better future (Mahler et al., 2018).

Other noted negative implications are stigma (Keene et al., 2018) and attachment disruptions (Arditti, 2016). According to Miles et al. (2012), when there is noted symptomatology during incarceration this could be indicative of adjustment difficulties. This could negatively impact functioning within the correctional environment, overall mental health, and access to pro-social skills development and opportunities for offending behaviour programmes (Miles et al., 2012). Inversely, when adjustment is mediated by contact with family, offenders present with lower

rates of mental health symptoms, reoffending, alcohol dependence and tend to display adaptive aspects of community functioning post release (Folk et al., 2019).

Religion as A Coping Strategy

According to Eytan (2011), despite improvements in technology and sciences, religion as a coping behaviour remains widespread. However, whether these programmes have improved offenders' behaviour and reduced recidivism is mixed (Montgomery & Turner, 2013). Johnson (1984) found similar behaviour between non-religious and religious offenders. Also found was minimal depressed feelings and improved adjustment (Clear & Sumpter, 2002), and less fighting (Kerley et al., 2005). Eytan (2011) similarly found that religion and spirituality reduced depression, incidents of misconduct, and disciplinary sanctions, while there was no noted significant reduction in suicide.

According to Thomas and Zaitzow (2006), one source of transformation in which offenders acknowledge their wrongdoing and embark on a self-transformation journey and peer counselling is religion and spirituality. Clear et al. (1992) assert that religion aided in adjustment in two categories, namely emotional strains (dealing with guilt and the dissonance linked to being incarcerated) and deprivations (dealing with the loss, especially of freedom) of incarceration. Faith provided motivation and focus for dealing with the pains of confinement and helped them create a self-image. However, isolation and deprivation related to the correctional experience remained (Kerley & Copes, 2009). Furthermore, Montgomery and Turner (2013) found a link between religion and physical health, including longer life expectancy and reduced hypertension.

Social Support as a Coping Strategy

From a network perspective, correctional settings offer a captivating distinction to other social network contexts, which people acquire over their lifetimes as incarceration signifies one of the greatest changes to the social affiliations (Schaefer et al., 2017). The correctional social context is a fluctuating environment where offenders are concurrently dependent upon each other, despite placing limited trust in one another; thus, surviving in a correctional centre requires constant monitoring of others and assessing one's relationships (Crewe, 2009). The composition of the offender population means that offenders' choices are restricted to criminally-sanctioned peers, many of whom may have violent histories, making social affiliation risky (Schaefer et al., 2017). The stated offender population's composition could be a prominent factor in the identified mistrust in their social contexts (Schaefer et al., 2017). According to Shrivastava (1973), the correctional environment is artificial in several ways and differs from normal social life in society; the patterns which offender friendship groups assume are also different from similar groups in the general society in many ways. For Schaefer et al. (2017), a disadvantage of correctional centres is the rapid disconnect of offenders from their network (support structures) who remain in the community, with some relationships never recovering. Having at least one close friend and someone to confide in within the correctional environment becomes increasingly necessary (Schaefer et al., 2017). Shrivastava (1973) stated that it was only the reduction of the pains of incarceration which led to the formation of friendship groups in the correctional centre, with the objectives of mutual help, passing time, selfish interests, ganging, and protective alliance.

For offenders who maintain contact with significant others, their relationships serve as support and encouragement while also making it difficult to serve their sentence (Brunton-Smith

& McCarthy 2017; Flanagan, 1980a). Incarceration negatively impacts family relationships, including reduced access to social support, stigma, and shame (Murray, 2005). Reoffending rates are significantly lower amongst individuals who maintain close and supportive familial relationships (Roberts et al., 2017), including regular family visits (Cluley, 2009). According to Folk et al. (2019), maintaining familial contact (visits, phone calls) is related to adaptive functioning post release, while also improving connectedness and mental health during incarceration. Lastly, visitation from parents greatly reduced depressive symptoms in the first two months of incarceration of child and juvenile offenders, regardless of the parent-child relationship's quality (Monahan et al., 2011).

Sentence Length and Adjustment

Offenders who serve longer sentences have different adjustment mechanisms, and for them, adjustment is a longer, more intricate process (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Thomas and Zaitzow (2006) found that withdrawal and reinforcing debilitating and counterproductive behaviours were adjustment mechanisms for offenders with long sentences. According to Toman et al. (2015), conceptualisations of the importation and deprivation approaches have not typically included court-processing characteristics or sentencing outcomes in their analyses. There is support for the hypothesis that offenders with longer sentence lengths face greater difficulty adjusting to the correctional environment. A longer sentence may result in more strain and anticipation of exposure to challenges and pains that will persist over a long period of time due to lengthy sentences (Toman et al., 2015). However, there are contradictory findings offered by literature. Offenders serving the longest sentences, including life and death sentences, are less likely to offend in a correctional environment; with each month increase in sentence length, they adjust better. As sentence lengths become exceptionally long, offenders are more likely to seek

conformity - to “do their time” (Flanagan, 1980b; Zamble, 1992) - than to be deviant, even in the early period of confinement (Cunningham & Sorensen, 2007).

Health and Adjustment

Courtenay-Quirk et al. (2008) state that studies have associated incarceration or arrest with ongoing health-related risks. Incarceration has also been associated with ongoing sharing of drug paraphernalia among injection drug users (Wood et al., 2005) and high-risk sexual behaviour among male STD clinic patients (Hser et al., 1999), as well as sexually active youth (Toulou-Shams et al., 2007). Knittel et al. (2013) reported that incarceration increases the risk of unprotected sex with multiple partners, subsequently increasing the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV. Sinha (2010) found that offenders are characterized by elevated mental and physical health related morbidity.

The prevalence of mental disorders within correctional populations are significantly higher than in the general population (Adams, 1986; Eytan, 2011; Monahan, 1992; Roth, 1980; Teplin & Swartz, 1989; Teplin, 1990). According to DiCataldo et al. (1995), mentally disordered offenders are vulnerable to abuse by other offenders and in greater need of protective segregation or isolation. They also tend to accumulate disciplinary sanctions resulting from their disruptive behaviour, placing them in higher security settings, limiting their access to privileges, programmes, work release assignments, and early parole. Most mentally ill offenders find it difficult to adjust to the correctional centre’s rules; most get in trouble for destroying state property and fighting with guards, while others are more prone to be taken advantage of by other offenders (Bjorngaard et al., 2009).

2.2.4 Importance of adjustment

Maintaining order is a critical goal of correctional systems, and there has been a resurgence of research aimed at understanding the factors and conditions that lead to offender misconduct (Toman et al., 2015). According to Palla (2006), positive adjustment and behaviour of offenders are solidly indicated by the smooth running of correctional centres. Offenders with poor adjustment have a high risk for negative outcomes, such as chronic depression and suicide (Clements-Nolle et al., 2009). Poor adjustment is linked to the rate and nature of rule violations as it prompts sanctions that affect the quality of the offenders' living conditions and is linked to acts of self-defence from violation (Palla, 2006). Further education also reduces criminal involvement by establishing a strong commitment to conventional goals, including the socially approved means of achieving these goals (Ford & Schroeder, 2011). It is imperative to note that most offenders return to their communities without the academic and vocational skills to help them compete in the job market and avoid future criminal behaviour (Arditti & Parkman, 2011; Williams, 1992).

Incarceration at younger ages is also characterised by a life course trajectory that includes cycles of future incarceration and poor life outcomes such as economic hardship, poor mental and physical well-being, and lower life expectancy (Arditti & Parkman, 2011; Geller et al., 2006). Research studies (Gretton et al., 2004; Houge et al., 2006; Robbins et al., 2003) indicate that younger child offenders exposed to certain forms of interventions learn and adjust more easily to change in beliefs, attitudes, thought patterns, and behaviours than older children and adults exposed to similar interventions. Poor adaptation negatively affects the willingness of juvenile offenders to participate in daily activities and training programmes and could reduce the effects of these training programmes indirectly (Van der Laan & Eichesheim, 2013). These

findings suggest that poor adjustment to incarceration decreases the motivation to change. Lastly, maladjustment further impacts the transition an ex-offender goes through post incarceration (Palla, 2006). Therefore, this suggests that poor adjustment within the correctional environment is detrimental beyond the confines of the correctional centre.

2.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined some of the seminal and current literature on adjustment to incarceration. The chapter outlined the impacts of incarceration such as depression, PTSD, anxiety and exposure to violence and living under conditions of overcrowding. Child offenders were identified as particularly vulnerable to the impacts of incarceration. Social support and religion were among the identified coping strategies utilised by offenders.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an outline of the research design and methodology applied in this study. It seeks to achieve this by discussing the research paradigm, qualitative research design, the sample and sampling method utilised, the process of data collection, data analysis and concepts of trustworthiness related to the study. Also included is a discussion of the relevant ethical issues.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm can be defined as a way of thinking or a philosophical framework (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Neuman, 2011). A research paradigm provides an overarching body under which research will be shaped using processes (methodology) congruent to the epistemology and ontology of that paradigm (Neuman, 2011). An interpretative research paradigm (Howitt & Cramer, 2011) with a qualitative methodology was used to better understand the perceptions of the child offenders adjusting to the correctional environment. Qualitative research is predominantly concerned with how individuals make sense of their worlds, their perception of experiences, and the meaning attributed to certain phenomena (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Hathaway (1995) postulated that the selection of a paradigmatic camp is replete with the researcher's underlying ontology or worldview. The interpretivist paradigm suggests that the world is constructed,

interpreted, and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and the wider social systems (Maxwell, 2006). Tubey et al. (2015) assert that qualitative methodology is underpinned by interpretivist epistemology and constructivist ontology (social processes produce reality). This assumes that meaning is rooted in the experiences of participants and that this meaning is mediated through the researcher's own perceptions (Merriman, 1998; Tubey et al., 2015).

According to Howitt and Cramer (2011), the aim is defined as a vital means of demonstrating the research contribution, and clarifying both the reason behind the research, and how it was conducted. This particular study's aim was to explore and describe the perceptions of adjustment to a correctional environment by first-time child offenders to uncover common patterns in first-time child offenders' perceptions in adjusting to the correctional environment. Some research studies provided academia with information on incarceration and child offenders, as explained in the literature review. However, the available literature, especially in the South African context, is limited. Therefore, this study aims to illuminate existing literature and expand the existing body of literature by exploring the following research question:

- What are the perceptions of first-time child offenders regarding their adjustment to a correctional environment?

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Vosloo (2014), a research design refers to the functional plan in which certain research methods and procedures are linked together to acquire a reliable and valid body of data for empirically grounded analyses, conclusions, and theory formulation. Mouton (2001) refer to a research design as a blueprint for conducting research. Research methodology refers to the

researcher's general approach to conduct their research study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). It refers to the process, tools, and procedures utilised (i.e., gathering and analysing data) (Mouton, 2001). Crouch and McKenzie (2006) state that within the qualitative approach, and through interview-based research, the researcher often seeks to infiltrate social life further than appearance and manifest meanings. Thus, qualitative research encompasses the methods and processes used by researchers to gain access to rich and thick descriptions of certain phenomena in their natural environment from its inhabitants, subsequently giving them a voice and understanding their lived experiences (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). This is in line with this study's aim as the researcher attempted to better understand participants' perceptions of adjustment to a correctional environment.

3.3.1 Multiple case study design

According to Howitt and Cramer (2011), a case study is one of the first approaches to research, with the main objective being to report on an identified case in detail. Yin (2009) describe a case study as an empirical inquiry that probes into a single phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context. A case study design was used as the adjustment of first-time child offenders represent unique cases. A single case study design is engrossed on one specific data collection unit, and a multiple case study design employs multiple sources of data to obtain an understanding of the variables being studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Therefore, the participants represented multiple cases due to their varying backgrounds (offence category, sentencing). Merriam (1998) identifies four essential characteristics of a case study, namely *particularistic*, *descriptive*, *heuristic*, and *inductive*. Particularistic refers to a single event, process, or situation that is the focus of a study. Descriptive denotes the rich and extensive set of details concerning

the phenomena. Particularistic and descriptive are heuristic, improving the understanding of phenomena, while inductive refers to the form of reasoning used to determine generalisations or concepts emerging from the data (Merriam, 1998).

This study employed a multiple case study design, as it provided a rich, in-depth understanding of the first-time child offenders' perceptions of adjustment to incarceration. It allowed the researcher to find meaning in their individual and shared experiences (Crowe et al., 2011). According to Yin (2009), a multiple case study design could be utilised when a theoretical lens is used. The transactional model of stress and coping, and the integrated lifestyle exposure models served as the theoretical lenses for this study. These models highlight the elements of adjustment and the impacting factors that were identified as the themes and sub-themes to explore and describe the participants' experiences. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). It also considers the participants' experiences in relation to the research topic (Stake, 2013). For this reason, it is regarded as an effective and valuable research tool, which could facilitate a more comprehensive exploration of the child offenders' perceptions of adjustment (Stake, 2013).

3.3.2 Qualitative research design in psychology

Qualitative research aims to understand the processes and social and cultural settings, which underlie several behavioural patterns and explores the 'why' questions (Niewenhuis, 2008). Subsequently, qualitative research studies people by interacting with them in their natural setting, focusing on their meanings and interpretations (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996), emphasising the

quality and insight of the material gathered. This research design is most suitable when the research question is based on an exploration of views within a real-life context (Hancock et al., 2007) and the meaning that an individual or group attributes to an experience (Creswell, 2014).

A qualitative research design was useful as it sought to explain participants' perceptions of their adjustment within their environment. The researcher was interested in exploring the patterns and themes that emerged from the data obtained in the interviews and focus group. Therefore, the qualitative approach granted the researcher the honour during the period of data collection of being an ear and a companion in the participants' vast life experiences; ushered into the woes, anxieties, perceived shattered dreams, and changes in perspective on some life views. This aligns with the conclusion made by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Sciarra (1999) that psychologists find qualitative research attractive as it tends to focus on participants' emotional and cognitive experiences of life. However, qualitative research in psychology is not without critic, despite being favoured in certain contexts. Smith et al. (2011) contended that qualitative research methods in psychology are complex. Qualitative research in psychology appears to be marginalised and not conducive to critical and creative engagement with research due to high pressures to conform to dominant paradigms and publishing in esteemed psychology journals for career progression (Gough & Lyons, 2016). Ponterotto (2005) stated that the training of psychologists in qualitative research is warranted as readily available training is typically elective with minimal student engagement. Gough and Lyons (2016) emphasised the importance of exposing students to in-depth qualitative research frameworks in their training.

3.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND PARTICIPANTS

Sampling refers to the selection of a ration of persons or things from a larger population, also known as a sampling frame, to represent that particular population (Neuman, 2011). Purposive sampling can be defined as the sampling method in which the researcher intentionally identifies and approaches potential participants who are proficient and well informed about the phenomenon of interest (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique (Neuman, 2011). This sampling method was also supported due to time constraints as a means to improve acquiring participants timeously.

The sample for the research consisted of eight participants. However, initially, 10-15 participants were the target. These participants were located at a correctional centre in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, namely Ekuseni Youth Development Centre. The sample consisted of child offenders aged between 14 and 17. The inclusion criteria for participant selection was that the (i) participants must be sentenced offenders below 17 years of age, (ii) be incarcerated during data collection, and (iii) should have had served six months or less of their sentence. The offence category and/or sentence was not prescribed as relevant to the data collection; thus, no specific offence category was more favourable to any other. Participation was open to willing offenders who met the criteria; however, varying backgrounds could have provided much richer data. Participants were obtained through the institution, although participation was voluntary.

During the sampling period, some challenges arose. Finding participants that fit the criteria proved to be significantly difficult. The contact person informed the researcher that a significant number of possible participants were eligible for the presidential pardon, with many being released or prepared for release. This significantly reduced the population from which to draw a

sample. Furthermore, during the lockdown period as a response to Covid-19, courts were not fully functioning, and as a result, there was no significant change to the population.

Table 3.4.1 provides a description of the sample demographics. Table 3.4.2 offers a summary of the sample profile.

Table 3.4.1

Participants' demographics

| Pseudonym | Race | Gender | Age | Sentence Length | Served at Initial Contact | Offence Category | Educational Level |
|------------|-------|--------|-----|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Anonymous | Black | M | 17 | 3 Years | 5 Months | Rape | 7 |
| Albany | Black | M | 17 | 3 Years | 3 Months | Culpable homicide | 8 |
| Bee | Black | M | 17 | 3 Years | 2 Weeks | Rape | 6 |
| Bhanoyi | Black | M | 16 | 7 Years | 2 Months | Rape | 7 |
| Jeqe | Black | M | 17 | 1 Year | 3 Months | Theft | 5 |
| Omega | Black | M | 16 | 7 Years | 4 Months | Robbery Aggravating | 6 |
| Propaganda | Black | M | 17 | 2 Years | 3 Months | Rape | 7 |
| Polo | Black | M | 14 | 2 Years | 1 Month | Malicious Damage of Property | 7 |

Table 3.4.2

Sample Profile Summary

| Category | Mean |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Age | 16.4 Years |
| Sentence Length | 3.5 Years |
| Served at Initial Contact | 2.9 Months |
| Educational Level | Grade 7 |

All participants were male, of African descent, and Zulu-speaking. The eight participants that formed the sample were incarcerated for varying offence categories and serving different sentences. Offence categories represented in the sample included rape, culpable homicide, robbery aggravating, and malicious damage of property. Sentence lengths ranged from one year

to seven years. At initial contact with participants, some had been incarcerated for two weeks to five months. Five of the participants were 17 years of age, two were aged 16, and one was 14 years old. The highest educational levels attained were Grade 5 (1), Grade 6 (2), Grade 7 (4), and Grade 8 (1).

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection comprised three methods, namely completion of biographical questionnaires, individual in-depth interviews, and one focus group (Howitt & Cramer, 2011).

3.5.1 Biographical questionnaires

Biographical questionnaires served to create profiles of the participants. These profiles were essential as they informed the description of the sample. The biographical questionnaires were received in a two-fold process. The researcher had access to the information necessary for identifying appropriate participants, although some details pertaining to the potential participants were concealed. Face-to-face contact with the participants was initiated in which their assent to participate and also their assent for their details to be accessed via the resident social worker was acquired. This information provided more details to the researcher and informed the sample description. The ethical issue of consent will be discussed later in the chapter. The biographical questionnaires were not very rigorous as a thorough background history was not warranted for this study. The biographical questionnaire is attached as Annexure G.

3.5.2 Individual in-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were used to explore and identify significant themes. According to Howitt and Cramer (2011), in-depth interviews allow the participant to partially formulate the topics, where the aim is exploratory, and a rich description is required. A single individual semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant. These interviews assisted in guiding the focus group discussion to clarify and obtain further elaboration on data that was gathered through the individual interviews and to put the themes identified, into perspective. This type of interview incorporated an interview schedule that consisted of open-ended questions to elicit further information and was well suited for developing a real understanding of their experiences and provided rich and detailed accounts (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Individual interviews also provided a platform for participants to expand on the information they wish to discuss in detail, which they would not discuss in the group with ease. Interviews were utilised to discuss not only the perceptions of the interviewees but perceptions of other incarcerated child offenders that they were aware of as these may also influence their perception of adjustment. This prompted a richer and fuller picture of the perceptions of adjustment in the sample, which will be discussed in the results section.

The individual interviews were initiated with a general open-ended question from which follow-up questions emerged (Gibson & Brown, 2009). In this study, all the interviews started with the question, “Before you were brought to the correctional centre, what did you think it would be like?” (see Annexure B). The interviews were flexible to allow the participants to invite the researcher into their world. Conducting interviews allowed the researcher to be flexible to a new and emerging phenomenon or, in this particular study, themes (Qu & Dumay, 2011); the researcher was able to clarify data while engaging in the interviews (data collection). During

the interviews, some challenges arose in the engagement of the participants, with some displaying noticeable discomfort during the interview process. However, as the interview progressed, they gained more confidence to engage. Participants were concerned that the contents of their interviews would be shared with the correctional centre's officials, regardless of being informed of the confidentiality of the interviews. Some participants appeared to have a challenge in clearly articulating their thoughts during the interview. It was an advantage that language was not a barrier; the researcher was able to probe, rephrase questions, and clarify responses.

3.5.3 Focus group

A focus group is a face-to-face small-group technique used to explore participants' perceptions of given topics (Varga-Atkins et al., 2017). The focus group utilises group interactions in a neutral environment (Wilson, 1997). In this study, the interview was not conducted in a neutral environment as the participants cannot be accessed outside of the correctional centre. Focus groups add an essential aspect to data collection, allowing further discussions and different perceptions to be shared within the group. A focus group was conducted after a series of individual interviews to explore the different individuals' comments in more detail. According to Carey (2016), focus groups capitalise on the synergy arising from the members' interactions, encouraging participation in well-planned settings. This is also a potential shortcoming, as it can lead to censoring (actively withholding comments) and conformity (peer influence to agree with others) (Carey & Asbury, 2012). Therefore, Carey (2016) argues that building rapport, adequate leadership skills, and a careful introduction to the study, as well as providing information on the confidentiality processes in handling the data are necessary to minimise such issues arising.

Webb and Kevern (2001) reported that one of the strategies of focus groups is that, while the selection of the focus group method is often justified in terms of the benefits that participant interaction could yield, this interaction is rarely reported or discussed. This prompted the researcher to be aware of the group dynamics and interactions, and include them in the discussion to maximise the benefits of using the focus group.

The focus group consisted of four members that already participated in the individual interviews. According to Krueger and Casey (2015), the ideal composition of the focus group is 5-8 members to allow them to share insights and for better group control. With an additional disadvantage of working space, Covid-19 regulations, participants being released before completing data collection, and participants being in other programmes, the focus group consisted of only four participants. Initially, the researcher anticipated that the focus group would take an hour to an hour and a half; however, it took only 55 minutes. The researcher expected challenges with communication, as some participants struggled to express themselves during the interviews. The noticeable discomfort could have been as a result of fear and also the uniqueness of the engagement required of the participants in their setting. Interaction with non-correctional officials as reported by participants is typically for spiritual/religious purposes, and engaging in an interview for academic research purposes was novel to them.

The objective of the focus group was to ensure creating an environment that welcomed and respected all opinions, with none being perceived as more valuable than the other. Participation among the group was reasonably spontaneous, especially as the group progressed. In the initial stages, participants seemed hesitant and required a bit more probing. It was essential to engage all participants to avoid dialogue and create an environment that encouraged equal and active engagements. One participant remained quiet and rarely engaged, unless probed. However, one

other participant mostly offered his comments first, with the remaining two engaging adequately. With the use of the interview schedule (Annexure B) that was already familiar with participants the discussed solidified data collected in the individual interviews. The participants introduced humour into the discussion and volunteered practical examples of ideas and principles they shared that influenced their experiences. Though the risk of censoring could not be ultimately removed participants indicated commitment to sharing their views.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Crowe et al. (2015), thematic analysis can be defined as a process of interpreting qualitative data to find patterns of meaning across the data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered through in-depth interviews and a focus group. Themes relating to the research topic were identified to emphasise the patterns of ideas from the data to help understand the child offenders' perceptions regarding their adjustment within the correctional environment. Braun and Clarke's model of thematic analysis, which includes the Steps 3.6.1-3.6.6 was utilised in this regard (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) highlighted a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development that was used to supplement the writing of Braun and Clarke. According to Swain (2018), in thematic analysis, a hybrid approach is organic, iterative, and ongoing, requiring reflection and flexibility. It is underpinned by a constructivist ontology and employs the bottom-up (data-driven) and top-down (theory) approach to identify themes (Wen & Katina, 2020). Six steps were employed, namely (1) developing the coding manual, (2) testing the reliability of the codes, (3) summarising data, and identifying initial themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), applying templates of codes and additional coding (4), connecting the dots and identifying themes (5), and lastly, corroborating,

and legitimating themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), in qualitative studies, the interpretation of both the participants and researcher of the phenomena are considered in the analysis process.

3.6.1 Familiarisation with the data

Familiarisation with the data refers to transcribing the data, if applicable, reading and re-reading, and taking notes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is vital in understanding the depth and breadth of the content. To be familiarised with the data, the researcher listened to the recordings of the interviews, transcribing the verbal data verbatim. The researcher read and re-read the interviews in an attempt to be fully immersed in the data. Immersion in the data requires the repeated reading of the data to search for meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which, in this study, was done by making notes of significant factors relating to each participant during the immersion process. Furthermore, as the interviews were conducted in Zulu, they had to be translated. The process of translation prompted the researcher to be further immersed in the data and engage fully in it, requiring vast reading, researching, and consulting to use English equivalents of the data, and essentially truly capturing its meaning within the context.

3.6.2 Generating initial codes

Generating initial codes refers to the coding of noteworthy features across the data set in an interesting manner and collecting data relevant to each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After becoming familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the researcher generated a list of factors that appeared prominent in the data. Boyatziz (1998) stated that codes refer to the most basic element of the collected data that can be assessed meaningfully. The researcher identified

codes by manually coding all the transcriptions. This process was completed twice to ensure that useful data were extracted from the transcripts. According to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), the first step is to develop a coding manual to test in Step 2 of its reliability. Each code must be labelled (given a name), defined (what the theme concerns), and described (an outline of how to know when the theme occurs). The codes were tested for reliability by determining their applicability to the raw data. The coding process was done using a table format that consisted of four columns with headings code, label, description (what constitutes the code) and examples (excerpts from participants). Codes such as Nu for nutrition, REH for rehabilitation and SS for social support were identified. A total of 20 codes after refining were identified. Refining was done after coding was done by an external researcher in order to improve reliability.

3.6.3 Searching for themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), searching for themes refers to collating codes into potential themes and gathering data relevant to the themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that searching for themes refocuses the analysis on a broader level and captures vital information about the data related to the research question. According to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), this (Step 3) involves reading, listening to, and summarising the raw data. While the researcher used the transactional model of stress and coping and integrated lifestyle exposure model as theoretical lenses in this study, they were still open to themes that emerged from the data. This can be done by employing Step 4, namely applying and adding new codes to the template of codes, where warranted (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The codes guide but do not confine the analysis.

The researcher combined the identified codes into broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) highlight that combining codes (Step 5) refers to connecting the dots as a means of discovering themes and patterns. The codes were initially separated into data-driven and theory-driven codes. The codes were further integrated to obtain themes. Identified themes included predisposing factors to failure in adjusting, protective factors to success in adjusting, and child offenders' adjustment strategies. Sub-themes were organised under these themes. For example, deprivations of incarceration, previous perception of life in incarceration, and perceived legitimacy of the correctional centre were sub-themes of predisposing factors to failure in adjusting. For protective factors to adjusting, sub-themes included emotional support and rehabilitation. As presented, final themes are a product of engagement with another analysis that prompted the restructuring of some sub-themes.

3.6.4 Reviewing themes

The fourth phase involved refining the identified themes. In reviewing themes, the researcher checks whether the themes work in relation to the codes and the whole data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher reviewed the data by rereading the transcriptions and themes, subsequently determining whether there was enough data to support the identified themes or merged themes. Sub-themes were identified for each individual interview, as well as the focus group. Themes are discussed concurrently for the individual interviews and the focus group.

3.6.5 Defining and naming themes

This phase of analysis involved analysing and identifying the core of each theme. Defining and naming themes required continual analysis to refine each theme's specifics, generating clear definitions and names of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher reviewed the analysed transcriptions to identify the relevant narratives of main themes and sub-themes, and thus clearly defining the themes for each individual interview and the focus group. Inductive analysis involved the back-and-forth process between the themes and the data until the researcher identified an inclusive set of themes; in deductive analysis the researcher considers whether the themes were linked to the theoretical frameworks in the study (Creswell, 2014). The methodological approach integrated data-driven codes with theory-driven (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The last step, according to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), involves corroborating the findings by revisiting all the steps to this point to ensure that themes represented the initial data analysis and codes.

3.6.6 Writing up

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), writing up comprises the selection of compelling examples, final analysis of extracts, relating the extracts to the question, and producing an academic report of the analysis. In this phase, the researcher aimed to provide a “concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tells” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23) by writing up the identified data and providing evidence in the form of verbatim quotations to support the themes. The main and sub-themes derived from the thematic analysis were merged and discussed comprehensively (see Chapter 4).

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is considered the quintessential framework for evaluating qualitative research (Billups, 2014). *Trustworthiness* is the corresponding term used in qualitative research as a measure of the quality of research. It is the extent to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy.

Transferability: Billups (2014) describes transferability as the study's ability to produce findings that are transferable to similar settings. Thick descriptions were sought during the process of data collection. Seale (1999) stated that transferability is attained by providing a detailed, rich description of the settings studied to provide the reader with adequate information to ascertain the applicability of the findings to other settings that they know. However, some identified challenges of articulation and self-expression threatened the participants' ability to participate efficiently. Regarding comprehensiveness, Billups (2014) informs that it is essential to allow the interview session to take its course without enforcing restrictions such as time, which could hinder the provision of further details through probing and unravelling of nuances. Therefore, the researcher needed to create a conducive environment by building rapport and allowing the participants to share as openly as they felt comfortable to.

Credibility: Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the findings (Amankwa, 2016). Engagement with the data (recordings, notes, and transcripts) was done intensively to demonstrate clear links between the data and the interpretations. This was successfully navigated through member-checking or participant validation. According to Billups (2014), member-checking can be defined as reviewing preliminary findings by participants to assess whether the presented findings are congruent with what was expressed to the researcher. This also awarded

the participants an opportunity to question and/or rectify the researcher's assumptions from the findings.

Dependability: Dependability refers to the consistency of findings (Amankwa, 2016). Riege (2003) states that dependability is similar to reliability found in quantitative research. The purpose of this research was to show indications of stability and consistency in the process of inquiry. Care was taken to ensure that the research process was logical, traceable, and reflexively documented by providing a detailed account of the research.

Confirmability: Amankwa (2016) defines confirmability as the extent to which the findings are influenced by the participants and free from researcher bias. An audit process was implemented by working back and forth through the research process to ensure that the data and interpretations of the findings were sound and could be confirmed. During the interpretation process, the intention was not to generalise findings to a population but to identify accepted principles and trends related to the research topic process. Reflexivity was also employed to record the researcher's preconceptions that may have interfered with the data analysis process as an aspect of confirmability. Lastly, analyst triangulation was also employed to review the findings by allowing another analyst to provide their own findings to illuminate blind spots, thus corroborating the findings.

The trustworthiness of this research phase was ensured by applying the following criteria: credibility, dependability, authenticity, and confirming. The description in the qualitative research process of *What was done; how it was done; and why it was done*, including adherence to the identified criteria for qualitative research, ensured the authenticity and trustworthiness of this research phase.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are the moral principles by which we conduct ourselves (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). In essence, ethics forms the boundaries of one's behaviour and decision-making processes. Silverman (2000) asserts that researchers should always remember that while they are conducting their research, they are entering the privacy of their participants, and should, therefore always adhere to the ethical principles stipulated that relate to their study.

i) GHREC and DCS REC approval

This study was approved by the Research Committee of the Psychology Department and the General Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities at the University of the Free State with the ethical clearance number UFS-HSD2018/0489 (Annexure F). Furthermore, approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the DCS to conduct this study at the identified correctional centre (Annexure G), indicating that the study was evaluated and found to be ethically sound and compliant.

ii) Informed consent

Before conducting the study, the researcher informed the participants and their parents/guardians of the study's purpose, nature, data collection methods, and extent of the research. The researcher also explained their typical roles, subsequently obtaining their informed consent and assent in writing (see Annexure D).

iii) Harm and risk

The researcher assured the participants that no one would deliberately be harmed (physical or psychological) due to their participation. However, they were informed of the possibility of

emotional distress that could arise due to participation. That risk was mitigated by providing them with information about how they could access counselling within the correctional centre, as well as a scheduled debriefing session.

iv) Honesty and trust

Adhering strictly to all the ethical guidelines serves as standards about the honesty and trustworthiness of the data collected and the accompanying data analysis.

v) Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

The researcher maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants by removing any identifying characteristics before the widespread dissemination of information. The researcher made it clear that the participants' names would not be used for any other purposes, nor will information be shared that reveals their identity in any way.

vi) Voluntary participation

Despite all the mentioned precautions, the participants were assured that the research was only for academic purpose and their participation in it was voluntary; no one was forced to participate. Voluntary participation was coupled with the option to withdraw during the data collection process, and participants were informed that no penalty or negative consequence would occur.

vii) Boundaries and Dual roles

Building rapport was an essential aspect of the data collection process. However, some of the participants needed further explaining to understand the researcher's role and that of a therapist; they expected the researcher should be both, without jeopardising the study due to dual roles. Some participants also required firmer boundaries.

viii) Payment or incentive

The research was conducted with no costs incurred by the participants. There was also no monetary gain or payment available for participants.

ix) Beneficence and Non-maleficence

The researcher faced a dilemma amidst the Covid-19 pandemic's unravelling prior to the formal lockdown of some of the country's services. In that regard, the principle of beneficence and non-maleficence became prominent. The researcher prioritised participants' health and safety to reduce unintentional risk of contamination and, as a result, stopped data collection until it was safe to interact with them face-to-face. Interviewees and the interviewer engaged throughout the interviews wearing masks. Sanitisers were utilised, and interviews were conducted in a ventilated office while practising social distancing.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research methodology utilised in this study. The next chapter focuses on the research results and the rich, and detailed data that were collected.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented a discussion about the research design, methodology, and data analysis used in this study. This chapter aims to present the analysed data in the form of the main themes and sub-themes identified. A description of the results and supporting evidence from the transcribed interviews are provided. The participants' verbatim responses were used as a means of validating the results presented.

4.2 RESULTS

Crouch and McKenzie (2006) stated that within the qualitative approach, through interview-based research, the researcher seeks to infiltrate social life, exploring it more than mere appearance and noticeable meanings. This chapter presents the findings based on the data that were collected during the interviews. The findings are discussed by exploring the similarities and differences in the participants' views and comparing the findings of other studies that were reported in the literature. The process of analysis is also guided by the theoretical framework (see Chapter Two) to address the research objectives and answer the research questions (see Chapter One). Thematic content analysis was used as a technique to identify and develop the themes. In

the interest of authenticity and validity, the respondents' transcribed and translated comments are presented verbatim and unedited in this chapter, highlighting the following themes:

Table 4.2

Themes and subthemes

| Themes | Subthemes |
|--|--|
| Contributing factors to maladjustment | Previous perception of life in incarceration |
| | Deprivations of incarceration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and career aspirations • Sensory deprivation • Security • Poor emotional well-being • Health care, nutrition, and exercise • Autonomy |
| | Perceived legitimacy of the correctional centre |
| | Emotional support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family support • Correctional staff support • Offender social relationships • Spiritual/Religious support |
| Protective factors to success in adjusting | Rehabilitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of talent enhancement programmes • Correctional programmes • Educational and psychosocial support |
| | Child offenders' adjustment strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking social support • Self-discipline |
| | |

4.2.1 Theme 1: Contributing factors to maladjustment

4.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Previous perception of life in incarceration

The participants shared the expectations they had about life in a correctional centre prior to their incarceration. The following were different perceptions that were shared by offenders about their experience, although some shared that their expectations were exaggerated to some extent due to the information they had:

Abuse and victimisation were persistently expected:

Anonymous: That it is hard; that I will be abused. I will be severely abused because we had been told that when you arrive in correctional centres there are 26s, 28s, and big 5. But no, as for me, that is not what I found when I arrived here. Because I did not participate in the number gangs, I found other “brothers” who are like me. They told me that I must behave well according to the centre’s rules; I must not misbehave. They told me to stop the drugs I was using; we agreed on that. Fighting in here is not allowed. If someone is trying to bring an offence to me, like giving me a cellphone, I must not accept it.

In the focus group, participant A shared:

A: What I expected was to be judged when I shared my reason for being here and what kind of person I was. That when I tell them that I used to use drugs, they will look at me as a bad person. But instead, they tried to guide me to do better, which I did not expect.

In the focus group, participant B stated:

B: What I expected was that I would be treated like adult offenders in the big correctional centres. That maybe I will find old men here, but no, I found my peers.

Propaganda shared that even the prospect of rehabilitation, especially being equipped with skills, was exaggerated.

Propaganda: We have very little resources here. Because for example, when the social workers tell us will be brought here, they tell us that here will receive education and skills such as plumbing. When we arrive here, there is no plumbing or electrical and mechanical engineering. They told us we will learn to drive in here, but all of that we are not seeing. People think we receive a lot in the correctional centre, but no.

In contrast, participants indicated that they had more positive responses during their incarceration:

Jeqe: To be honest, when I arrived here, I did not have any problems. I even made friends when I arrived in this correctional centre. I shared with them the reason for my arrest, and they have advised me on how I need to behave. My stay here is nice; all is going well.

4.2.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Deprivations of incarceration

Education and career aspirations:

During the interviews, some of the participants expressed their concerns about feeling deprived of some things due to their incarceration. Anonymous felt deprived of accessing educational opportunities he felt were suitable for him.

Anonymous: Ei, I was not feeling well. The things that happen here, the things that I did outside that I could no longer do. I was very sad. First of all, school. The school here is good, but I can't attend it because it requires previous reports and I don't have them. Here I have to attend level 1 that has fewer subjects; I only do 2 subjects.

Loss of opportunities especially linked to career aspirations:

Albany: Because now I cannot do the things I wished to do because I am incarcerated. Not exactly, I do not mean being able to study. But the kind of work that I had wanted to do, I will no longer be able to do it.

Sensory deprivation:

Boredom and sensory deprivation were identified consistently by participants. Citing that they do not have enough to keep them occupied and others felt what is available is not adequate to aid in their rehabilitation. As it is popularly known, “an idle mind is the devil’s playground,” and these examples reveal that.

Bee: And also, that there are other activities to partake in to push time. Because we are up, sit, and doing nothing from the morning until sundown. We do not have anything to do. That is very harmful.

Propaganda: Yes, another thing is that I would stop making things difficult for the children 17 years and below. I have seen that they don't have TVs and they have too much free time on their hands. Sometimes they do things that I don't think they would do if they were busy with something. I understand why they don't have phones, but TVs are important, and they can have them.

Albany, with special reference to his schooling, stated:

Albany: It helps me to avoid those boys because they are not schooling; they are just idle. I am avoiding being in their presence for long. I go to school and return when school is closed.

Security:

Participants shared feeling unsafe within the institution.

Albany: No, I do not feel safe.

Propaganda: For example, when you clean, you can't clean the same way you clean at home. When you mop at home, you mop freely. If you want to bend, you bend in whatever direction you want. Here in the correctional centre, you do not do that because when you do that, someone may start developing certain thoughts about you and all those things.

Violence and hostility were outlined in the expectations of the participants prior to incarceration. It became a reality in their lived experiences within the correctional centre, particularly, gang-related activities.

Albany: Ei, what can I say. These boys love "ukuphakama" a lot.

R: What is "ukuphakama"?

Albany: It is gang-related activities, stabbing one another.

Polo: Aah, things such as being forced to have sex with other offenders, making you clean, and calling you a wife. All those things. When your family brings you things, they are taken away from you. Yes.

Though not expressed in any of the expectations or perceptions prior to incarceration, assault by correctional officials was another aspect that the participants mentioned.

Jeqe: It's the correctional centre's staff; they beat us up a lot.

Jeqe: Even though I have not received any of those beatings, but I have witnessed them.

They beat you up mercilessly, oBaba. You would think that they don't have kids the way they beat us.

In the focus group, the participants mentioned being worried that their discussions might reach the officials.

Poor emotional well-being:

Emotional well-being was identified to have been impacted due to the correctional environment.

D in the focus group: It is just that some of us do not think about how we want to be like when we are released; the kind of people we want to be. We only see these walls of the correctional centre.

This comment indicates a loss of hope. Participants discussed several factors that impact their emotional well-being, mostly in a negative manner. Propaganda's experience was double-barrelled as it presented aspects that contributed both positively and negatively to his emotional well-being—discovering that he can evade being coerced into gangsterism aided in his emotional well-being. Inversely, the surrounding and continuing gang activities contributed to his feelings of anxiousness.

Propaganda: So, I can say that it is bearable. It is not that bad. It is not what I thought that you will be forced into gangsterism. Although I am always anxious as to when the time will

come when they initiate new members and they have to stab others. Because that is some of the things that happen.

Polo's emotional well-being was greatly affected by the visits he had with his family prior to the lockdown instigated by the outbreak of Covid-19. The experience of being left behind in the correctional centre was particularly difficult for him.

Polo: They used to come visit me a lot and encouraged me to behave well in here. It used to be really painful when they had to leave me, but I eventually got used to it. I always used to think I could be leaving with them, but because of my actions, I can't.

Propaganda also shared how he perceived the correctional environment to have a propensity towards creating feelings of insecurity and confusion.

Propaganda: You see from there that others start getting confused; this place changes a person. They start becoming unsure of themselves and how they should behave. They are no longer able to feel secure.

Lastly, participants' emotional well-being was compromised by the deprivation of dignity associated with negative labelling. In terms of labelling, the participants reflected that the label of being deviant or criminal was distasteful to them. There was also the aspect that the level of criminality is hierarchal; some categories of crime are viewed better than others.

Bee: Well, for now, I do not have significant challenges, but oBaba (male wardens), that they call us names, you know. I am naturally a short-tempered person, but when I see a person who calls me names that are not mine, they make me angry. It really infuriates me.

Jege: Whereas now I am considered a criminal. That is what has shown me the importance of being a child, to behave well. Yes.

Following are some of the sentiments shared in the focus group in this regard.

A: It really is not nice being given so many names that you don't know; donkey, sausage, new one, offender.

A: It makes you feel like you are nothing and think lowly of yourself being called a donkey, an offender. It means they have given up on me.

B: It really just drains us.

Propaganda introduced the presidential pardon that affected many individuals in the offender population; if meeting the stipulated criteria at the beginning of 2020, these individuals would be released. One relevant criterion was the offence category that excluded crimes such as murder and sexual offences.

Propaganda: What I would like to comment on is what Mr Ramaphosa recently talked about or allowed to happen when he released offenders. They are saying they are being outcast in South Africa because of the crimes they committed. Those that were arrested for robbery are being encouraged to go out and continue.

The data gathered indicates how emotional well-being can be destabilised within the correctional environment.

Health care, nutrition, exercise

Physical well-being, nutrition, exercise, and access to healthcare will be discussed next, as the participants shared their experiences of how their physical well-being was compromised due to incarceration.

Polo: Sometimes, when you have reported, you will be taken to the clinic. And if that problem has been re-occurring, then the nurses will give you a hard time as if you are annoying them. For me, my sinuses give me a problem a lot. Then they will ask me what I used to do outside. And I would tell them that my parents used to buy medication for me. They have told me that I will have to wait to be released then to get that medication or assistance.

Bhanoyi shared dissatisfaction with the following:

Bhanoyi: The beds, boiled food, drinking tea with no sugar.

And in the focus group, these are some of the comments made regarding the food:

A: It is not nice; it is not appetising. And it does not give us energy.

D: The portions are small.

And lastly, statements related to exercising, included:

A: It really hurts us because now that things are like this with the lockdown, it is worse; there are shifts we play on, and some we don't. It really hurts us.

D: And that time, our legs become really sore when we get the opportunity to run and play. When we go to bed, we wake up with aching bodies. But if we had a time where we knew it was set aside for us to play, it would be better.

Concerning a healthy diet, one can deduce that the institution attempts to provide healthy meals. However, the emotional engagement pertaining to the meals posed a threat to their positive appraisal of the meals. One participant felt unsupported in the treatment of his medical ailment. Lastly, participants expressed a need for a more consistent exercise schedule.

Autonomy

This aspect of the sub-theme was commonly reflected among participants as they shared their experiences. They expressed limited control over how their days are and the activities that they are able to participate in.

Bhanoyi: Here at the correctional centre, I had to get used to waking up early, wake up in the morning to bath and brush my teeth, and prepare to go to the kitchen.

Programme participation and plans to engage in other programmes not participated in before had Jeqe stating the following:

Jeqe: I cannot say that I will join those programmes. I can say that programmes are structured. You are informed when it comes a time for you to be a part of a certain programme and then you follow through.

In the focus group, this was attested by the following extract:

D: What we can comment on that Ma, is that everything that we do has a time constraint. At a certain time, you must be at a certain place doing this, and at another time, you must be doing this or that. But that also helps us and will help us when we are outside to be able to

manage our time. You know that you can plan your day, that at a certain time I will be doing this and later I will be doing that.

4.2.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Perceived legitimacy of the correctional centre

Participants felt that they were misplaced in the correctional environment. They indicated that it was not an environment that is suitable for children. It appeared as if participants were not fully convinced of the legitimacy of the correctional environment.

Anonymous: That this is not a place good for children.

Propaganda: No, I would really be lying. This is not a place that is suitable for people like us.

Propaganda: I mean people of my age.

Furthermore, they made recommendations they felt could improve child offenders' experiences in South African correctional centres.

Jeqe: The changes I would introduce would be to firstly put for the kids, because we are also kids as we are here, TV so that they can watch TV. As well as food, we don't eat well. We are served very small portions. We eat 7 am in the morning and at 12 pm midday. We will only see food again the following day, so I would add food as well.

Polo: I would change the things I have noticed my "brothers" are not happy with; that don't sit well with them. So that at all times, they are satisfied. Like the fact that they always play soccer within the confines of the correctional centre. I would like to give them the

opportunity to go play outside and sometimes invite outside teams for them. Make them feel like people as well. So that they don't feel isolated or discriminated against.

Propaganda had a more detailed view to share:

Propaganda: The first thing I would shut down is smoking of cigarettes. That is the thing that I have noticed happens a lot. The smokers and non-smokers must not share rooms but be separated. Those who are over 18 would be accommodated on their own. Because if children are together, they think alike because if someone knows more than the children, then can influence them. Some of these have violent and vulgar language. So, the children, instead of learning they will be encouraged on their bad behaviour. So that is what I would change. Another thing that I would change is the issue of gangsterism. If I ever hear at the person in charge that there are gang activities happening, I would shut them down immediately. We all know what happens here; there is no need to leave things for long. Those who spill blood to be initiated into gangs must be punished to set an example out of them. They must know that they won't get away 'with it. This 'thing of killing one another affect the country because all these people die with their talents, and their purpose is wasted.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Protective factors to success in adjusting

4.2.2.1 Sub-theme: 1 Emotional support

Family support

In their responses, offenders also shared their views on how getting support from their families positively impacted their stay in the correctional centres:

Propaganda: Ei, what I can say is that the advices that my mother gave me before I came here are stuck with me. My mother is the only parent that I am left with; I don't have a father anymore. So, whatever I do, I always think how 1, 2 or 3 will make my mother feel if she should hear about it. The way that she was and the way that she spoke touched me a lot. It really helped me a lot that my mother did not toss me aside when I committed the crime. She was a very supportive parent towards me. And another thing I am a religious person. So, I took this as a way God is correcting my behaviour and showing me the wrongfulness of my actions. Because I know that he loves me and he would never allow me to do this to his other child, he loves us all. God has his ways to teach and mould a person. Maybe he wants me to bear witness one day of the path that I have walked.

Polo: They used to come visit me a lot and encouraged me to behave well in here. It used to be really painful when they had to leave me, but I eventually got used to it. I always used to think I could be leaving with them, but because of my actions, I can't.

Bhanoyi: It is very important for me to be able to reach them, greet my mother and grandmother, and greet my grandfather.

Inversely, due to varying family dynamics, some of the child offenders expressed that they lack family support. However, support from the correctional officials seemed to mediate that.

These were the comments made in the focus group in this regard:

A: For me, I would say it depends on the person, as I explained earlier. It depends on who you are, what you want. If you know you have no outside support, no one there missing you or thinking about you. Then you must communicate with oBaba.

A: Others can still say I have a mother and father back home; some of us only have a mother because our father is deceased; others have stepfathers. And that stepfather is abusive, and that child is scared to tell their mother that. So, in a place like this, they feel safe, and they love it because all the time they are (inaudible).

Correctional staff support

Support from correctional officials was in the form of encouraging words of support and reporting what they witness that should not be happening, especially if it can divert further offending within the correctional environment.

Polo: But it is good because you are able to get good guidance inside here. Whereas you may not have had that while you were outside. And they always make it a point to remind you that they will always support you. That kind of support some of us have never had or experienced. My boy, all you have to do is to serve your sentence and go back into the community back to your family. And that kind of support gives you motivation to try as hard as you can to make it out of this place a better person.

Bhanoyi: OBaba usually encourage us to report if we see something wrong happening or if we have any problems. So that we can avoid getting into trouble.

Polo: I could say that there isn't anything that I am seriously concerned with. Because if I approach oBaba with a concern or a need they do their best to address it. And if it is not in their power to assist, then I must live with that and accept the situation.

Offender social relationships

It seemed to be common practice to initiate and rely on friendships with other child offenders.

Anonymous: When I arrived here, I found my own "brothers" who were good and good for me. They taught me the right way to behave, do's, and don'ts. They taught me that I should never go steal in the correctional centre's kitchen, cellphones are not allowed in here, smoking is not allowed. While we are in here, we must go to school. When Mama (female warden) talks to you, you listen and follow what is expected of you.

Bee: Then my friends Cloud, Green, and Maize (pseudonyms) come to join me, and we spend some time together.

Jeqe: To be honest, when I arrived here, I did not have any problems. I even made friends when I arrived in this correctional centre. I shared with them the reason for my arrest, and they have advised me on how I need to behave. My stay here is nice; all is going well.

An aspect that appeared to be significant to the adjustment of the child offenders was their developmental stage. Participants felt that the correctional environment was instrumental in developing their own thoughts and recognising the impact of peer influence on their behaviour.

Jeqe: That school is important; it has helped me to behave better, see my errors, and see who I am.

Self-esteem was identified as one of the important aspects that influences one's behaviour.

Propaganda: Because it all starts on whether a person has self-esteem and self-confidence. If a person tried to influence me to do something wrong, I do not accept that, and I also tell them that.

Participants also expressed gratitude for the experience of being engaged in their identity development.

Bee: It is very important to me because I have never in my life had a person who engaged me in who I am. Who talks about my identity and the kind of person that I am. A person who teaches me about the kind of company that I need to keep. And that whatever small opportunities you get, you must grab them with both your hands.

As part of his identity, Polo shared that he was also able to identify his talent:

Polo: Because I as an example received help by being in here. I now even know what kind of talent that I have, which I discovered in here.

Lastly, there was a clearer understanding of developmental stages and the different nuances that come with them.

Jeqe: Being a child means that I had not reached a stage to do things that are done by adults. I can put it that way. Because when you are child, you are not yet at a stage to do the things that have led me here.

Engagement with peers was reflected upon pre- and post-incarceration.

Polo: I can say that at home, I received everything; I lacked nothing. It is just that I was the one who was preoccupied with friends, bad friends at that, misleading each other. Yes.

Bee: When it comes to that, I know that I am a naturally shy person when it comes to engaging with people.

Overall, there is a suggestion of the impact of their developmental stage on their offending and adjustment. Polo shared that part of his offending was influenced by the company he kept. At the same time, Bee informed that his persona posed a challenge in initiating friendships within the correctional centre, and before incarceration.

Spiritual/Religious Support

Religion or spirituality was identified as a form of support that aided in successfully adjusting to the correctional environment.

Propaganda: And another thing I am a religious person. So, I took this as a way God is correcting my behaviour and showing me the wrongfulness of my actions. Because I know that he loves me and he would never allow me to do this to his other child, he loves us all. God has his ways to teach and mould a person. Maybe he wants me to bear witness one day of the path that I have walked.

Bee: Praying, not feeling free. Prayer, talking to God.

4.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Rehabilitation

In different ways, participants mentioned that incarceration resulted in their rehabilitation. Rehabilitation included acquiring, for example, new skills, education, changes in behaviour, including time management, anger management, communication, education, gardening, sewing, and discontinued drug use.

Availability of talent enhancement programmes

The respondents showed to have benefited from programmes provided in South African correctional centres to assist in the preparation of the offender's life post incarceration and also to keep them occupied during their stay:

Polo: Because I as an example received help by being in here. I now even know what kind of talent that I have, which I discovered in here. It is what I intend to focus on when I am released from here. If you know what you want, you do get help in the correctional centre. But if you will still do things for friends and to please others, you will not gain anything.

Propaganda: Other things such as skills, the sewing programme. Provide them with fabric and sewing machines as well as cottons. Not fabric for correctional services, normal fabric so they can create something to call their own with it. A sort of portfolio for when they are released, to use to search for opportunities. Something to show them "esicabheni" that I was able to discover my talent whilst inside.

Anonymous: Skills has a sewing programme, they sew there.

Jeqe: I draw, I sew, and then I work in the garden. We do the garden in the villages, right here.

Correctional programmes

From the responses, some of the participants mentioned having limited resources in the correctional centre, compared to what is shown to the outside community. (Propaganda mentioned this in the sub-theme *deprivation of incarceration*.)

Propaganda: We have very little resources here. Because for example, when the social workers tell us will be brought here, they tell us that here will receive education and skills such as plumbing...

However, from the participant's responses, they seemed to have had a highly positive response when it came to showing several programmes that they are offered in their correctional centres, which could assist them in adjustment, attachment to the outside life and in finding purpose and introducing change in their lives:

Polo: Its heart line, anger management, and social work programmes. What else?

Gugulethu.

Propaganda: It touches on a lot of things. It speaks to acceptance, recreating, and thinking over, compassion, and other things that I cannot remember well. But I do remind myself as often as I can. Acceptance as an example that we must accept one another regardless of whatever differences we have like where we come from. Whether you are Zulu or not, we must be able to accept one another as people. Yes. Another one is anger management and time management. So, that you are able to keep time in all your things that you do. Knowing that at a certain time, I must be doing this or that. Even outside, you need time management. Yeah, those are the kind of things we are learning about. Those are the programmes I can comment on for now.

Jeqe: There is this one, what is it called... I have forgotten its name, but it has to do with my "brothers". For instance, when someone provokes you, they teach you how you can avoid or ignore those people. When some tries to instigate you, you must not show them that whatever they are doing gets to you. If they call you names, insult you or say whatever they

want to you, don't show them that are successfully annoying you. That will give them more reason to persist and provoke you. You must just ignore them or laugh at them when they call you names. That way, you discourage them, and they eventually leave you alone. They will look for a new target, and you will be able to continue on the straight and narrow. It does not matter how much what they say hurts you; you must not give them power over you.

Propaganda: And there is in the mirror. It is almost similar to the sex offender programme because it focuses on the feelings of the victim and how you feel over time. And then there is negative and positive peer pressure, where we look at how our friends' impact on us negatively or positively and how to tell the difference. They also teach us how sense of belonging influences us to do bad things to gain acceptance from our friends. Then there is family life and main gate, those I haven't attended to. I have just heard about them.

Jeqe: I draw, I sew, and then I work in the garden. We do the garden in the villages, right here.

Participants shared the following changes due to their exposure to the offered programmes.

Anonymous: With anger, they have helped me to manage it better. They have helped me to learn how to communicate better with people. Eish, I do not know what to say.

Polo: Speaking of anger management, I can say that it is the one programmes that really moulded me and helped me in here. Pertaining to fighting and all those things.

Some of the respondents shared that there are programmes offered in the institutions that assist according to the crimes that each offender is arrested for:

Propaganda: Yes, there is a programme of sex offenders. That one I have done. There, they look at how you committed the crime, what motivated you to, what challenges did you have led to you committing a crime. Then is a victim-offender stage where you have to put yourself in the victim's shoes. To see how much your actions hurt and affected them, are you remorseful and willing to apologise. The sex offender programme deals with that.

Educational and psychosocial support

Some of the participants showed how some programmes offered by the correctional centres had assisted them in maintaining good conduct and also to adjust easily in the correctional centres:

Albany: It helps me to avoid those boys because they are not schooling; they are just idle. I am avoiding being in their presence for long. I go to school and return when school is closed.

Bee: What I am seeing is that it is good for someone to be incarcerated here. This correctional centre, what can I say. It is not exactly a correctional centre because we are able to receive education, because in the big correctional centres one would not be able to attend school. We also have programmes here. We receive what we can, somethings we will not be able to receive.

The participants also expressed being in the correctional centre taught them about changing their behaviour and learning from their past mistakes;

Jeqe: What I have seen is that the mistakes that I have made in the past, I should not make them again when I am back into society; That school is important; it has helped me to behave better; see my errors and see who I am.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Child offender's adjustment strategies:

Most of the participants shared different ways in which they learned to adjust in the correctional centre, some through what they observed from more experienced child offenders in the centre, self-discipline and through their peers and gang membership.

Despite some participants adjusting well in the correctional centres, albeit in different ways, some struggled with adjustment due to their different personalities or avoiding unnecessary conflicts that could affect their sentences.

Albany: I tried to create some kind of bonds or friendship with them, it does not work out. So, now I have opted for being on my own; if I do not spend time by myself, I interact with another "brother" of mine that I arrived with.

Bee: Right now, I would say that it is communicating with my "brothers" that I live with in village. It is difficult for me to communicate with them; when it comes to that, I know that I am a naturally shy person when it comes to engaging with people.

The participants also stated that there were things they had to adapt to which are part of the internal routines in the correctional centres:

Bhanoyi: Here at the correctional centre, I had to get used to waking up early, wake up in the morning to bath and brush my teeth, and prepare to go to the kitchen.

Polo: What I found as a challenge is the process of getting food. Have to travel up to the kitchen and the long lines you have to stand in. And that when you need to go to the clinic, you have to report first.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Seeking social support

Anonymous: When I arrived here, I found my own “brothers” who were good and good for me. They taught me the right way to behave, do’s, and don’ts. They taught me that I should never go steal in the correctional centre’s kitchen, cell phones are not allowed in here, and smoking is not allowed. While we are in here, we must go to school. When Mama (female warden) talks to you, you listen and follow what is expected of you; I had to learn to behave well. I heard to learn to talk with respect with others. I had to learn to try and not respond when instigated, when a person tries to pick a fight with me. And also, to avoid peer pressure of smoking.

Polo: What helped me was that when I arrived here, I was lucky to meet a boy named Flavour (pseudonym), eish I am sorry to say his name. But I found someone who is able to sympathise with me, who understood my situation and knows how to live with others. You will find that there are different groups here; I was lucky to find someone who doesn’t have a group he associates with and doesn’t want to be involved in gangsterism. So, I joined him, and we live well and partner well. If I am short of anything, he is the one who helps me, and he has been here longer, so he guides me.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Self-discipline

Propaganda: What helped me was to differentiate between right and wrong and not dwell on the wrong things. There is also a friend of mine in here, his name is Nike (Pseudonym), and he is doing Grade 12. He is a person I talk to, and he always gives me good advice.

Polo: What I can say I needed to teach myself was to be as okay as I can be. Always try to have a positive mindset so that you can plan for your life. And if a person provokes you, do not just jump to calling out their shit and things like that.

4.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented a discussion about the research results related to this study. The results were organised into themes and sub-themes, which were discussed in great detail.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the themes identified in Chapter 4 will be interpreted in relation to the current research and literature. Similarities and differences between the findings and existing research studies will be highlighted. Furthermore, similarities and differences between the research findings and the theoretical lenses will be highlighted.

5.2 DISCUSSION

5.2.1 Theme 1: Contributing factors to maladjustment

5.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Previous perception of life in incarceration

According to Yanagisawa (2016), expectations impact the expected or perceived experience by affecting behaviour and perception. The expectation of being violated and abused, judged, and incarcerated with adult offenders might increase anxiety and make the child offenders prone to poor adjustment, especially in the early stages. Monahan et al. (2011) stated that child offenders are susceptible to psychological distress in the early stages of incarceration. This has been linked

to incarceration being a particularly stressful event (Chagnon, 2007), and the conditions of incarceration such as violence, drug violations, illegal gambling, and illicit sexual behaviour that occur daily (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). However, the prevalence of negative expectations could be considered another impacting factor. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stated that personal factors such as beliefs and situational factors such as novelty impact on appraisal. First time child offenders held certain beliefs about incarceration and further incarceration was new to them thus they had no prior experience to refer to.

Furthermore, this may be linked to the influence of joining gangs as a form of protection to avoid victimisation, as in the case of Albany, for example. According to Beare and Hogg (2013), it is not uncommon for offenders to join a gang after their incarceration for the protection it offers. Joining a gang can be understood as a reflection of perceived insufficient coping strategies. Light (2018) reported that beliefs, prior experiences, and the hierarchy of goals are crucial to individualised adjustment in a correctional environment. Beliefs of the child offenders according to their expectations of violence and abuse, could prompt the goal of seeking protection through gang affiliation. This form of response could be considered maladaptive adjustment, as Beare and Hogg (2018) identified that many offenders opt to take gang membership upon entry into a correctional centre. This could indicate the anxiety that has been documented in literature experienced by offenders (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). Wood and Dennard (2017) further stated that gang affiliation poses a greater risk to an offender's mental health.

Participants stated that their experience was not as traumatic and as challenging as they had expected or were led to believe by the information they had. This indicates the primary appraisal of the correctional environment as less threatening rather than successful mediation of stressors

and coping strategies. Primary appraisal refers to the perceived importance of the event to the individual where they consider whether they have any stake in the event (Busko & Kulenovic, 1995). Secondary appraisal can be defined as an individual's resources to counteract the demands of the event (Busko & Kulenovic, 1995). Li et al. (2018) found that appraisal is crucial as they are personal and can indicate one's reaction to a stressor, as the same stressor can be appraised differently by different people. In different ways, participants also shared their disappointment as they had expected to gain more opportunities within the correctional environment which they felt are significantly limited. They had expected to be more equipped for life post incarceration with a wider variety of artisan skills and education. This is significant as it poses a threat to adjustment resources, which will be discussed in more detail under the deprivations of incarceration sub-theme.

5.2.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Deprivations of incarceration

The deprivation model states that the correctional environment itself discomforts the offenders as it deprives them of basic human needs in social interactions (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013). As earlier stated, deprivation (situational) and importation (personal) factors are interlinked hence both play a role in how the individual responds to the stress of incarceration. The perceived correctional environment was found as a predictor of participation in the offender economy and strongly correlated with criminal attitudes (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005). This denotes how offenders perceive the correctional environment, which can lead to misconduct because of possessed criminal attitudes that often lead to engagement in the offender economy. The perceived correctional environment has the dimensions of an absence of privacy, sensory deprivation, noise, and boredom (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005). Other noted aspects were

autonomy, security, education and career aspiration, emotional well-being, healthcare, nutrition, and exercise.

Education and career aspirations

According to the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998, child offenders must be allowed access to educational programmes. However, Muntingh and Ballard (2012) found inconsistencies in providing educational programmes to child offenders in eight correctional centres, including Ekuseni Youth Development Centre. Further, Magano (2016) identified in a correctional centre that there were resource challenges and other offender dynamics that hindered the successful provision of educational programmes to child offenders. Anonymous experienced the educational programmes as insufficient because he was doing subjects at a lower level than the ones he was exposed to in mainstream schooling. He expressed being hurt by this and missing the experience of mainstream schooling. Education is considered particularly important in the correctional centre as it has been identified as a positive and beneficial use of time and facilitated reflection of offenders on their offences and rehabilitation (Rosario et al., 2016). For example, Albany was disconcerted as he perceived his incarceration to be a deterrent to him achieving the qualification he desired in medicine. Incarceration has been found to negatively affect child offenders' education by increasing the chances of dropping out and reducing the chances of college enrolment (Kirk & Simpsons, 2013). This may be attributed to the increased vulnerability related to arrest and how arrest impacts attitudes and beliefs of a better future (Mahler et al., 2018). Albany has shared that his incarceration has put an end to his dreams. This can negatively impact incarceration as it may not prompt him to engage effectively with rehabilitation programmes.

Sensory deprivation

Boredom in the correctional environment is a significant stressor (Bengtsson, 2012; Greve, 2001; Putwain & Sammons, 2002). Young offenders curb boredom through risky behaviour such as violence (Bengtsson, 2012; Rocheleau, 2013). Beuaregard and Brochu (2013) found that amongst other prominent reasons for gambling in the correctional environment, boredom was also listed. Boredom and lack of sensory stimulation impacts the adjustment of offenders and further increases their risk of offending in the correctional environment. Participants shared how activities such as schooling successfully aided them to avoid misconduct while others mentioned how the lack of sensory stimulation and boredom has resulted in physical fights within the institution. This attests to the perceived correctional environmental conditions creating an environment conducive to offending.

Security

Security incorporates a level of danger while incarcerated; witnessing a sexual assault, assault with a weapon and physical fights were dimensions of witnessing victimisation (Hochstelle & DeLisi, 2005). De Wet (2005) states that security is among the losses experienced by offenders. Loss of security can be explained partly by the correctional sub-culture that includes gang membership. Correctional environments are infamous for sexual assaults (Greve, 2001), physical assault (Fox et al., 2012), bullying, and victimisation (Gooch, 2016). Violence is common in the correctional environment (Beare & Hogg, 2013; DeLisi et al., 2013; Toman et al. 2015). Participants shared feeling unsafe within the centre due to underlying rules that govern their behaviour and movements. The shared sentiments indicated fear of enticing other offenders to sexualise their behaviours. Furthermore, there was a fear of being impacted by activities that are prescribed for gang members. These aspects of security appeared to be more anxiety-provoking

to the participants, and therefore, could prompt increased vigilance. Haney (2001) indicated that increased vigilance and paranoia are often experienced by offenders. Lastly, it was noted that child offenders experienced physical abuse from correctional staff. Mendel (2011) also found that child offenders experience physical abuse at the hands of correctional officials. Participants shared that such incidents occur in cases of violations of the correctional centre's codes of conduct and never unsolicited. However, they strongly stood against such actions. In light of the strain due to overpopulation and minimal resources, one might wonder what kind of impact this has on the correctional environment, especially considering the goal to maintain control. Violence and hostility serve as a threat to the offenders' emotional well-being and subsequently negatively impact adjustment.

Poor emotional well-being

Emotional well-being refers to optimal psychological experience and functioning, capacity to be resilient, manage stress, and generate emotions that lead to feeling good (mcgoglu & Uysal, 2020). Participants noted that incarceration had impacted their feelings of hope to the extent of failing to envision themselves beyond incarceration. Hope was identified through plans and thoughts of re-integration back into society and purpose. There is also the aspect of self-reliance indicated by the participants' resolution to strive towards bettering themselves. Purpose and self-reliance are elements of resilience; resilience refers to the ability to adjust effectively to new and stressful situations (McGowan et al., 2018). This implies that hope encourages adjusting as required to manage a stressful situation, driving hopeful child offenders towards greater chances of adjustment. Lastly, Mahler et al. (2018) state that when adolescents have positive expectations for their future, they behave in a manner that increases the probability of attaining or reaching their goals.

Participants reported prominently anxious feelings and sadness. Adolescents entering correctional institutions represent a population that is significantly disposed to severe psychological distress (Brown & Ireland, 2006). Feelings such as diminished self-worth (Haney, 2001), anxiety (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2013), and depression (Cesaroni & Peterson-Badali, 2013) can be expected. Participants shared that the labels attached to them as offenders diminish their sense of self-worth or dignity. Besemer et al. (2017) report that the labelling theory envisages that criminal justice interventions amplify offending behaviour. As reflected by A in the focus group, labels given to them make them feel as if they have been forsaken. This can impact adjustment, especially in relation to behaving in a manner that fulfilled the expectations of the labels placed on them. Anxious feelings were provoked mostly by the environment's unpredictability and being unsure about their safety. For Polo, the experience of watching his family leave was painful. Incarceration negatively impacts family relationships, including reduced access to social support (Murray, 2005).

Health care, nutrition, exercise

Physical well-being can be defined as the ability to improve one's body functioning through a healthy diet and good exercise habits (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). However, poor healthcare, scarce resources, and nutrition have been found to be a challenge within South African correctional contexts (Nkosi & Maweni, 2020). Once again, the correctional environment is causing discomfort and pain to the offenders. Thus, negatively impacting on their ability to adjust to the environment. Exercise, however, has several positive benefits for physical and emotional well-being (Daley, 2008). Regular exercise is associated with reduced anxious and depressed feelings, less stress, and improved emotional and physical well-being (Bernstein et al., 2018). Child offenders are deprived of this due to inconsistent opportunities for physical

exercise. Deprivation can be perceived as a significant stressor that would require the appropriate appraisal to adjust successfully. As it stands, these aspects hold great potential to cause distress and hinder successful adjustment. Comments by A and D in the focus group attest to the negative impacts of not being able to exercise. A reported that it hurts them to not have the opportunity to exercise. D further stated that the inconsistency results in them experiencing body pains. Lastly, a good diet has been noted as part of physical well-being. The participants shared a displeasure with the food they eat which they described as not appetizing and served in small portions.

Autonomy

Lastly, participants commonly reflected on limited control over how their days are and the activities that they are able to participate in. Loss of autonomy was identified in early literatures as one of the deprivations of autonomy (Sykes, 1958). De Wet (2005) reported that loss of autonomy is one of the social and psychological inconveniences of incarceration. This correlates with Haney (2001) observation on the difficulty of ex-offenders to have planning skills and self-sufficiency after being dependant on the institution. In the focus group D shared that they have structured days and everything they do has a time constraint. Jeqe also stated that they are allocated to programs and they have to follow that instruction. Van der Laan and Eichshleim (2013) stated that reduced feelings of control are associated with a sense of learned helplessness and motivation of offenders is increased by opportunities for choice.

5.2.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Perceived legitimacy of the correctional centre

Bierie and Mann (2017) informed that legitimacy plays a vital role in the perceptions and behaviours of people abiding by the law, even when it is inconvenient. As the participants have

reported that they perceive the correctional environment as a place not best suited for them, it makes them prone to misconduct. Bierie and Mann (2017) assert that when the law or correctional centre, for example, is perceived as a legitimate propensity, obedience increases. Perhaps this could partly explain the presence of misconduct, as participants disregard the authority of the centre and its officials. Van der Laan and Eichshleim (2013) stated that the correctional environment provides opportunity for stress, unproductive behaviour or violence. Some of these opportunities as noted by participants are limited recreational activities leading to boredom, smoking, and gangsterism. It could also make offenders additionally sensitive to perceived acts of authority over them by the correctional officials. Even trivial acts of authority are magnified due to reduced liberty (Bierie & Mann, 2017). Questioned legitimacy is thus a threat to their adjustment. Offenders' perception of the authority of the staff as being legitimate fosters lasting obedience, improves trust building, well-being and staff-offender communication (Liebling, 2011).

In summary, the discussion of these sub-themes indicates the stance of the child offender with regards to their primary and secondary appraisals according to the transactional model of stress and coping. The primary appraisal is concerned with whether an event is important to the individual, and secondary appraisal refers to one's resources to counteract situational demands (Busko & Kulenovic, 1995). As these sub-themes were reflected in the data, it is an indication that they were considered important to the participants in the primary appraisal. However, the secondary appraisal deemed the participants incompetent at counteracting these aspects to adjust to their environment successfully.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Protective factors to success in adjusting

5.2.2.1 Sub-theme: 1 Emotional support

Family support

Offenders present with lower rates of mental health symptoms, reoffending, alcohol dependence and tend to display adaptive aspects of community functioning post release when they maintain contact with their families (Folk et al., 2019). Individuals maintaining close and supportive familial relationships (Roberts et al., 2017), and receive regular family visits (Cluley, 2009) have significant lower reoffending rates. Folk et al. (2019) state that maintaining familial contact (visits, phone calls) is related to adaptive functioning post release, while improving connectedness and mental health during incarceration. Lastly, visitation from parents greatly reduced depressive symptoms in the first two months of incarceration of child and juvenile offenders, regardless of the parent-child relationship's quality (Monahan et al., 2011). For example, Propaganda shares that his mother's acceptance and support during his incarceration has been a strong motivating factor in maintaining good conduct. Polo attested that through visits from his family, he received support and encouragement to stay on the straight and narrow. However, the visits were not without any pain as was stated by Polo that it used be very difficult for him when his family left after visiting him. Bhanoyi added that the phone calls to his family are very important to him as they aid in maintaining contact with his loved ones. Family dynamics have contributed to other child offenders not accessing such support; however, this was reported to be mitigated by the following aspects of this sub-theme.

Correctional staff support

Du Plessis and Lombard (2018) emphasised the importance of a good relationship between officials and offenders for the facilitation of successful rehabilitation. The relationship between officials and offenders impacts retention and criminal behaviour post treatment (Latessa et al., 2014). Participants shared that they found positive, accepting, and kind words and/or actions of the correctional officials supportive. A positive relationship with officials when established, also gave the child offenders confidence to report any challenges or issues they faced. They also noted that they are able to accept when they are not assisted as they have come to see that the officials are often willing to assist them.

Offender social relationships

The composition of the offender population means that offenders' choices are restricted to criminally-sanctioned peers, many of whom may have violent histories, making social affiliation risky (Schaefer et al., 2017). Participants commonly shared the experience of identifying like-minded individuals within the correctional centre to form friendships and alliances with. As mentioned by Schaefer et al. (2017), there is a risk with social affiliations in correctional centres due to the presence of criminally-sanctioned peers. However, the participants seem to have been aware of this and cautious too. They testified that this had offered them guidance, companionship, and support. According to Shrivastava (1973), it was only the reduction of the pains of imprisonment which led to the formation of friendship groups in prison, with the objectives of mutual help, passing time, selfish interests, ganging, and protective alliance. The accounts of participants indicate successful alliance formation that led to passing the time and mutual help.

Social relationships are interlinked with an individual's identity. Personal identity, self-concept, and self-esteem are closely related concepts (Baumeister, 2015), which aid an individual in coping with stress, trauma, and misfortune (Haesen et al., 2018). As Propaganda stated, self-esteem is important in the correctional environment to curb the influence of peers. It appeared to also assist Propaganda in being able to assert himself within this environment. This is particularly important as other offenders shared that peer influence had played a role in their incarceration, as indicated by Polo. Adolescents perceive their relationships with friends to be increasingly important during this developmental stage (Helsen et al., 2000). Thus, they had reflected and committed to changing their lives for the better, impacting their choice of social affiliations and possibly criminal attitudes.

Criminal attitudes significantly correlated with perceived correctional environment conditions, offending, and self-control (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005). Criminal attitudes impact adjustment in a variety of ways and may further explain propensity towards gang affiliation. Association with older individuals with a history of incarceration is particularly risky for adolescents who are still very susceptible to peer influence; their perspective ability is still developing (Dmitrieva et al., 2012). There is the risk that when incarcerated, the child offender will find themselves susceptible to peer influence within the correctional environment. In Polo's case, his incarceration seemed to propel him away from that trajectory. Lastly, the use of drugs was identified as an influencing factor to criminal involvement and incarceration. In light of these perceived criminal attitudes and their tendency towards offending within the correctional environment, poor self-control, and perceived conditions, there is an increased risk of maladjustment.

For Jeqe, the experience of incarceration assisted him to engage with the concept of his identity. Bee expressed gratitude for having a similar experience as he shared that his prior environment lacked that stimulation. Bee was also able to express how he struggled with forming friendships and connecting with other offenders.

Spiritual/Religious support

According to Thomas and Zaitzow (2006), religion and spirituality are a source of transformation in which offenders acknowledge their wrongdoing and embark on a journey of self-transformation and peer counselling. Clear et al. (1992) found that religion aided in adjustment in two categories, namely emotional strains (dealing with guilt and the dissonance linked to being incarcerated) and deprivations (dealing with the loss, especially of freedom) of incarceration. Faith provided motivation and focus for dealing with the pains of confinement and helped with creating a self-image. However, Kerley and Copes (2009) found that isolation and deprivation related to the correctional experience remained, while Eytan (2011) reported that religion and spirituality tend to decrease depression, incidents, and disciplinary sanctions. Engagement of participants on this aspect revealed that spirituality offered comfort, motivation for acceptable conduct, and prompted reflection on their behaviour. Bee further indicated that praying is essential to his adjustment in the correctional centre.

5.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Rehabilitation

Availability of talent enhancement programmes

According to Harding (2014), the ‘What Works’ literature has established that a good correctional social climate would seem likely to improve the outcomes achievable through

proven 'What Works' rehabilitation programmes. Thus, rehabilitation in the correctional environment is possible depending on the correctional climate, among other things. Caulfield et al. (2016) indicated that rehabilitative programmes such as art could potentially improve the well-being of the offenders in terms of their self-esteem, treatment engagement, and further learning. The findings indicate that the participants have an interest to engage in programmes and to improve themselves. According to Caulfield et al. (2016), rehabilitative programmes also have the potential to improve programme engagement, thus creating a healthy cycle. This kind of engagement is pivotal to rehabilitation and, more importantly, on adjustment. Improvement of self-esteem and others, as indicated by participants, could improve the correctional climate. Participants identified needs and talents that could be improved while incarcerated. The opportunity to engage with their creative sides was embraced positively and aided in their adjustment and rehabilitation. This aligns with the literature about the importance of art-based programmes to enhance the self-esteem and treatment of offenders.

Correctional programmes

The DCS' White Paper on Corrections indicates that development programmes are intended to improve life skills and to unleash the potential of offenders in all aspects of life (DCS, 2005).

The objective of rehabilitation is to address offending behaviour, promoting positive social values, and enhancing development among offenders (Du Plessis & Lombard, 2018).

Participants mentioned the programmes they had participated in and identified those that made a notable impact in their lives. Participants benefited from anger management and communication skills, as indicated in their responses. Some of the participants shared that these programmes also assisted them in their relationships and engagements with each other. Propaganda shared his experience of the sex offender programme, stating that it enabled him to understand the possible

impact of his actions on the victim. It prompted his reflection and willingness to change. These are some of the examples indicative of an acceptance of positive social values. Other programmes offered included sewing and gardening. Those skills aided in enhancing development and rehabilitation. Rehabilitative programmes are positively related to successful adjustment and coping of offenders within correctional centres and post release (Light, 2018).

Educational and psychosocial support

Education reduces criminal involvement as a strong commitment to conventional goals, and the socially approved means of achieving these goals are established (Ford & Schroeder, 2011). It is imperative to note that most offenders return to their communities without the academic and vocational skills to help them compete in the job market and avoid future criminal behaviour (Williams, 1992). This was essential, as discussed by the participants that the availability of educational programmes allows for productive use of their time. Also, it reduces offending through the change in criminal attitudes. As indicated in the literature, education incites commitment to conventional goals, which may include law-abiding behaviours. Magano (2016) stated that regardless of the challenges in providing educational programmes, they limit the exposure of schooling child offenders with negative influences.

In summary, the sub-themes and their aspects are crucial to the correctional environment in the environment-individual interaction in the model of stress and coping. These aspects are essential because they contribute to the pool of resources with which child offenders tackle the aspects identified in Theme 1. According to Echemendia et al. (2019), coping incorporates cognitive and behavioural responses to internal or external stressors that were deemed beyond available resources in order to manage the stressor. Rehabilitation and emotional support include both aspects (behavioural and cognitive) of responding to the stressful event, namely

incarceration. Committed engagement with rehabilitation and social support appears to be more problem-focused, as it addresses the troubled person-environment relationship (Busko & Kulenovic, 1995).

5.2.3 Theme 3: Child offenders' adjustment strategies

5.2.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Seeking social support

Participants employed social affiliation or withdrawal in response to what the situation demands. Participants shared that they were able to source, not only support, other survival items within the centre through their friends. Polo identified that in times of shortage, his friend shared his resources with him. Albany stated that social withdrawal was necessary at times to avoid conflict and misconduct. Child offenders shared "survival guides". Incarceration has been identified as successfully altering or ceasing social relationships and reducing support (Schaefer et al., 2017). Chao (2011) reported dissatisfaction with the interpersonal environment (social support) associated with behavioural, emotional, and physiological strain. Findings indicate that the participants actively sought and built social relationships that offered support within their environment. Therefore, this support was able to assist in adjustment. Problem-focused coping aims to change negative emotions or stress by addressing or altering sources of the stress (Lazarus, 1993). Thus, improving confidence in addressing situational demands (Li et al., 2018).

5.2.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Self-discipline

According to Hochstetle and DeLisi (2005), self-control remained significant; it decreased offending and was a strong predictor of participation in the offender economy. Subsequently, self-control impacts adjustment in two ways. Firstly, when a person exercises self-control, they are able to deter themselves from offending. Failure to exercise self-control could predispose offenders to assault or victimisation. Secondly, poor self-control increases the likelihood of engaging in the offender economy, which strongly impacts offending. As evidenced by Polo, the ability to control one's impulses is essential to adjustment in the correctional centre. This was a skill Polo had to master. Anonymous also attested that it was essential not to respond to instigation and peer pressure. Furthermore, Propaganda shared that it was important to be able to identify right from wrong while not dwelling on the wrong. Age was also highlighted as one of the independent variables correlated with self-control. Dmitrieva et al. (2012) stated that temperance and perspective are aspects of psychosocial maturity that are expected to develop in adolescence. However, incarceration tends to negatively impact this. Thus, age has the potential to negatively impact adjustment by reducing self-control, exposing child offenders to greater risks of offending, and participating in the offender economy. Self-control can be considered as an emotion-focused coping strategy with a particular focus on adapting as it increases the ability to cope. It enables the offender to curb victimisation and offending perpetuated in correctional centres by looking at the bigger picture and adjusting standards or expectations.

5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research results, according to the research and literature identified in Chapter 4, were presented in this chapter. A summary of the research findings and concluding remarks are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the researcher's personal experience, limitations of this study, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. Conclusions regarding the study's findings will also be included.

6.2 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Reflecting on this journey independently and holistically as part of my professional development and academic achievement has not necessarily been easy. This process is truly dear to my heart because of the areas of development it has highlighted and the steady process of addressing them that I am still undergoing. During the first two years of my master's journey and the demands of each, respectively, I struggled to connect and engage with my thesis. This process has unlocked the curious, fascinated, and inspired human being and novice psychotherapist in me. It has allowed me to transcend beyond wanting and working towards being adequate; an adequate researcher, student, a clinical psychologist to being an open, engaged and fulfilled individual in all these aspects. This has been a truly testing and taxing experience, from unexpected and seemingly unwarranted surprises and delays to immense growth and trusting the process. I honestly thought I was losing my mind at times, and I am delighted that we have reached the end

of this journey. I take with me resilience, self-determination, better engagement with feedback, improved decision-making skills, improved time management skills, and so much more!

One aspect that I found particularly interesting and challenging was the therapist-researcher dilemma that came about during my preparation and data collection. I had to engage consistently with this dilemma and address it. The awareness and acceptance of the therapist being a core component of my identity was important. I had to realise the advantage (e.g., building rapport, gauging distress, mediating discomfort) and disadvantage (e.g., counter-transference, preoccupation with being a helper) that it brought me and my research process. Reflecting and keeping a record of my thoughts was particularly helpful.

Lastly, this process has further opened my heart to work in the correctional environment due to its peculiar context and apparent need. Engagement with the officials at the research site in the social work department, as they shared their history of lacking psychological services are a concern with colleagues from other institutions they are in contact with.

6.3 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The sample for the study consisted of males only, as female child offenders are not as prominent in the South African context, as indicated by annual statistics provided by the DCS. Having access to female child offenders could have broadened the focus and changed the dynamics of the study, offering a more conclusive and inclusive idea of the experiences of child offenders in South Africa. It is recommended that a similar study be conducted with female child offenders.

Participants that were available for the first round of interviews were not available when the data collection was resumed, as they had already been released. However, member validation

was conducted with available participants, and they confirmed the findings as accurate with no recommendations offered. For corroboration, Billups (2014) advises that portions of the results are sufficient; presenting full findings or raw data to participants is not necessary. Regardless, this may have limited the credibility of the findings.

Loss of autonomy was noted as one of the deprivations of incarceration. The researcher was aware of the possibility of participants feeling that they may not have the liberty to decline participation. This may impact participation in terms of building rapport and being forthcoming with information. Regarding harm and risk, the researcher could have taken a more practical approach within the interviews regarding the comfortability experienced by participants indicating more personal responsibility. As indicated, participants would have been offered debriefing sessions and referrals for in-house counselling would have been facilitated in the event of distress resulting from participation. Failure of the research to take such an approach could have prompted a feeling of disinterest for the participants' well-being.

This research was conducted in one correctional centre in South Africa. Thus, there are situational or geographic and cultural components relevant when it comes to the influences pre- and during incarceration. There is also a possibility of different conditions, especially regarding the deprivation model that focuses on the characteristic of the environment. Research consisting of different institutions across the country may be replicated to allow for comparisons and more informative findings. However, most of the findings of this study were in line with relevant literature regarding the models used and the experiences shared by the participants.

Lastly, there are limited literature available on first-time child offenders and their adjustment to incarceration in South African correctional centres. Literature forms the foundation of any research, and the limited literature did not allow for stronger arguments during the discussion.

6.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study's findings reflected that child offenders in the identified correctional centre in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, face several challenges resulting from their incarceration. Incarceration was regarded as a stressor in accordance with the model of stress and coping. When offenders can find ways to overcome their stress, they can function more efficiently in the correctional environment. They can also be more effective in their engagement with the rehabilitative programmes they are exposed to. The findings reflect factors that mediate and are engaged during the appraisals of different scenarios within the environment that lead to adjustment or maladjustment.

The data-driven and theory-driven codes consistently indicate that child offenders are faced with a massive task of adjusting to the correctional environment and certain factors either predispose them to fail or protect them towards succeeding in adjusting. Results also indicate that components such as violence and hostility within the correctional environment (Al-Fijawi et al., 2019; Peacock, 2006; Sykes, 1958), expectations or perceptions (Yanagisawa, 2016), and perceived legitimacy of the institution (Bierie & Mann, 2017) hold a potential threat to their adjustment. Social support factors (Monahan et al., 2011; Roberts et al., 2017; Schaefer et al., 2017) and rehabilitation aid in their adjustment. Furthermore, child offenders utilised coping strategies such as self-control (Hochstetle & DeLisi, 2005), gang affiliation (Beare & Hogg, 2013), and social support (Schaefer et al., 2017). These coping adjustment strategies aimed at reducing emotional distress and addressing environmental or contextual causes of stress. Thus, mitigating against distress and improving adjustment.

6.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This study highlighted the perceptions of first-time child offenders regarding their adjustment to a correctional environment. These findings shed some light on their experiences and circumstances impacting their adjustment. The findings highlighted the themes of protective factors in adjusting and predisposing factors in failing to adjust and child offenders' adjustment strategies. Findings are linked with the integration of the deprivation and importation models, indicating a lifestyle of offenders in correctional environments that impact their adjustment.

These findings can be appreciated by higher institutions, the DCS, and the general population. Higher institutions are key in the training of practitioners, such as social workers and psychologists, who are expected to play important supporting roles in rehabilitating child offenders. The general population is affected by children in conflict with the law in different ways. These child offenders come from and return to communities, and correctional centres are not built in a vacuum. This study's findings can aid by informing the greater population on the plight of child offenders.

The DCS has a monumental responsibility of not only catering for the incarcerated offenders but their employees as well. This can assist to better equip practitioners in their roles. Literature (Peacock, 2006; Nkosi & Maweni, 2020; Sinefu, n.d) indicates the overpopulation is of particular concern in South African correctional centres, impacting not only on adjustment but the availability of resources as well. These conditions contribute to the strain offenders and correctional officials are faced with concurrently. Therefore, prioritising access to psychological services for offenders and officials may aid in alleviating this strain. Muntingh and Ballard (2012) identified the scarcity of psychological services and restricted practice of social workers to mitigate the scarcity of psychologists.

Lastly, in relation to factors identified as predisposing child offenders to maladjustment the following is recommended. A long-term plan to reduce overpopulation in child correctional centres by building more centres and strict adherence to the capacity of the centre. Thus, improving security and control impacting on misconduct and gangsterism. Simultaneously, improves the provision of medical care, nutrition and sanitation. It is recommended that sports and recreation be more inclusive to improve the well-being and autonomy of child offenders thereby increasing their motivation. An inclusion of skilled labour to the academic training of child offenders may assist child offenders with learning difficulties.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This study focused on the perceptions and experiences of first-time child offenders regarding their journey of adjusting to a correctional environment. It is evident that the participants managed various challenges during their initial days within the institution but concluded that they had had some positive experiences that did not align with the expectations they had of the correctional environment. From the discussion of their results, it was also evident that despite the pain, the participants experienced personal growth and development in their individual lives.

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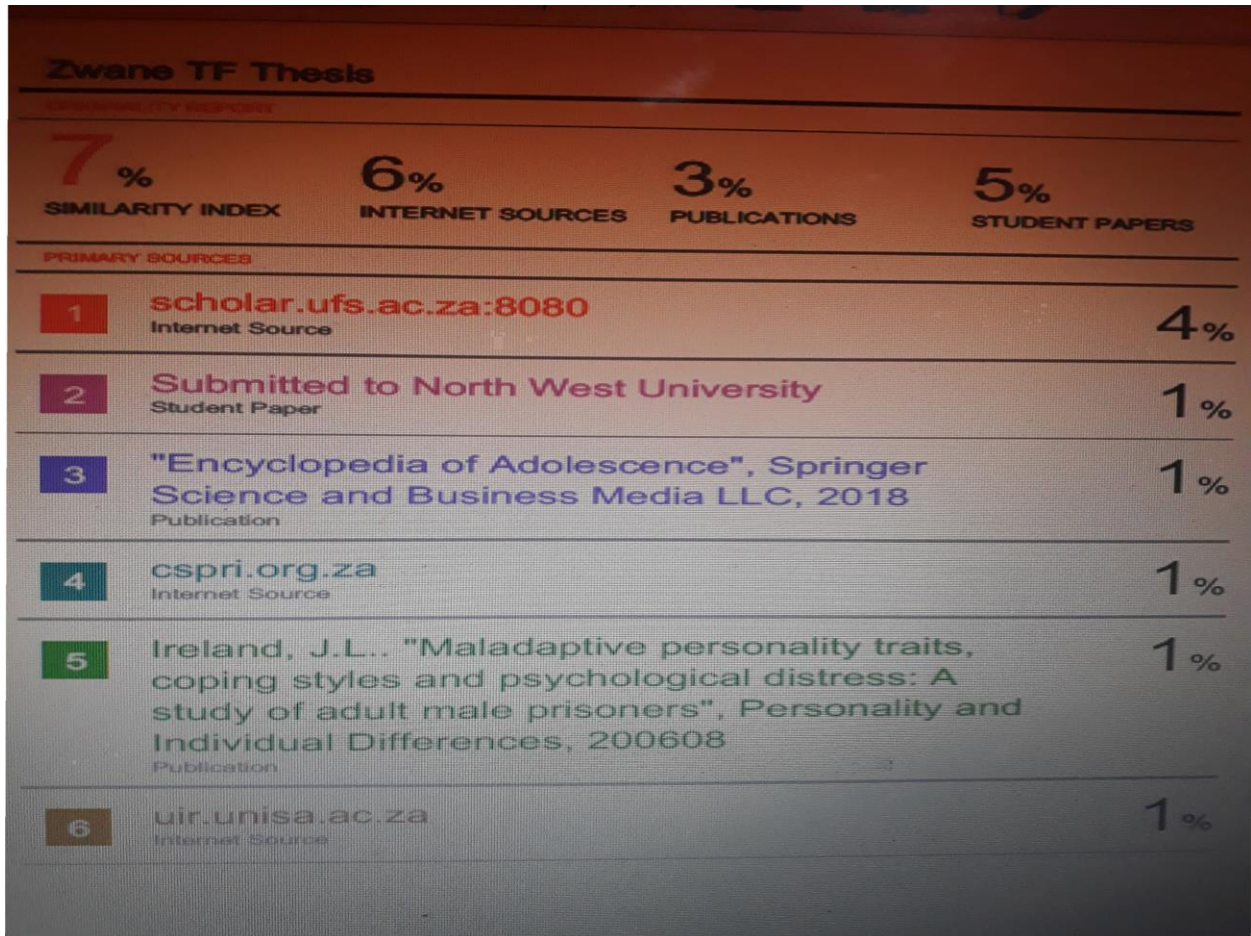
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ANNEXURE A: TURNITIN REPORT



INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

- What are your views of being incarcerated?
- Before you were brought to the correctional centre what did you think it will be like?
- How is it compared to what you had envisioned?
- What was your experience of your first three months here?
- If you were to make any adjustments to the way the system is run, what would you do?
Please elaborate as to why.
- What services do you have available to you here?
- Why have you not made use of them?
- Would you recommend for other people to be placed in this correctional centre? Please elaborate as to why.
- What are the things you had to adjust to?
- What helped you adjust?
- What was a challenge to adjusting?

ANNEXURE C: TRANSCRIPT

Individual Interview with Anonymous

(R= Researcher, A= Anonymous)

R: I'd like to place the recorder here so that it can easily record both our voices. Okay?

A: Yeah.

R: Are you comfortable? Are you ready for us to start now?

A: Yes.

R: Okay, so let us start here. Before you were brought to Ekuseni, a correctional environment, what did you think life inside here was like? As you may now know that we no longer refer to them as prisons.

A: That it is hard; that I will be abused. I will be severely abused because we had been told that when you arrive in correctional facilities, there are 26s, 28s, and big 5. But no, as for me, that is not what I found when I arrived here. Because I did not participate in the number gangs, I found other "brothers" who are like me. They told me that I must behave well according to the center's rules; I must not misbehave. They told me to stop the drugs I was using, we agreed on that. Fighting in here is not allowed. If someone is trying to bring an offense to me, like giving me a cellphone, I must not accept it.

R: In other words, when you arrived here, you were scared?

A: Yes.

R: Expecting that your life will be really hard?

A: Yes.

R: So now, when you compare what you expected and what has become your life, what would you say?

A: I expected to experience a lot of abuse. However, I found “brothers” here, who counseled me about what is right and wrong, what I should and should not do.

R: Okay, perhaps if we could go back a bit. If you could rewind a bit, can you remember your first day here?

A: Arriving here?

R: Mmmm

A: Yes.

R: When was it?

*A: It was ** of September; it was a Thursday.*

R: September, is that of 2019?

A: Yes.

R: Okay, so if you could take a walk down memory lane, September, October, and November, these first 3 months, how were they for you?

A: Ei, I was not feeling well. The things that happen here, the things that I did outside that I could no longer do. I was very sad.

R: What is that you missed most that you wished you were still able to do?

A: First of all, school. The school here is good, but I can't attend it because it requires previous reports and I don't have them. Here I have to attend level 1 that has fewer subjects; I only do 2 subjects.

R: So, does that mean you were schooling prior to be here?

A: Yes.

R: Which grade were you in?

A: Grade 8.

R: Okay, so 8 or 9 subjects?

A: Subjects?

R: Yes, that you were learning at school.

A: Zulu, English, Mathematics, Life Skills, Natural Sciences, EMS.

R: Can I please move the recorder closer to you. So, you said you are currently doing 2 subjects?

A: Yes.

R: And those are?

A: English and Mathematics.

R: Okay. Is there perhaps more that you miss outside besides school, as you had earlier mentioned that you were sad due to missing certain things? Is there anything else?

A: No, there isn't anything else.

R: No? Okay, then. If you as Anonymous were to be given an opportunity to be in charge of this institution Ekuseni and how it operates, what can and cannot be done. What changes would you come up with?

A: That I would come up with? It would be to encourage my "brothers" to stop using drugs, smoking, and misbehaving. And to spread awareness on how benzine mixed with dagga can cause you to make horrible decisions.

R: So, when you speak of "brothers," who are you referring to?

A: I mean my "brothers" in here and outside.

R: So, you wish for more stricter measures and focus on drug use and awareness?

A: Yes.

R: I apologise if you feel that we are deviating from the matter at hand. What makes you so passionate about drug use?

A: It is because I am incarcerated today because of them. I never thought I would one day find myself here; if I was not using drugs, I would not be here. They brought me here.

R: Would I be correct in saying that you have seen just how debilitating they can be to a person's life, especially a young person?

A: Yes.

R: I see. Thank you for explaining that to me. When looking at this institution Ekuseni, what resources do you have available to you to use when you need them? By that, I mean centres, projects or programmes.

A: We have skills.

R: What does skills offer, what is being done there?

A: Skills has a sewing programme; they sew there.

R: When you say they, does that mean you are not a part of them?

A: No, I am in school.

R: Okay, so it is just skills and school?

A: There are programmes as well.

R: What programmes do you know that you can tell me about?

A: I know of anger management.

R: Anger management...

A: I cannot remember the others, but I have been a part of 3.

R: Which are the 3 that you have participated in?

A: The main gate one (paused), the others I cannot remember them well.

R: You cannot remember the others well, that is okay. It seems as if you have used some of the available resources. How did you decide on which ones you want to be a part of, the ones you want to use? Or are you dictated into programmes?

A: No, you do not get to choose which programme to partake in. You do all the programmes; it is how things are done here.

R: Ooh, so it is how things are done. So, does that mean that you will still participate in the remaining programmes?

A: Yes.

R: Would you say that those that you have participated in have been helpful to you?

A: Yes, they have helped me.

R: How would you say they have helped you?

A: With anger, they have helped me to manage it better. They have helped me to learn how to communicate better with people. Eish, I do not know what to say.

R: Would you say that you can communicate your thoughts and feelings better to others now that you have been exposed to anger management and communication skills?

A: Yes, I would.

R: Okay, so let us say at this very moment, there is a child in court being sentenced to serve time in a correctional centre like this one. Would you recommend that that child be accommodated here at Ekuseni or would you prefer they were sent to another institution?

A: No, I would really prefer they were sent to another place. I think it would be better that way.

R: Why would you want them sent to another institution?

A: Because here they will be introduced to the awful mindset of number gangs and other negative things.

R: Why do you make it sound like you fear they will learn more criminal behaviours inside here?

A: Yes, I do.

R: Okay. Is there more perhaps that you would like to comment on this?

A: No.

R: What do you think protected you from that exposure?

A: When I arrived here, I found my own “brothers” who were good and good for me. They taught me the right way to behave, do’s and don’ts. They taught me that I should never go steal in the correctional centre’s kitchen, cellphones are not allowed in here, smoking is not allowed. While we are in here, we must go to school. When Mama (female warden) talks to you, you listen and follow what is expected of you.

R: (clears throat) excuse me, if you can recollect well. What are the things that you had to learn or adjust to when you arrived in Ekuseni?

A: I had to learn to behave well. I heard to learn to talk with respect with others. I had to learn to try and not respond when instigated when a person tries to pick a fight with me. And also, to avoid peer pressure of smoking.

R: What do you think helped you to adjust?

A: It helped me to associate myself with my “brothers” who are older than I am.

R: In the village that you were placed in?

A: Yes.

R: Okay, so why is it important that they are older than you?

A: They behave well.

R: You see, take them as good examples?

A: Yes.

R: What would you say was hard or a challenge for you in your adjusting process?

A: What was a challenge for me was... No. No, that wasn’t any.

R: Would you say that you have had a “good” stay so far?

A: Yes.

R: Alright, thank you. This is the last question that we need to go through. I would like to know what is your opinion on the incarceration of people for various reasons?

A: (Mumbles to himself, hesitant to respond)

R: Laughs

A: No, never.

R: There must be some thought you have on it. Do you see it as a good thing or a bad thing? If it is good, what makes it good, and if it is bad, what makes it bad?

A: It is just that others, like myself, are helped by being in here. For instance, this has helped me to stop using drugs.

R: Do you think you would not have been able to stop if you were not incarcerated?

A: Yes.

R: Is there anything else that you would like to comment on?

A: No.

R: Is there anything that I did not ask that you would like to share with me?

A: No, there isn't.

R: Thank you for your time! This brings us to the end of the session.

THE END!!!

ANNEXURE D: ASSENT FORM



RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM

DATE

Date of research project

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Perceptions of first -time child offenders regarding their adjustment to a correctional environment

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT

NUMBER(S):

Thembelihle Zwane 2016327716 076 294 9351

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Faculty: Humanities

Department: Psychology

STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Study Leader: Dr. Jacques Jordaan

Contact number: 051 401 2890

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim is to explore and describe the perceptions of adjustment to a correctional environment by child offenders; to uncover common patterns in perceptions.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

The study is being done by the above-mentioned principle investigator, Thembelihle Zwane. Who is a masters student in clinical psychology and is undertaking this study to fulfil requirements of the qualification.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: UFS-HSD2018/0489

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

This particular population was chosen as inspired by literature on adjustment to imprisonment. Literature reports an increase in the placement of children in correctional centers commonly known as prisons. However, studies conducted on their adjustment is very limited. The participants can help with producing new knowledge and information on the topic. Participation will be voluntary, however participants will be shortlisted through the institution to reduce risk of harm through participation. There will be approximately 10-15 participants. very limited. The participants can help with producing new knowledge and information on the topic. Participation will be voluntary, however participants will be shortlisted through the institution to reduce risk of harm through participation. There will be approximately 10-15 participants. This particular population was chosen as inspired by literature on adjustment to imprisonment. Literature

reports an increase in the placement of children in correctional centers commonly known as prisons. However, studies conducted on their adjustment is

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

As a participant you will be asked to take part in individual interviews that may take up to an hour and a half per individual. These interviews will try to get an understanding of how the participant has succeeded or failed or is still in the process of adjusting to the correctional environment. You can as a participant expect questions such as:

-What has made it difficult for you to adjust to the correctional environment?

-Is there anything you have found useful? What were those things?

Thereafter, all participants will join in the focus group that will be held for an approximated minimum of 2 hours. The focus group will be used to explore ideas that were introduced during the individual interviews. Participation in this study may result in some discomfort and emotional distress from engaging with individual experiences in the correctional environment.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Participation is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefit for not participating. Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written assent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. heet to keep and be asked to sign a written assent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Participation is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefit for

not participating. Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information s

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

It may potentially be beneficial to the participants to share their experiences openly in a secure environment that has no attachment or duty to the institution. It may also bring a sense of usefulness to engage in a process that can benefit the academia and can possibly impact how they are viewed and understood. Participants may also find support in each other moving forward and may even adopt the ideas of other participants that were useful. nd can possibly impact how they are viewed and understood. Participants may also find support in each other moving forward and may even adopt the ideas of other participants that were useful. It may potentially be beneficial to the participants to share their experiences openly in a secure environment that has no attachment or duty to the institution. It may also bring a sense of usefulness to engage in a process that can benefit the academia a

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

It may be difficult to discuss the experiences of adjustment in the individual interviews as they can result in discomfort and psychological stress. Engagement in this topic in the focus group may also affect perceptions and possibly statuses of other participants in the group. That can introduce some instability into the structure and possibly affect feelings of security.icipants in the group. That can introduce some instability into the structure and possibly affect feelings of security. It may be difficult to discuss the experiences of adjustment in the individual interviews

as they can result in discomfort and psychological stress. Engagement in this topic in the focus group may also affect perceptions and possibly statuses of other part

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality of information will be maintained; your name will not be recorded, anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers that you provide. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number (e.g. FTC854) or a pseudonym (e.g. Falakhe) and you will be referred to in this way in the data. The researcher will have access to the data (transcriber/external coder) and these individuals will maintain confidentiality by signing a confidentiality agreement. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee.

Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. Anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles and a conference presentation. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. It is impossible to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity especially when focus groups will be used, as is the case in this study. A focus group is a deliberately set up group to discuss a particular topic of interest in order to gather perceptions in a non-threatening environment. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. At any time you feel uncomfortable or inconvenienced beyond what you are willing to accept you may discontinue participation without getting in

trouble.he) and you will be referred to in this way in the data. The researcher will have access to the data (transcriber/external coder) and these individuals will maintain confidentiality by signing a confidentiality agreement. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. Anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles and a conference presentation. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. It is impossible to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity especially when focus groups will be used, as is the case in this study. A focus group is a deliberately set up group to discuss a particular topic of interest in order to gather perceptions in a non-threatening environment. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. At any time you feel uncomfortable or inconvenienced beyond what you are willing to accept you may discontinue participation without getting in trouble. Confidentiality of information will be maintained; your name will not be recorded, anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers that you provide. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number (e.g. FTC854) or a pseudonym (e.g. Falak

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard in a secured place for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer and the documents will also be password protected. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hardcopies will be shredded whereas softcopies and their back up will be deleted. There is a risk for embarrassment or psychological stress as a result of the nature of the topic. There will be psychological services available in the form of debriefing to assist the participant to return to a state of stability and security. ts will also be password protected. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hardcopies will be shredded whereas softcopies and their back up will be deleted. There is a risk for embarrassment or psychological stress as a result of the nature of the topic. There will be psychological services available in the form of debriefing to assist the participant to return to a state of stability and security. Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard in a secured place for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer and the documen

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICPATING IN THIS STUDY?

The research will be done to no costs at all towards the participants. There will also be no payment available for participants. The research will be done to no costs at all towards the participants. There will also be no payment available for participants.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research results, please contact Thembelihle Zwane on 076 294 9351 or email mafungwase28@gmail.com. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please use the abovementioned details. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact the study leader or supervisor Dr. J. Jordaan on 051 401 2890, or email JordaanJ1@ufs.ac.za. lease use the abovementioned details. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact the study leader or supervisor Dr. J. Jordaan on 051 401 2890, or email JordaanJ1@ufs.ac.za. If you would like to be informed of the final research results, please contact Thembelihle Zwane on 076 294 9351 or email mafungwase28@gmail.com. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, p

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my assent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the *individual interview and focus group*.

I do not/agree to the researcher requesting information about me from the institution.

I have received a signed copy of the informed assent agreement.

Full Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

ANNEXURE E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

28-Nov-2019

Dear Miss Zwane, Thembelihle TF

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Perceptions of first-time child offenders regarding their adjustment to a correctional environment.

Ethical Clearance number: UFS-HSD2018/0489

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Prof Derek Litthauer

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee Digitally signed by Derek

 Litthauer

Date: 2019.11.29
16:35:00 +02'00'

205 Nelson Mandela
Drive
Park West
Bloemfontein 9301

P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein 9300
Tel: 051 401 9398 /
7619 / 3682
RIMS@UFS.ac.za



South Africa www.ufs.ac.za

ANNEXURE F: APPROVAL LETTER

correctional services



Department:

Correctional Services

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X136, PRETORIA, 0001 Poyntons Building, C/O WF Nkomo and Sophie De Bruyn Street,
PRETORIA Tel (012) 307 2770

Ms TF Zwane
P.O. Box 8623
Cumberwood
3235

Dear Ms TF Zwane

**RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES ON: "PERCEPTION OF FIRST TIME CHILD
OFFENDERS REGARDING THEIR ADJUSTMENT TO A CORRECTIONAL
ENVIRONMENT"**

It is with pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services on the above topic has been approved.

Your attention is drawn to the following:

- This ethical approval is valid from 15 October 2019 to 14 October 2021.
- The relevant Regional and Area Commissioners where the research will be conducted will be informed of your proposed research project.
- Your internal guide will be Ms JCN Chonco: Regional Head Development and Care, KwaZulu-Natal.
- You are requested to contact her at telephone number (033) 355 7340 before the commencement of your research.
- It is your responsibility to make arrangements for your interviewing times.
- Your identity document/passport and this approval letter should be in your possession when visiting the Correctional Centre.
- You are required to use the terminology used in the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (February 2005) and the Correctional Services Act (No. 111 of 1998) e.g. "Offenders" not "Prisoners" and "Correctional Centres" not "Prisons".

- You are not allowed to use photographic or video equipment during your visits, however the audio recorder is allowed.
- You are required to submit your final report to the Department for approval by the Commissioner of Correctional Services before publication (including presentation at workshops, conferences, seminars, etc) of the report.
- Should you have any enquiries regarding this process, please contact the REC Administration for assistance at telephone number (012) 307 2770.

Thank you for your application and interest to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services.

Yours faithfully


N LEBOGO
ACTING DC: POLICY COORDINATION & RESEARCH
DATE: 15/10/2019

ANNEXURE G

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| | |
| Name | |
| Age | |
| Gender | |
| Race | |
| Educational level | |
| Offence category | |
| Sentence length | |
| Sentence served at initial contact | |
| | |