



The Value of The Strengths-Based Approach at Residential Child and Youth Care Facilities in Ethekekwini, KwaZulu-Natal.

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for the Master's Degree in Child and Youth Care**

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Supervisor: Dr F Dewan

DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Child and Youth Care Degree. This is to declare that the work is original, and all rights belong to me, except where otherwise referenced. The dissertation has not been previously submitted to any tertiary educational institution.

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20 June 2025

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my mother, Nokuthula Nzuza, who enabled me to dream and realise my full potential despite not having the opportunity to obtain the kind of education that I did. She trusted all my decisions and helped me along the way, even though she did not understand what I was doing. It was quite challenging and amusing to explain to her what a "master's study" is and how it will develop me professionally and personally. Mshazi, your unwavering support and patience will always give me the strength and motivation I need. I also dedicate this thesis to my late father and sister, MaThongo Amahle, boMbulazi. Thank you for guiding me in the right direction. Words will never express how grateful I am for the guidance.

To my older sister, thank you for helping me navigate challenging times and believing in me. I would not have done this without your love and support. To the Dlamini family, I still cannot believe that you all took me in when it all seemed impossible, walked me through my spiritual journey, and redefined my purpose. I will always be eternally grateful for your continued support and encouragement. My heartfelt thanks to my loved ones and friends: Mandisa, Ngcobo, Skuku, Nokwanda, Inamandla, Noorain, Sinolizwi, Sibusile, Joy, and the entire crew. I am immensely grateful for your unwavering support and the profound positive impact you have had on my life.

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ABSTRACT

The child and youth care profession has always existed to provide services for children and youth who are vulnerable, orphaned or at risk, as well as for their families. However, there is insufficient information on the approaches utilised by child and youth care professionals to ensure optimum growth and development in residential child and youth care facilities. The findings of this study intend to provide knowledge about the application and challenges child and youth care professionals may encounter when using the strengths-based approach, which is an approach that seeks to empower children by focusing on their existing capabilities and resources, rather than solely focusing on their deficits or problems.

The study's aim was to explore the value of the strengths-based approach at residential child and youth care facilities and provide recommendations to enhance and inform strengths-based work in child and youth care. The study adopted a phenomenological research approach using eighteen locally based child and youth care workers from three child and youth care centres in the eThekweni region, Durban, KwaZulu Natal. The study participants were purposively chosen to participate in semi-structured in-depth interviews. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. All the ethical considerations, such as voluntary participation, anonymity, informed consent, and confidentiality, were thoroughly followed and adhered to.

The research study results highlighted the significant value of strengths-based work in residential child and youth care settings. Notably, this approach has been instrumental in promoting language and age-appropriate programmes, interventions, and assessments tailored to the unique needs of young people. Moreover, strengths-based work has fostered growth and development in the lives of young people, yielding positive outcomes. Participants emphasised that the strengths-based approach is a valuable tool in child and youth care because it governs the way they think about children and young people and the way they go about their life-space work daily. This approach is responsible for meaningful behavioural changes in young people which is the core objective for child and youth care work.

Participants in the current study also highlighted the disadvantages of employing this approach stating that strengths-based work is time-consuming, requiring significant investment in building relationships and implementing individualised plans. Additionally, participants reported difficulties in the implementation of the strengths-based approach, highlighting the negative behaviours and attitudes they encounter from children, which hinders progress and create challenges for practitioners. There is also inadequate emotional and financial support offered by the organisation. According to the study results, it was established that many problems in the strengths-based approach can be solved by training, support or education. A better

understanding of strengths-based work and the value of this approach may strengthen and improve strengths-based services, broaden knowledge, and enable child and youth care workers to provide thorough treatment and appropriate interventions for children's developmental needs. It is therefore recommended that future studies evaluate the effectiveness of strengths-based approaches from the perspectives of children and young people in residential care and compare outcomes across different settings and populations to further inform best practices.

Key words: Child and Youth Care; Strengths-Based Approach; Residential Child and Youth Care; Phenomenological Research Approach

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CYC	Child and Youth Care
CYCW	Child and Youth Care Worker
CYCCs	Child and Youth Care Centres
DUT	Durban University of Technology
DSD	Department of Social Development
EPS	Empowerment-Participation-Strengths
IDP	Individual Developmental Plan
IREC	Institutional Research Ethics Committee
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NACCW	National Association of Child Care Workers
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professions
SCIE	Social Care Institute for Excellence

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The strengths-based approach encourages cooperation among service recipients and providers, allowing them to carefully determine a course of action that best utilises everyone's skills and assets. It is stated that it focuses on the relationship that develops between people who are giving and receiving support, as well as the efforts that the person who needs help, makes (Ehlers and Muller 2020: 01). In Child and Youth Care (CYC), the strengths-based perspective offers a framework for assessing, supporting, and empowering children and adolescents so that they can realise their full potential (Schlechter, O'Brien, and Stewart 2019: 157).

Studies have concluded that the strengths-based approach has merit and suggested that the benefit of the strengths-based approach is that it never confines people to their traumas, issues, challenges, illnesses, or adversity, but instead views them as opportunities for growth and progress (Lewis, Chapin, and Rand 2020: 44). In CYC, the strengths-based approach is mainly about co-production, i.e. child and youth care workers (CYCWs) providing care, working in equal partnership with children and young people to design and deliver different holistic services (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2018).

Research has also proven that the strengths-based approach tackles a wide range of issues since it has been applied to case management (a Rehabilitation-Case model), education, community development, and working with mental health conditions (Allot *et al.* 2020: 10). The chapter will provide a context and the background of the study. The research problem, the aim of the study, the research methodology and the theoretical framework that provided direction to this study will also be presented.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The goal of helping professions has always been to deal with psychopathology and misbehaviour. When there was no emphasis on optimal development, well-being was described as the absence of pathology and distress. This approach was utilised by many helping professions, and the results revealed that focusing on and enforcing pathology promotes low expectations, results in dependence on outside resources, and inhibits people from realising their full potential (Dinishak 2022: 14). This meant that professionals interested in ensuring optimal growth and development needed to shift away from the disease-orientated paradigm and instead, focus on supporting development by emphasising individual strengths and abilities.

The research of Canda, Furman, and Canda (2019: 111) described the strengths-based approach as a basic concept and a common philosophy that guides how professionals interact with individuals. It is a method of approaching interventions that promote beliefs and behaviours associated with the practice of child and youth care (MacArthur, Rawan and Brownlee 2011: 06). This approach is a model of treatment and evaluation that takes advantage of a child's strengths in a range of developmental areas, such as peer interactions, school, and family (Daveney *et al.* 2020: 01).

The child and youth care field has a long history of using the strengths perspective to work towards youth development (Shaw and Gamble 2023: 22). However, studies have shown a lack of high-quality research evidence analysing the effectiveness and execution of the strengths-based approach. This has resulted in the strengths perspective remaining an approach or idea rather than a clear treatment model. However, an updated framework has provided detailed instructions for using the strengths perspective when working with children and families, which can be integrated into child and youth care work (Mimmo 2022: 10).

In the past, the strengths perspective was viewed as a values-driven approach to working with individuals rather than a framework for developing interventions (MacArthur, Rawan, and Brownlee 2011: 07). As a result, strengths-based interventions are usually defined using a resiliency paradigm and have not been significantly developed or implemented. Therefore, this research study aims to evaluate the value of the strengths-based approach in residential child and youth care facilities and further investigate how child and youth care workers use it in their interventions and programmes.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Gillison *et al.* (2019: 110), the idea that behavioural change interventions are most successful when they only focus on boosting people's innate strengths, as opposed to additionally addressing their flaws, has received attention in recent years. Several studies have concluded that the strength-based approach creates the illusion of skill, even for those who lack it. It is argued that the strength-based approach fails to address, examine, and monitor an individual's weaknesses, undermining their efficacy (Bu and Duan 2021: 53).

Other research studies highlighted that overused strengths become toxic (Mapp *et al.* 2019: 257). This means that even advantageous characteristics will become toxic if they are overused. Several authors have expressed that supporters of the strengths-based approach frequently highlight what it is not, or at the very least, how it varies from the more deficit-focused approach (Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown 2021: 417). However, in child and youth care, focusing on strengths is an important component of our developmental and therapeutic work

with children and adolescents. Therefore, this study will explore the value of the strengths-based approach in residential care, how child and youth care workers (CYCWs) utilise it and the challenges they experience when using it. Research on the strengths-based approach will help build a robust evidence base, supporting the development of therapeutic and effective programmes and interventions. It will also help professionals and researchers to fully understand the strengths-based approach as a therapeutic healing method.

A study by Staudt, Howard, and Drake (2001: 14) highlighted that the strengths-based approach's dimensions or goals are not sufficiently operationalised or measurable and that there is no empirical evidence to demonstrate its distinctiveness or efficacy. Additionally, studies with positive outcomes claimed that it was impossible to determine whether such outcomes were due to the strengths-based approach or the inclusion of extra resources (attribution difficulty) (Staudt, Howard, and Drake 2001: 14). Other authors argued that the strengths-based approach is frequently misunderstood, leading to confusing and pointless discussions on whether there is scientific evidence for the usefulness of the strength's perspective (Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown 2021: 419). This confirms that there is a need for a research study that will examine how the strengths-based approach may be utilised by a range of professionals in practice.

This study will address the significant research gap in the eThekweni area, where despite the presence of over ten child and youth care centres, there is a notable lack of research investigating the effectiveness of strengths-based approaches in child and youth care. Additionally, the current study will provide much-needed empirical evidence to support or refute the effectiveness of the strengths-based approach. By exploring this approach in the local context, this study aims to provide significant results and insight that will prompt critical thinking about the strengths-based approach, re-evaluate the assumptions and potentially challenge existing beliefs.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

To explore the value of the strengths-based approach used by child and youth care workers at residential child and youth care facilities in eThekweni.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the value of strengths-based work in residential care.
2. To explore how, when and under what circumstances do child and youth care workers apply strengths-based work in residential care.

3. To describe challenges experienced by child and youth care workers when applying strengths-based approaches.
4. To provide recommendations to improve strengths-based work in residential care.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research question: What is the value of the strengths-based approach in residential child and youth care facilities in eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal, and how can it be optimised for increased effectiveness in residential care settings?

1. What is the strengths-based work in residential care?
2. How and when do child and youth care workers apply strengths-based work in residential care?
3. What are the challenges experienced by child and youth care workers when applying strengths-based approaches?
4. What recommendations may apply to improve strengths-based work in residential care?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research study aims to explore the value of the strengths-based approach at residential child and youth care centres by analysing the lived experiences of professionals and the application of this approach in residential care. While previous studies have critiqued the strengths-based approach for being poorly defined and not significantly different from many conventional techniques (Bryant et al. 2021: 14), this study will a detailed evaluation of the concept of strengths-based work and concisely explain the advantages of this approach for residential care centres. The findings of this study should contribute to a deeper understanding of the application and challenges that professionals may encounter when utilising this approach.

Furthermore, a study on this approach will provide evidence for the effectiveness of strengths-based interventions, informing practice and guiding decisions in child and youth care centres. This research study will also help identify the best practices in implementing strengths-based approaches and help practitioners adopt effective strategies and interventions. Leveraging the insights of CYCWs who have directly applied the strengths-based approach will clarify the benefits and effectiveness of adopting this perspective as a treatment model for residential care centres. Their firsthand experiences will provide knowledge to guide other professionals in effectively implementing this approach.

The strengths-based approach is comprehensive and multidisciplinary, working with individuals to promote their well-being (Schutte and Malouff 2019: 11). Parkinson and Edwards (2023: 11)

have noted that the strengths perspective considers how organizations can flourish as well. Research on the strengths-based approach can facilitate collaboration among agencies and organisations, promoting a shared understanding of these approaches. Strengths-based work is important because it examines the environment, meaning that research in this area can drive change and development in child and youth care facilities across KwaZulu-Natal. Additionally, research on the strengths-based approach is crucial to inform the development of training programmes and professional development opportunities, enhancing practitioners' skills and knowledge. By conducting a study on the strengths-based approach in child and youth care, practitioners and researchers can work together to improve outcomes, inform practice, and contribute to the development of evidence-based interventions

It is evident that research shows that the future of strengths-based work is both promising and precarious (Schutte and Malouff 2019: 11). Research has also shown that strengths-based work improves children and youth's understanding and realisation of their strengths and capabilities, especially when they are dealing with several challenges, it assists them to overcome personal struggles (Racco 2009). This study will generate knowledge on how the CYCWS utilises the strengths-based approach in different interventions, programmes, and activities to ensure optimal growth and development of a young person in residential care. The strengths-based approach is applicable in many practice situations and demographics (Pattoni 2012: 130). This study will be of value to CYCWs because it will also offer guiding principles that shape the manner of viewing human behaviour. The alternative viewpoint may strengthen and improve strengths-based services, contribute to the theoretical understanding of this approach, increase credibility, and examine the challenges and barriers of implementing strengths-based approaches, thereby informing strategies to address these gaps.

1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.8.1 Strengths-based work - According to Madden (2020: 29) strengths-based work focuses and builds on the client's existing strengths, seeing them as resourceful and resilient when they are in adverse conditions. In Child and Youth Care, strengths-based work is about focusing on the child's strengths, interests and resilience. Child and Youth Care workers role in strengths-based work is to build positive relationships with young people, provide opportunities for skills-building and empower youth in decision-making.

1.8.2 Residential childcare - Residential childcare is a type of care where vulnerable children live with other children while being looked after by paid workers who either live somewhere or work in shifts. The team conducts work in the homes of the children and adolescents, using this environment as the context for their work (Ainsworth 2022: 04). This means that residential

childcare is a 24-hour care and support provided to children and young people in a group home or residential centre, where trained CYC professionals offer therapeutic and developmental interventions to promote holistic growth and development of young people.

1.8.3 Strengths - Niemiec (2019: 06) defined strengths as character traits or skills considered positive. Strengths include knowledge, attributes, skills, and talents. In Child and Youth Care, strengths are considered to be the positive qualities or skills that a young person possesses such as resilience, honesty and problem-solving skills.

1.8.4 Value - According to Inayyah, Nur and Simanjuntak (2020: 26) value is regarded as something that is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something. Value in the context of this study refers to the importance, worth and usefulness of the strengths-based approach

1.8.5 Child and youth care work - child and youth care (CYC) work is defined as “practice which focuses on the infant, child and adolescent, both normal and with special needs, within the context of the family, the community, and the life span” (Mhizha and Nhedzi 2023: 172). It is working directly with children and their families to promote physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. Child and Youth Care work involves providing support, guidance and mentorship to help young people build resilience and life-skills

1.8.6. Holistic development- According to Andam (2018: 1), holistic development concerns the overall growth, development, and well-being of a child, and it focuses on all the domains of development that are crucial as the child grows up. A holistic approach acknowledges that children are composed of interconnected parts, including the mental, physical, socio-emotional, and spiritual domains. In Child and Youth Care, holistic development is a comprehensive approach that addressed multiple aspects of a young person’s development including physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cognitive needs.

1.8.7 Child and youth care worker- A child and youth care worker is a professional social service provider who works with children and young people to offer comprehensive care and therapeutic, educational, recreational, and developmental programs that support and enhance their overall growth and development. This includes offering management support and supervision services (Mhizha and Nhedzi 2023: 172). Mhizha and Nhedzi (2023: 172) further stated that the role of a registered professional child and youth care worker depends on the programme or setting. A child and youth care worker can serve as a houseparent or manager, resident counsellor, psychiatric technician (psych techs), youth counsellor, case manager and

caseworker. Child and youth care workers focus on direct services, but can also be found in operational, training, administrative, and supervisory roles.

1.8.8. Life space work- “The two words, ‘life’ and ‘space’ are simple, but when used together “take on a far greater complexity” (Allsopp 2006: 2)”. Allsopp (2020: 55), further highlighted that “child and youth care work is done at the molecular level; it doesn’t occur at arm’s-length or in a sterilised environment”. Child and youth care workers interact with children and young people in their daily lives, the space “belongs to” them but turns into a shared encounter area. In addition, Gharabaghi and Stuart (2013: 54) stated that life space work is associated with the quality of the worker's presence at the moment when a child's life is developing. The concept of life space work in CYC encompasses using daily life experiences and interactions as opportunities for growth, learning, and therapeutic interventions.

1.9 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE (CYC)

Child and youth care is an emerging profession in South Africa (SA) and has proven to cater for the developmental needs of vulnerable children and youth. Zondeka (2021: 02) highlighted that the professionalisation and distinctiveness of CYC have long been valued by CYCWs in South Africa. CYC has a long history and has assumed many different forms worldwide. This has led to the professionalisation and regulation of the CYC profession in South Africa. According to Allsopp (2020: 05), it is regulated by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and aligned with the local scope of practice articulated in the legislation.

Child and youth care professionals work in the life space of children and young people and have also been proven that they work well with families and in community settings where they practice as community-based CYCWs (Allsopp 2020: 03). This profession was established to address the large number of challenges impacting children and youth in the country, creating groups of vulnerable and at-risk children in need of care and support. South African children and young people “continue to face multiple forms of deprivation” (Omotoso and Koch 2018: 431). According to Allsopp (2020: 05), a report released by Statistics South Africa titled, Child Poverty in South Africa: A Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis highlighted that 6 out of 10 (62,1%) children who are aged 0-17 are multidimensionally poor.

According to the report, a child is classified as being multidimensionally poor when she/he is living in a household that cannot provide at least three of the seven elements of poverty—health, housing, nutrition, protection, education, information, water, and sanitation. Children who experience multidimensional poverty will miss out on key aspects of their life which usually helps them develop and reach their full potential. Mhizha and Nhedzi (2023: 172) further highlighted that children and young people in child and youth care centres (CYCCs) represent

one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in South Africa. These dire situations of children and youth in South Africa drew attention to the inadequacies in services offered to this population.

According to (Allsopp 2020: 04), the CYC profession has always existed to provide services for children and youth who are vulnerable, orphaned, or at risk, as well as for their families. CYCWs are expected to create spaces that are in line with notions of safety, normality and therapeutic benefits (Digney and Smart 2020). It is also noted that the country requires “novel approaches to the provision of social services for children to realise its legislated rights imperatives” (Allsopp *et al.* 2018: 39). This led to the creation of different approaches, models and theories to heal children and young people and to facilitate their growth and development.

1.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Empowerment gives individuals influence and control over decisions and actions that impact their lives. This theory highlights that providing individuals or groups with freedom, responsibility, and resources can lead to improved performance and life satisfaction (Rachmad 2022: 01). It is stated that empowerment theory seeks to enhance people's lives by giving them greater private, social, and legislative power. When assisting people in developing their autonomy and sense of control over their lives, the empowerment theory employs different intervention techniques and ideas. This theory also provides a method that enables professionals to boost individuals' capacity for self-help.

Shin, Perdue and Pandelaere (2020: 72) further stated that this theory enables children and young people not to be seen as passive, helpless, “victims” to be rescued but instead as self-empowered individuals going through a crisis in which professionals act as the facilitator rather than a rescuer in the process. The empowerment theory is one of the theories that include elements of the strengths-based approach. An essential commonality of empowerment theory and the strengths-based approach is that it prioritises an individual's strengths or skills over his or her weaknesses. These theories enable people to achieve their best aspirations and goals, individually and collectively.

The benefit of the empowerment theory is that individuals may gain a deeper comprehension of the decision-making process, gain the self-assurance to influence decisions that impact their lives and work to voice their concerns (Shin, Perdue, and Pandelaere 2020: 792). Christens (2019: 10) stated that when empowerment is understood and properly managed, it promotes self-efficacy and creates a positive cycle of action and satisfaction. The link between the strengths-based approach and the empowerment theory is that both perspectives emphasise changing from a passive condition to a more active state of control. This means that individuals

move from a position of relative helplessness to one of control over their life and destiny. Self-determination has been considered the main key component of both the strength's perspective and the empowerment process, and the environment plays a huge role in shaping the change process of an individual.

According to (Rachmad 2022: 07), the empowerment theory highlights the importance of empowerment in reaching optimum performance and well-being. This theory offers a detailed framework for understanding and promoting empowerment in several areas of development. Furthermore, it is stated that the empowerment theory allows organisations and individuals to strengthen their empowerment skills, develop problem-solving skills, and improve their performance and well-being.

1.11 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Snyder (2019: 333) defined research methodology as a process by which a researcher carefully plans a study to produce accurate and reliable findings that meet the study's goals and objectives. The research methodology describes the methods and procedures used to gather and assess data for the research project. It provides the tools the researcher must use to conduct the study (Allan and Skinner 2020: 12).

This study adopted a phenomenological research approach to understand the value of a strengths-based approach in residential child and youth care facilities and explored how child and youth care workers apply the strengths-based approach in residential care. Eighteen registered child and youth care workers (CYCWs) were selected to participate in the study. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain crucial data. Each interview lasted about 30-40 minutes. The participants were allowed to express their opinions and personal experiences regarding the research topic. Data was collected until saturation.

The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder to obtain vital and relevant information, and all ethical guidelines were upheld in this study. Data and all identifying details of the participants were kept anonymous. Pseudonyms were employed throughout reporting, and no identifiable data about the participants was published; their names were only accessible to the researcher. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the information acquired from the interview process. According to Braun and Clarke (2019: 02), thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that entails reviewing a data set (such as transcripts from in-depth interviews or focus groups) and finding themes based on meaning patterns.

1.12 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The structure of the dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1 – Overview of the Study

The introduction, background of the study, research problem, scope of the study, research questions and objectives, were discussed in the first chapter.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter reviews related literature. The strengths-based approach as a model was discussed and how it has been applied in other contexts. The elements of the strengths-based approach and the limitations that have been discovered by other studies will also be addressed.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The research methodology followed in this study will be explained, including the research design, research setting, sampling, recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis tools and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter provides a contextual background. The results will be interpreted, including the descriptive analysis that answers the research questions.

Chapter 5 – Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

In this final chapter, findings and conclusions are summarised and recommendations will be made for future studies.

1.13 CONCLUSION

Chapter One provided a summary of the research topic. The problem statement, research objectives and questions, the significance of the study, and a brief overview were also discussed. This was followed by a description of the theoretical framework, which was used as the basis of the study, along with its importance. An abridged overview of the methodology utilised was included. This subsequent chapter will comprise a review of the literature relating to the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The first chapter presented an outline of the research study. An analysis of prior research will be presented in this chapter. It is stated that a good literature review can corroborate a suitable research question, theoretical framework, and study method. The main objectives of a literature review, according to Paul and Criado (2020: 10), are to familiarise the researcher with the current state of knowledge on the topic, to present an outline of the main conclusions and discussions on the topic as well as to indicate knowledge gaps and open problems that the research can address.

This literature review then gives context for the research study and explains why the study is necessary. The application of the strengths-based approach has drawn a lot of interest in the field of positive psychology research due to questions regarding its efficacy, how various professionals use it, and whether there is sufficient empirical data to back up the approach's successes. This literature review focuses on the elements of the strengths-based approach, the development of strengths, limitations of the strength's perspective and the different types of strengths-based approaches.

2.2 WHAT IS RESIDENTIAL CARE?

Residential care is defined as "any group living arrangement in which children are cared for by paid staff in a facility specifically designated for the purpose" (Frost and Mills 2019: 04). It covers a wide range of settings, from modest group homes to temporary shelters to larger institutions such as orphanages or children's homes. According to Brown *et al.* (2019: 16), residential care should typically only be offered temporarily. However, in rare circumstances, certain types of residential care might serve as a longer-term care option for children. Residential care is an option for children and young people who cannot stay with their biological family, in places of foster care or kinship care, which are the most preferred social care services. Residential care arrangements are governed by court orders (Brown *et al.* 2019: 16).

2.2.1 What is a Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC)?

A child and youth care centre provides children with care and protection outside of their own homes (Agere 2014: 13). In this placement, children are under the supervision of qualified CYCWs (child and youth care workers) and share bedrooms in a facility or cottage that meets all of their basic needs. CYCWs are required to create programmes that are developmental and therapeutic and meet the requirements of children and young people. Agere (2014: 14) further stated that the therapeutic and developmental programmes provided by CYCCs address the needs of children and youth who exhibit psychological, emotional, and behavioural challenges.

The role of CYCWs is to teach children and young people the skills and abilities required for self-care and successful reintegration into society.

2.2.2 Why residential care?

Child and youth care centres were established to provide safe environments for young people, ensuring safety and security, optimum growth and development, and facilitating their restoration (Wanglar 2022: 382). CYCWs exist to support children who are at risk due to abuse, neglect, or orphanhood in a safe and therapeutic setting, to promote their physical and mental well-being. Residential childcare is a response to several challenges. Parker (2021: 11) asserted that in some cases, it is already too late to stop child harm from occurring, but it is at this moment that a different kind of intervention is essential. Children and young people who have already experienced neglect and other forms of abuse in addition to living in dangerous neighbourhoods and witnessing violence and drug use, need assistance as well (Parker 2021: 11). The Children's Act (38 of 2005) specifies that children who are orphaned, homeless, or unsafe at home or in their communities can be placed in alternative care. The Children's Court supervises this procedure and uses the investigation and recommendations from the report of the external social workers to determine the best placement for the child (Parker 2021: 11).

According to Abraham *et al.* (2022: 12), residential care facilities offer a variety of programmes to fulfil the therapeutic and developmental requirements of children and young people. Children and young adolescents displaying different emotional, behavioural, and psychological challenges can start their healing and recovery journeys in residential care facilities because they provide a safe and nurturing environment that can cater for their developmental needs. According to Abraham *et al.* (2022: 12), the objective is for these young people to acquire the skills and abilities they need to manage themselves and successfully reintegrate into society. As important characteristics of healing and progress, core interventions are focused on identity, belonging, and self-discovery.

Rockhill and Gelsthorpe (2020: 77) highlighted that other essential components include setting academic goals, acclimating to a structured environment, and learning routines. Child and youth care facilities are committed to defending the best interests of children and young people in need and fostering awareness of their condition. To do this and bring about long-lasting change for all South African children, care and protection services are paired with an essential advocacy effort. Kendrick (2022: 112) asserted that CYCCs are still at the forefront of developing new programmatic approaches to the escalating complexity of needs demonstrated by young people in residential care. It is said that many residential care plans provided by CYCCs are designed to provide each child with a thorough yet individualised care plan. Reunification of families and

community reintegration are the objectives of these programmes. Child and youth care workers collaborate holistically with children and their families to "be the gateway between brokenness and healing."

The ultimate goal of CYCW is to meet the social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and educational needs of each child in a loving, safe, and therapeutic environment that will enable children in their care to realise their full potential and, in doing so, develop and empower them to one day become significant members of society (Green, Warwick, and Moran 2021: 23). Many CYCCs regard empowerment as a key to social and emotional wellbeing and development of children. This will enable a sense of pride and dignity (Johannisen, Van Wyk and Yates 2021: 377).

Additionally, the focus of CYCWs has changed over time to reflect modern best practices. Creating a nurturing and secure environment for children and young people to thrive is still a crucial aspect of Child and Youth Care Work. Green, Warwick, and Moran (2021: 23) stated that the ultimate goal is to support families so that children and young people can return to their rightful homes. It is stated that CYCWs engage with families and children to provide early intervention and preventative services, ensuring that children do not have to spend a lot of time in the welfare system. Sometimes, they don't need to enter the system at all. A multidisciplinary team assesses and creates an individual developmental plan for each child determined to require care and protection, after which they are placed at a CYCC (Western Cape government 2022).

2.3 THE ROLE OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORKERS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES

According to the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP 2016: 04), "the focus of professional child and youth care work is on the newborn, child, and adolescent within the family, community, and life span; this includes both children who are normally developing and those with special needs". The SACSSP (2016: 04) further explained that the scope of practice is the restrictions under which professionals who have met the necessary registration requirements for their profession may operate. The guidelines in Government Notice No. 838, which was released on October 31, 2014, in Government Gazette No. 38135, specified the boundaries of practice for child and youth care workers, auxiliary workers, and student CYCWs (SACSSP 2016: 12).

In line with the Code of Ethics of the profession, which applies to child and youth care workers (a professional category of registration), Child and youth care workers (CYCWs) oversee the growth, care and development of children and young people in residential care, guaranteeing the fulfilment of their requirements for survival, cognitive development, emotional, spiritual, and

physical needs (Allsopp 2020: 24). In residential care, the main duty is to provide care and manage a child's behaviour, either individually or in groups. The International Child and Youth Care Network (2000: 45) emphasised that initiatives for children and youth must be designed and implemented based on their known developmental requirements.

Residential CYCWs are responsible for the development and maintenance of planned activities (International Child and Youth Care Network 2000: 45). According to the International Child and Youth Care Network (2000: 46) the main areas of attention for CYCWs are developmental play, child and youth care work administration, and life-space work implementation. These duties ensure the smooth running of child and youth care work. When providing routine in child and youth care, the CYCWs ensure that behaviour control and support approaches are applied correctly. According to research by Kendrick (2022: 52), working in residential childcare involves playing developmental roles and carrying out fundamental child and youth care work to promote children's development and resilience and to build their confidence and self-esteem.

Daily responsibilities may also include guiding young people in the direction of advisory resources, recognising and investigating concerns regarding young people enrolled in different programmes (Beker and Arieli 2013: 77). Other residential duties include assessing the requirements of the young person's environment and the community where the projects are being implemented. By doing this, the normalisation principle which grants young people the freedom to live their lives like other young people in the community is practised (Kendrick 2015: 04).

Additionally, Beker and Arieli (2013: 77) emphasised that CYCWs also prioritise keeping private documents, preparing and delivering reports, supervising new employees, including volunteers and presenting workshops in community and educational settings. CYCWs also focus on collaborating with other institutions, including, community organisations, and schools. One of the crucial roles of CYCWs is to provide counselling for children and young people and their families. Child and youth care workers are essential to the healthcare system since they provide advocacy and lobbying to children, adolescents, and their families (Barford and Whelton 2010: 271).

Barford and Whelton (2010: 271) further stated that child and youth care workers are crucial in supporting and offering guidance to children, young people, and their families. Since child and youth care workers frequently deal with young people who struggle with social, mental, emotional, or behavioural challenges, empathy and caring skills are essential for this role (Barford and Whelton 2010: 271). According to Brown, Winter, and Carr (2018: 65), CYCWs use a variety of knowledge, real-world experience, and interpersonal communication skills to

improve the lives of young people as residential child and youth care work is about ensuring holistic growth and development for young people.

According to Williams and Lalor (2001: 06), residential CYCWs are responsible for developing, implementing, and supervising behavioural, recreational, social, and life skills programmes for youth; they also assist in individual and group programming activities in a variety of areas, such as education, sexuality, anger management, self-esteem building, and social skills. Residential child and youth care work allows CYCWs to launch appropriate engagement programmes, where the young person is introduced and assessed individually so that relevant programmes or interventions can be created to respond to the developmental needs of the young people. Furthermore, CYCWs also ensure that the young person engages in the right disengagement activities or programmes. This helps young people to prepare for life outside the CYC centre (Williams and Lalor 2001: 06).

Additionally, Brown, Winter, and Carr (2018: 65) stated that child and youth care workers may have a diverse group of young people, and their daily responsibilities may vary based on the demands of a particular young person. They further stated that regular daily responsibilities may involve analysing young people's background data, conducting interviews to gather case histories, creating intake reports, evaluating the needs and relevant skill and strengths of young people, helping them make decisions and creating action plans while offering the required support and assistance (Barford and Whelton 2010: 271).

The National Association of Child Care Workers (2014: 33) emphasised that child and youth care workers have an important duty in social care, including referring children and youth to other social services or helping them to find and use community resources such as housing, work, transportation, medical, legal, and other services. According to Barford and Whelton (2010: 272), CYCWs also play a part in the selection and admission of young children to appropriate programmes. They also oversee the implementation of various community and social service programmes, including youth service, substance abuse treatment, and life skills workshops, all while working under the supervision of social services or medical professionals (National Association of Child Care Workers 2014: 33).

According to Linton, Fox and Forster (1986: 21), CYCWs manage and assess young people's development and ensure a clear follow-up process when issues are to be addressed. They also carry out short-term projects and interventions. Linton, Fox and Forster (1986: 21) further stated that CYCWs play a crucial role in assessing the efficacy of treatment programmes by monitoring young peoples' behavioural shifts and responses to interventions. They also keep in touch with other social service organisations and medical professionals who work with children and young

people to exchange information and get input on their overall development. They are also involved in arranging volunteer work for healthcare facilities, human service organisations, and organisations in the arts and sports (Linton and Forster 2003: 21).

The research of Fulcher (2003: 73) stated that CYCWs frequently interact with a broad collection of young people therefore they must have strong interactional skills to ensure that adolescents of all ages and their families understand the suggested courses of action (Fulcher 2003: 73). Residential CYCWs have a special way of interacting with young people and their families, and they ensure that their language is age and developmentally appropriate for children and young people. Child and Youth Care Workers have additional responsibilities because of the unique needs of young people, which may include behavioural, cognitive, or emotional issues (Gharabaghi 2008: 185).

According to Gharabaghi (2014: 185), managing individual and group therapy sessions is one of the responsibilities associated with residential CYC work. Residential childcare work is about putting behaviour management plans into action and providing crisis and suicide intervention services. In addition, several Child and Youth Care professionals have received training in helping children and young people who battle addiction (Gharabaghi 2014: 186). The National Association of Child Care Workers (2014: 34) stated that this may entail taking on new responsibilities including managing drug addiction treatment programmes. Furthermore, their responsibility is to address the physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and educational needs of the children and to maintain orderly, clean, therapeutic and developmental environments and facilities. It is also to give children a predictable, consistent, and structured environment.

According to research by the National Association of Child Care Workers (2014: 34), CYCCs must be placed where children and young people can reach their full potential and prepare for adulthood. Child and youth care workers in residential settings assist the family and children develop holistically, by implementing programmes that respond to their developmental needs. They provide necessary assistance to the family to recognise and embrace the family as an essential component of the child's existence; to share parental responsibilities for the child's upbringing; and to encourage communication between the child and parents.

Research by Weisman (2010: 125) highlighted that CYCWs can maintain therapeutic relationships that are meaningful and effective with all young people. They also foster a mutually comfortable and reciprocal involvement between staff and young people, offer positive and emotionally supportive counselling and introduce them to new activities and experiences. It is claimed that they exhibit knowledge of the behavioural and emotional needs and issues that young people face, which enables them to deal with young people who are in crisis, adhere

consistently and accurately to the group's guidelines and each young person's treatment plan, and actively interact with them while staying aware of their whereabouts at all times (Weisman 2010: 125).

According to Hardy (2012: 88), working in child and youth care requires careful observation and recording skills. This means that CYCWs document significant information about events, activities, routines, appointments, contacts, etc., and complete documentation as events occur or at the end of the shift in clear, behavioural terms. Observed data on young people's behaviour, interactions, and incidents are recorded in a clear, concise, and objective manner in the logbook. As part of the overall therapy strategy, Hardy (2012: 88) added that they also prioritise starting, planning, supervising, and/or engaging in group activities to assist young people with social work and to build helpful relationships with them.

In residential care, CYCWs are responsible for consistently rewarding adaptive and positive behaviour, enforcing natural or logical consequences for undesirable behaviour, and acting appropriately in a disruptive conflict using a flexible, non-coercive approach (Brend 2020: 105). Brend (2020: 105) further emphasised that the CYCWs' role deal with disruptive or unwanted behaviour consistently and appropriately, avoiding drawn-out disputes or discussions. According to Kendrick (2015: 07), there is strong evidence that residential care can effectively meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people. The professionals who care for children are the most important resources, and they must be trained and supported in order to properly engage with children and develop positive and loving relationships. Residential care can benefit children's growth, resilience, confidence, and self-esteem. Scott (2024) emphasised that residential childcare efforts provide a therapeutic setting in which vulnerable children receive individual attention, support, and education appropriate to their unique experiences and challenges.

2.4 ELEMENTS OF THE STRENGTHS- PERSPECTIVE

The strengths-based approach is one of many methods used by professionals across various fields to shift the emphasis of their work with people from deficiencies to strengths (Lerner & Benson 2003). The strengths perspective is an approach that is known to be multidisciplinary and holistic. One of the main elements of the strengths-based approach is that it is an "approach" rather than a "process" or a goal. This means that the strengths-based method was discovered as a way of dealing with certain situations or problems. This method of doing work involves a flexible and adaptable approach that does not rely on a fixed set of actions and decisions. This approach allows for tailoring activities and programmes to the unique strengths and needs of each child (Sawyer and Coles 2020: 23).

Sawyer and Cole (2020: 23) further highlighted that the strengths-based approach is not about the results of what was implemented or 'what professionals do,' but it is more about 'how they do things. Working collaboratively provides young people with the opportunity to be involved in discussions and decision-making. The strengths-based approach, according to Sabo & Trudeau (2020: 17), has three crucial key components. These components guarantee that strengths-based techniques are applied correctly. The identification and use of strengths is the first component. This component is important because it is the first step in ensuring that the professional is not concentrating on the child's weaknesses or disorders.

The professional must evaluate all factors that are important in the identification of strengths, placing special emphasis on any positive traits that can aid in the child's recovery and general growth. The second component is reframing issues as opportunities and challenges. This means that the professional must not focus on the negative things that may disempower or demotivate a young person. Professionals must ensure that they shift away from a fixed, negative, or disempowering viewpoint. The final component is acknowledging the child's competence in their life, which is important for advancement and optimal development (Sabo and Trudeau 2020: 17).

The strengths-based approach can be used in any profession, intervention, setting, or level of need. Wiium and Dimitrova (2019: 148) stated that the strengths-based approach is advantageous in supporting community development because it identifies personal, family, and community strengths and helps the individual connect with them. The most important component of the strength's perspective is its flexibility; every intervention may incorporate some of its elements depending on the circumstances or available resources (Wiium and Dimitrova 2019: 14). Madrid (2020: 121) asserted that the strengths perspective allows one to look at individuals, families, and communities uniquely.

The strengths perspective further emphasises the importance of viewing everyone in the context of their capacities, abilities, potential, visions, principles, and desires, regardless of how broken they are from challenging circumstances or trauma. It takes into account people's skills and expertise. According to Nelson-Becker *et al.* (2020: 327), the strengths-based approach employs a naturalistic, normative approach. This implies that it is focused on "client competence" and considers each person responsible for his or her actions and recovery. Nelson-Becker *et al.* (2020: 327) further explained that to provide care, support, and inclusion that is strengths-based, professionals must first consider what each person can accomplish with their abilities and resources, as well as what other people accomplish in their social

networks and the communities in which they live. People must be treated as experts who can control their own lives, rather than objects to be cared for.

A study by Madrid (2020: 20) confirmed that working together allows individuals to be partners in their care rather than consumers of care services. The "wellbeing principle" and the emphasis on boosting "personal individual wellbeing" placed on professionals performing any care and support duties are both highlighted and applied by the strengths-based approach. A strengths-based approach acknowledges the person's condition but directs the attention to good aspects of their lives and neighbourhoods (Nelson-Becker *et al.* 2020: 327). The principles behind it include the ideas that people are resourceful and able to solve their problems if given the chance and support to do so, and that the social care relationship is one of teamwork (Pulla 2017: 97).

Another important element of the strengths-based approach is that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach nor is it prescriptive. This means that it focuses on an individual's developmental needs and should be tailored to fit the developmental requirements of that individual. Strengths-based approaches acknowledge that the person is aware of their circumstances, attention and assistance they need. According to Pulla (2017: 97), it also strives to guarantee that the individual is always at the centre of any intervention, is supported to communicate their thoughts about their condition and may contribute with the help of their family and friends.

In strengths-based practice, the individual is given as much autonomy and authority as possible and is encouraged to provide ideas and solutions so they can lead the best life possible. Strengths-based approaches in child and youth care cover a range of interventions and support techniques. Pulla (2017: 102) emphasised that it is important to understand that applying a strengths-based approach does not mean weaknesses are ignored rather an emphasis is on strengths and that the strengths must be the starting point of any intervention or programme. Rapp *et al.* (2008: 79) suggested six standards for identifying a strengths-based approach.

Goal orientation: The client needs to set objectives.

Strength's assessment: A client evaluates and recognises their abilities and assets. Eco-friendly resources: Establish connections or let the person create connections to relevant resources in their immediate environment. The resources could be individuals, groups, schools, or organisations.

Different methods are used first for different situations: In solution-focused therapy, clients list their objectives and assets. In strengths-based case management, clients first use an appropriate assessment to look at their own strengths.

Explicit methods are used for identifying the client and environmental strengths for goal attainment: These strategies will vary based on the client's situation for each of the strengths-based approaches.

The relationship is hope-inducing: Hope is fostered by identifying one's abilities and forming relationships (with other individuals, organisations, or communities).

Meaningful choice: Everyone is an expert regarding their capabilities, assets, and aspirations. The practitioner has to encourage the client to make well-informed decisions and to help them make better decisions.

A study by MacArthur *et al.* (2011: 07) highlighted that these standards are also considered in child and youth care work when evaluating interventions, programmes and activities that will be utilised in individualised developmental plans or group assessments. These standards assist CYCWs in determining if the programme is strengths-based and developmentally appropriate for the individual child or group. The standards also assist CYCWs in selecting an appropriate type of strengths-based approach to apply in a child's situation.

2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHS-BASED WORK

Strengths-based practice has been guided and implemented using some concepts that social scientists, researchers, and practitioners have developed over time (Hammond 2010: 291). Multiple researchers have studied this perspective and concluded that the strength perspective demonstrates that every individual has potential and that their unique talents and abilities will define who they are and determine how their life progresses, rather than their limitations (Epstein *et al.* 2003: 17). Strength-based practitioners use this perspective to inculcate hope and optimism by focusing on strengths. Additionally, the language used shapes the world, affecting not just the children, adolescents, and their families but also the carers (Hammond 2020: 291).

The goal of the strengths-based approach is not the elimination of issues, but the transformation of the individual. Hammond (2020:291) further stated that the strength-based approach emphasises that everyone wants to achieve success, is curious about their surroundings, and wants to give back to their communities. It all comes down to developing the ability to deal with any scenario that may arise in the future and the ability to solve the issue at hand. According to Semigina (2019: 96), to recognise their worth people need to perceive themselves at their best level. The ability to capitalise on one's strengths allows one to increase that value and showcase positive qualities rather than weaknesses. Strengths-based work is crucial since it focuses on the environment and the individual. It also assists in identifying any limitations the person may

have, allowing professionals to provide thorough treatment and appropriate interventions for their developmental needs (Semigina 2019: 96).

Research by Herfelt, Poulsen, and Hoang (2020: 89) highlighted that strengths-based work is valuable because it starts with a bigger picture and emphasises a person's assets and skills throughout the change process. It avoids labelling, assumes that children and their families are capable of providing for themselves, and sees professionals more as partners than as specialists in the process of change. The approach focuses on working with, rather than fixing, it prioritises health over dysfunction, and it chooses fullness and well-being over negative labels and diagnosis (Dao *et al.* 2019: 98).

Dao *et al.* (2019: 98) further stated that focusing on one's strengths rather than weaknesses empowers people, providing a new perspective to view their lives. This approach fosters resilience, enabling individuals to perform better in their family and community. Resilience is the primary goal, offering the young person an assessment plan and prevention strategies. Additional advantages of increased resilience include feeling unique, important, and optimistic, as well as realising that life is a journey. The skills that young people acquire include goal setting, expectation-management, growth-promoting stress management, and the ability to face different challenging situations rather than avoiding them. Intervention strategies that are client-centred and relationship-focused are implemented through strengths-based work. Research by Denegri, Cymbal, and Catrone (2023:09) highlighted that the strength-based approach sees humans as constructors and creators rather than as flawed or incompetent. It does not ignore deficiencies or vulnerabilities but serves as a strategy that fosters confidence and competence in young people. Children and adolescents are able to develop strong social skills, allowing them to seek assistance and support when necessary.

Young people are more aware of what is in their control and what is not. According to Foot and Hopkins (2010), spending time with people who are important to them helps young people be more supportive of others. The strengths-perspective encourages communication between children and young people and social support systems, such as community members or family, to enhance progress. In addition, Linsang *et al.* (2023: 15), stated that a strengths-based approach fosters capacity and encourages more accessibility, inclusivity, diversity, and equity for children and families in the educational system. Ellis *et al.* (2022: 95) highlighted that it is possible to design and implement solutions that will better assist learning and holistic development by learning to recognise and value the "individual strengths, aspirations, and capacities" of children. This method provides a step forward from the more traditional, deficit-based approach used in Western Educational Systems.

Furthermore, Fox *et al.* (2023: 396) emphasised that strengths-based work doesn't need to make the limitation the intervention's main focus, as this approach collaboratively examines an individual's talents and circumstances. The strengths-based approach enables individuals to identify and focus on their most important qualities. By utilising these good characteristics, people can effectively navigate and overcome hardship. This method promotes empowerment and self-efficacy, both of which are essential for resilience and overall well-being. Additionally, research by Pulla (2017: 99) indicates that the strengths-based approach examines both the individual and their environment, focusing on obstacles and ways a person can develop positively in that environment. These limitations occur when a person is forced to deal with social, personal, or cultural issues.

Furthermore, it can be inferred that strengths-based care is advantageous for a wide range of mental conditions. There is proof that this approach can help people with depression or anxiety, and it can also help them feel more confident and boost their self-esteem (Pulla 2017: 99). A study by Manthey *et al.* (2011: 126), highlighted that the strengths-based approach can help individuals who are recovering from trauma. Many symptoms associated with these conditions can be eased by increasing resilience. Families may benefit from a strengths-based approach to counselling since it can help reframe issues and promote constructive communication. Individuals can learn to see how their strengths, contribute to the relationship and discover their partner's or family member's strengths (Manthey *et al.* 2011: 126).

The study also highlighted that strengths-based therapy has been proven in research to be a successful treatment for several diseases and as an early intervention for mental health conditions like psychosis. Strengths-based therapy, like all therapeutic modalities, is not the best fit for everyone, a well-rounded strengths-based treatment strategy will emphasise a person's strengths in the context of their total well-being (Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown 2021: 22). The goal of strengths-based approaches is to lower risk and increase stability for young people. Strengths-based programmes and interventions seek to improve families' resiliency and general well-being. To provide children and young people greater control over the support they receive, strengths-based approaches promote their involvement in decision-making alongside their families (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2018:11). Although the strengths-based approach is not a novel concept, it still requires continued research, development, and refinement to enhance its overall efficacy and ensure its optimal implementation in various contexts.

2.6 STRENGTHS VS PATHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

A study by Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021: 402) suggested that the pathology-oriented perspective emphasises the importance of the individual's issues and pathology. In contrast, the strengths perspective is about uncovering the individual's strengths and skills throughout the treatment process with the primary goal of preserving the individual's autonomy, resilience, decision-making ability, and welfare. According to Davis and Museus (2019: 11), the pathology perspective only focuses on a person's problems and seeks specific solutions to those problems.

Furthermore, Davis and Museus (2019: 11) noted that while the pathology perspective is helpful for immediate and uncomplicated problems, it is less effective when used for more complicated issues. It results in short-term solutions which do not adequately address the real problems over the long term (Warburton and Bredin 2019: 2044). As a result, the idea that "the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem" can be used to understand the strengths perspective. The research of Suarez-Balcazar (2020: 261), however, revealed that it is important to understand that the strengths-based approach considers the reality that when a problem takes precedence over a person's life and becomes the key focus of attention, people become dependent on helping professionals, which lowers their expectations and prevents them from making positive changes in their lives.

This means that the strengths-based approach avoids the downside of problem-centric thinking, which leads to dependency and limits individuals. In child and youth care, certain programmes or interventions are designed for a few months therefore the strengths perspective is suitable because it ensures independence, daily improvement and optimal growth and development of a young person. It is stated that by supporting and creating a path for the development of capabilities, the strengths-based approach alters the narrative surrounding the issue (Aschew *et al.* 2020: 102). Simmons (2012: 12) stated that practitioners using a strengths-based approach can evaluate a young person's innate strengths without having to list them. The research of Bryant *et al.* (2021: 14) demonstrated that the strengths-based approach is more successful than traditional methods, which often identify or diagnose qualities and abilities as limitations.

The strengths-based approach is a way of rejecting negative labels that people in need may have been accustomed to or accepted. This perspective helps them to feel empowered to change. Without a doubt, the deficit language negatively impacts the lives of vulnerable people (Bryant *et al.* 2021: 14). The strengths approach, on the other hand, instils optimism in people by emphasising past and current successes, it lays the foundation for appropriate expectations

(Bryant *et al.* 2021: 14). It reduces power and authority restrictions in various contexts by empowering the people to become the authority on what has worked, what hasn't, and what could work for them (Bullen *et al.* 2023: 53).

According to Lee *et al.* (2023: 09), it has been proven that helping professionals have tried to address the needs and problems within a family or community by using deficit-based techniques and individuals were negatively affected by using this perspective. This approach gave families and communities a sense of vulnerability, disappointment, and low expectations. Furthermore, Lee *et al.* (2023: 10) highlighted that one key negative factor of deficit pathology is that it usually intervenes after the problem has occurred rather than proactive prevention. The use of a strengths-based approach is more appropriate for community-based engagements since it enables professionals to create efficient programmes that will minimise risk and vulnerabilities.

As strengths-based approaches are used more often nowadays, research on their effectiveness has increased. According to Lee *et al.* (2023: 10), several research studies have proven that deficit-based programmes are far less successful than those that emphasise the children's and youth's strengths since they concentrate on what they do incorrectly. Furthermore, Heinbach *et al.* (2019: 49) highlighted that the traditional approach, which focuses on limitations, limits opportunities for creating solutions because it focuses on labelling. The problem with the deficit perspective is that it usually highlights "cant's" rather than "cans," which hinders the clear understanding of a person's unique skills and abilities. In addition, the method relies on pre-established templates or forms rather than customising solutions and disregards the potential that arises from challenges (Heinbach *et al.* 2019: 49).

Heinbach *et al.* (2019: 49) asserted that the majority of problem-solving techniques start with identifying what is wrong, then, they analyse the causes, select goals to address the causes, make plans to achieve the goals, carry out the plans, and evaluate whether the problem has been solved. On the other hand, the strengths approach, according to Carales and Lopez (2020: 103) offers a strong foundation for addressing the primary objective of community-based mental health services, which assists people in taking meaningful and long-term control of their lives.

They further stated that the strengths-based approach emphasises building connections based on trust and cooperation. It gives individuals agency, fosters cooperation to achieve common goals, and taps into individual motivational and hopeful resources which bring about long-lasting change through experiential learning. According to Sebastian (2014: 291), when it comes to describing the young person's hopes for the future, the young person alone has the final say. It

is, therefore, important that the young person and the CYCW collaborate to identify problems and develop solutions.

The problem-based method only concentrates on the young person's solution to the problem and the CYC practitioner's role in providing a feasible answer. According to Sebastin (2014: 291), the goals of the strength-based approach are constrained by the inventiveness of the young person and CYC practitioner. It is stated that evaluation is crucial in strengths-based work since it is an ongoing process in which the young person continually re-evaluates the goals from a subjectivist angle. This approach motivates people to use their strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses and areas that require work, which helps people understand the value that they can bring by being authentic (Sebastin 2014: 291). Research by Francis (2014: 264) also claimed that the strengths-based approach in social care has a high level of relevance in the modern era given the development of numerous societal concerns. Francis (2014: 264) made a compelling argument that the evolution of this approach is in synthesis with the current practices but a step forward towards successful case-by-case problem solutions.

2.7 STRENGTHS-BASED DEVELOPMENT

Research by Hodges and Clinton (2004) highlighted that strengths-based development contributes to positive outcomes across various disciplines. Other studies concluded that strengths-based development enhances positive psychological and organisational behaviour capacities such as hope, confidence, and well-being. According to Steimer and Mata (2016: 41), every person and family is born with a few core strengths. However, the deficiency is most obvious, and social care professionals immediately seize upon it to develop solutions to the issues based on these flaws. Because of this, the strengths are hidden. This was a typical response to the deficit theory, which advocates going after the underlying pathology of the problem at hand to find a desirable solution (Steimer and Mata 2016: 41). When desired results were not obtained, practitioners were forced to investigate other methods that would produce desirable results (Urdang 2019: 11).

According to Urdang (2019: 11), it has been discovered that a group's or an individual's positive persona is a better way to approach difficulties. The idea of problem-solving has taken on a new dimension since the emphasis on people's capabilities and self-determination. Dominelli (2017: 07) stated that practitioners were confident that the case might change if handled using a strengths-based approach to explore more productive outcomes. This meant that practitioners needed to move away from the deficit perspective and concentrate on finding ways to develop and enhance people's strengths using strengths-based work. The CYC profession incorporates

all the core elements and principles of the strength's perspective in their daily life- space- work with children.

A person's strengths are the tasks, activities, knowledge, proficiencies, skills, and talents that they are strong at (Wang and Cheng 2020: 65). According to Zafar (2020: 93), personal strengths are natural or learned characteristics that enable a person to thrive in particular circumstances. Strengths, in the opinion of Nayak and Narayan (2019: 08), help people feel more self-assured, resolute, and resourceful in trying situations. The first step for practitioners is to re-evaluate their strategy and put emphasis on current advantages and solutions rather than yesterday's faults and issues. Nayak and Narayan (2019: 08) further that the strengths approach tries to understand how change occurs in young peoples' lives and the good possibilities that arise, as opposed to focusing on young peoples' deficit patterns.

According to Wang and Wang (2020: 22), practitioners use a four-step process to highlight and build on individuals' strengths. Explicitly is the first step in the identification process, which recognises that explicitly builds on existing strengths. The second step, called imagine, comes after this and is a method for identifying future areas that require change to achieve goals. The third phase is empowerment, which is a method for identifying potential growth areas for goals to be met. The final step is evolution, which is summing up progress and using strengths outside of therapy (Wang and Wang 2020: 22).

Martin Seligman (2019: 03), the creator of positive psychology and a supporter of the strengths-based approach, explained that strengths help people adopt six virtues that enable them to lead fulfilling lives. He stated that strengths connect people further with each of these 6 virtues. Each virtue also has a set of strengths attached to it. This is depicted below:

- Wisdom: Interest, empathy, creativity, and analytical thinking are all important.
- Courage: determination, truthfulness, and integrity.
- Humanity: Acceptance, kindness, charity, and empathy.
- Justice: Fairness, equity, and leadership.
- Temperance: Responsibility, dedication, and modesty are all important.
- Transcendence: Happiness, confidence, passion, and a sense of humour.

According to Choptik *et al.* (2021: 23), strengths-based development offers potential to individuals, and it is only now starting to be understood. It is obvious that there is a need to raise awareness of positive psychology and the need to appreciate and focus on abilities in real

life. The strengths-based model is an ideal strategy for many programmes and interventions since the ultimate goal of caring services is focused on empowerment.

Soria and Stubblefield (2015: 62) stated that talents are innate, repeated thought, feeling, and behavioural patterns that can be put to good use. The importance of talents in developing one's strengths is well known; unlike skills and information, talents come naturally to a person. Soria and Stubblefield (2015) further stated that practitioners have concentrated on the factors that lead to the development of strengths. Strengths-based development is a process that entails discovering a person's strengths and incorporating them into their self-perception, which leads to a change in conduct (Hodges and Clifton 2004: 20).

2.8 DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACHES

Strengths-based methods can be helpful on levels from individuals, associations, and organisations to communities. According to Bryant (2021: 140), the staff needs to contribute and support the development of strengths-based practice within an organisation. Partner organisations and the communities must all be involved for the implementation to be successful. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 provides the most effective framework and basis for ensuring that all social care and support services are based on developmental and holistic principles (Braye and Preston 2019: 212).

According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, interventions must aim to improve individual well-being and maximise the use of resources which already exist, inside and near the individual rather than the "provision" of statutory services as a one-size-fits-all. This means that programmes in social care facilities should aim to implement individualised developmental plans for each child. The research of Nelson-Becker *et al.* (2020: 22) stated that several new practice approaches relate to and build upon the basic ideas of the strength perspective. The primary goal of these approaches is to determine how to use a strengths perspective to enhance interactions between professionals and people receiving help from these services (Nelson-Becker *et al.* 2020: 22).

2.8.1 Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT)

According to Macdonald (2014: 26), a strengths-based approach highlights the goals individuals hope to achieve, rather than the problems that led them to seek assistance. If young people are encouraged to focus on choosing their solutions rather than receiving solutions from others, they may often behave and think differently. Studies have shown that the association between objectives for issues and goals for solutions is less than 5%. As a result, this strategy is focused on "living without the problem" and is geared towards an individual's goals for the future (Macdonald 2014: 23). Solution-focused therapy (SFT) has been applied in different

countries in various family services and mental health contexts, as well as in hospitals, schools, detention centres, public social services, and child welfare. The strengths-based approach does not focus on the interpretation of the problem, how it arose or how it changed the person but focuses on the solutions that would enable the individual to progress or develop (Murray 2023). Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) is used mainly when an individual tries to reach a certain goal or solve an issue.

2.8.2 Strengths-based case management

Strengths-based case management is an alternative service model that focuses on identifying an individual's strengths and goals while addressing habit formation and recovery (Whitley *et al.* 1999). According to Arnold *et al.* (2017: 86), the focus on an individual's skills and talents is combined with three other concepts in this method: enhancing the use of informal support systems, giving managers chances to actively participate in the community, and placing a strong emphasis on the client-case manager relationship. Arnold *et al.* (2017: 86) further stated that it is a strategy that helps individuals reach their goals. Strengths-based case management has been tried in several contexts, such as psychological wellness, educational counselling, substance abuse, and in children, youth, and families.

2.8.3 Narrative strengths-based approach

According to Freeman *et al.* (2023: 99), practitioners have employed the narrative strengths-based approach to highlight the advantages of people and communities. Practitioners who use this approach demonstrate that every situation has a story linked to bravery and resiliency. This is achieved by reframing the situation to emphasise unique strengths that develop into a story of resiliency. The narrative approach depends on the idea that individuals live their lives through stories or narratives they have created in response to their experiences, and that these stories can further shape their perception of life (Freeman *et al.* 2023: 99).

Research by Cloitre and Schmidt (2022: 307) further highlighted that practitioners using this method typically avoid focusing merely on the problem being presented, in favour of selecting ways to increase a person's resilience, thereby minimising the problem. This strategy's important component is that some people might link their problem to who they are. Thus, according to Cloitre and Schmidt (2022: 307), externalising the problem gives the individual the freedom to manage the issue constructively.

2.8.4 Family Support Services

Family support is defined as “a style of work and a wide range of activities that strengthen positive informal social networks through community-based programmes and services” (Family Support Agency 2013: 03). Many different countries, such as Canada, Australia, and the United

Kingdom, offer family-based support programmes that aim to strengthen positive social connections within local communities. According to the Family Support Agency (2013: 03), the main objective of these programmes is early intervention to protect and advance the health, rights, and general well-being of all children, young people, and their families. Those who are ill or in need of special care are also given extra care during this period.

These services are in contrast to preventative assistance offered to families and are given before their issues get too serious (Usher *et al.* 2020: 54). The goals of family support services include assisting families when their children's welfare is at risk, by reducing child risk through enhancing family life and encourages parental strengths. The author further stated that practitioners who use this method believe that strengths-based practice has advantages for growing their social support networks, boosting family efficacy and empowerment.

According to Usher *et al.* (2020: 54), "In family support and preservation services, the CYCW works with the family to identify their needs, strengths, and available resources so that they can develop a plan to address their issues and move towards their goals". This process includes assessments, which are included throughout the process. There are many forms of family support services, but they all emphasise the presence of the family or family members as partners. Family support services aim to keep children with their families or reunite children with families when it's safe to do so (Usher *et al.* 2020: 54).

According to Broadhurst (2003: 66), family support services assist families and people who need care and support. It is not always easy to be part of a family. Births, deaths, depressions, separations, sicknesses, abuse, and financial hardships are among the life events that put stress and strain on families and relationships (Broadhurst 2003: 66). According to research by Chaffin, Bonner, and Hill (2001: 128), family support services are beneficial. Having professionals to talk to about a problem could be the easiest way to begin solving it. In a variety of support groups, Family Support Services enable individuals, children, and young people to share their stories and provide support to one another. Victims of child abuse or domestic violence receive assistance from specialised services. Families are typically given family support services in the comfort of their own homes and communities (Chaffin, Bonner, and Hill 2001: 128).

According to Doherty *et al.* (2006: 29), confidentiality and privacy are ensured in family support services and young people's issues are handled confidentially by qualified professionals who provide the necessary support, guidance, and assistance. Doherty *et al.* (2006: 29) further stated that family support services offer a comprehensive family approach. These are in-home, home-based services provided by CYC professionals to help families with various complex

requirements. CYC professionals work with families that face mental health issues, challenges in parenting or relationships, domestic abuse, children with behavioural issues, difficulties in school, emotional or physical welfare issues, supporting older family members, and material and financial hardship (Bromer and Henly 2004: 94). Furthermore, the authors stated that the foundation of family support services is linked to the idea of empowerment, which involves collaborating with families and assisting them in accessing universal resources until they can function independently.

According to Doherty *et al.* (2006: 30), family support services are a starting point for vulnerable families seeking guidance and information. The role of CYCWs is to evaluate a family's needs and assist them in connecting with the local resources that best suit their requirements. Goodson *et al.* (2000: 05) stated that CYC professionals may be able to assist families in a single session or by spending more time learning about the family's circumstances before directing them to appropriate resources. According to Goodson *et al.* (2000: 05), CYCWs working in family support services can assist a family by phone, in-person visitation, or at a location the family deems secure enough for communication. Intensive family support services serve families at risk of involvement in the statutory child protection system. This consent-based programme offers case management to families who agree to engage with it (Hoagwood *et al.* 2010: 29).

Additionally, Hoagwood *et al.* (2010: 29) stated that anyone who agrees to participate and identifies as a member of the referred child's family is qualified for a service. Dolan and Sherlock (2010: 147) highlighted that CYC professionals collaborate with families to determine which of their presenting requirements should be given priority, as well as to provide intensive support interventions and facilitate contact with specialised agencies. To lessen harm or the risk of damage to children and young people, stop family issues from starting or getting worse, and stabilise or maintain family welfare, secondary family support services are necessary (Dolan and Sherlock 2010: 147).

The research of Kyle (2000: 37) stated that Family Support Services are designed to enhance the security and well-being of children, youth and their families. These services increase the families' ability to look after and defend their children and prevent re-entering or entering the legally mandated child protection system. According to McCurdy and Daro (2001: 113), the goal of intensive family support programmes is to strengthen the parenting skills already possessed by families by providing them with useful assistance like managing a budget, keeping a household, strengthening the bond between parents and children, and lowering risks in the family home and surroundings.

2.9 THE ROLE OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORKERS IN BUILDING STRENGTHS

According to Allsopp (2020: 51), the roles and functions of child and youth care workers align with the local scope of practice as outlined by legislation. Child and youth care work is very distinctive. Allsopp (2020: 51) further highlighted that CYCWs, “create transformative developmental and therapeutic experiences” by sharing themselves with young people and families in life-space-based care interactions. According to the author the role of a CYCW is to promote children's and young people's social competence and holistic development by engaging in their day-to-day activities to facilitate growth and development. It is stated that child and youth care work is about concentrating on the children's competence and strengths-based approach which ensures the development of therapeutic relationships and holistic growth (Allsopp 2020: 51).

Furthermore, Allsopp (2020: 52) highlighted that the main goal of child and youth care is to support young people's growth and development. Gray (2018: 18) also highlighted that the core of CYC work is the development of children and youth. Research by Mkhwanazi, Makusha, and Blackie (2018: 70) suggested that CYCWs create interventions that build on each person's current strengths and abilities and see children's and youth's behaviour from a developmental perspective. The research further stated that CYCWs are crucial in identifying and fostering the strengths of young people.

Child and youth care workers assist children and young people in realising their potential as they approach maturity. According to Seligman (2011: 100), young people can start envisioning how to create fulfilling, fruitful lives once they discover what they enjoy or what they are good at. In strengths development, CYC professionals create programmes and interventions to show the strengths and weaknesses of young people. CYCWs believe that adolescents who acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses acquire the skill of concentration (Seligman 2011: 100). In addition, Mkhwanazi, Makusha, and Blackie (2018: 70) stated that CYCWs help children and young people reach their full potential as they get closer to adulthood. Their role in strengths building is teaching and implementing activities that are age and developmentally appropriate for children and young people.

According to Rashid (2013: 81), CYCWs play a critical role in teaching children and youth how to accept failure and learn from their mistakes. Games, instructional activities, and interventions are used to accomplish this. CYCWs take on the role of facilitator in strength building. They also help children and young people learn to accept their weaknesses by offering weekly counselling sessions.

Soshani and Schwartz (2018: 21) highlighted that CYCWs make sure they have discussions with young people regarding their strengths and limitations. The child and youth care worker's (CYCW) role is to guide and help the young person to process different emotions during that stage. CYCWs take their time to explain how young people can improve or make something good out of those limitations. It was further noted by Soshani and Schwartz (2018: 21) that it is important to understand that children and young people have both strengths and weaknesses. A CYCW's role is to teach young people how to take advantage of their strengths and recover from setbacks. Children and young people are taught by CYCWs that there are many methods to make up for mistakes.

Child and youth care workers are trained to teach young people strategies for compensating for limitations, such as asking for assistance, exerting extra effort, and persevering through challenging activities and interventions. These kinds of deeds foster self-awareness and character development (Toros and Falch-Eriksen 2018: 15). The role of CYCWs in building strengths is ensuring that young people understand the necessary steps to be taken to build character strengths. Toros and Falch-Eriksen (2018: 15) further stated that CYCWs support the encouragement of doing new things in residential care settings.

Children learn valuable lessons from trying new things. It enables children and young people to discover their strengths and potential areas of difficulty. This, according to Toros and Falch-Eriksen (2018: 15), is what motivates young people to discover their interests, passions, and possible career paths. It also helps them determine where to concentrate their efforts. Building character strengths is a crucial aspect of strengths development. CYCWs ensure that young people have high levels of thankfulness, compassion, persistence, optimism, and confidence to identify their strengths and purpose in life (MacArthur, Rawana, and Brownlee 2011: 24). Long-term gains in health and happiness can be derived from discovering meaning and purpose.

Child and youth care workers (CYCWs) help young people develop these character traits to set them up for a fulfilling and successful adult life (Ruch, Weber, and Park 2014: 20). Oswald *et al.* (2001: 192) claimed that CYCWs are imaginative and creative, they use basic tasks to develop children and adolescents' strengths daily. They aid in the growth of youth wisdom. They locate motivational video documentaries or real-life accounts of individuals who overcame adversity that children and youth may view together and discuss. It is said that CYCWs concentrate on assisting young people in being loyal to themselves and honouring their word.

According to Oswald *et al.* (2001: 192) developing one's strengths can help young people become more confident, less anxious, and generally happier people who are also better at

handling relationships and situations. CYCWs discuss modifications and create new goals with young people by routinely reviewing the strengths profile. They establish rapport and trust with young people. As per Henderson, Benard, and Sharp-Light (2007: 56), creating a strengths profile is recommended. CYCW use strengths profiling to facilitate positive dialogue with young people by focusing on their strengths rather than their difficulties.

A study by Cooley *et al.* (2021: 20) highlighted the intriguing idea of strength profiling. Considering young people's qualities in a positive light is possible with a strengths profile. CWCWs go through phases to complete a strengths profile, the first of which is a group conversation about values, strengths, and talents in various spheres of life. According to Cooley *et al.* (2021: 20), CYCWs also support their imaginative development. This is accomplished by doing small-scale activities like crafting a brief narrative, engaging in group discussions, or simply setting aside time to daydream while staring out the window. They provide children and young people with an entertaining way to learn more (Cooley *et al.* 2021: 20).

Moreover, CYCWs use strength profiling to promote group discussions. Oswald *et al.* (2001: 193) claimed that when a group collaborates, its members support and assist one another by utilising their interpersonal abilities. The research of Haridas, Bhullar, and Dunstan (2017: 32) highlighted that CYCWs should ask young people about their priorities and assist them in reflecting on the strengths that are most significant to them to help them develop their strengths. Young people can benefit from this by becoming more involved, discovering more about themselves, and developing a sense of ownership over their growth (Henderson, Benard, and Sharp-Light 2007: 56).

2.10 LIMITATIONS AND CRITICISM OF THE STRENGTH'S PERSPECTIVE

The strengths perspective was created in reaction to current approaches and policies that limit the potential for deficiencies, diseases, and dysfunctions (Poluakan, Mulyana, and Rachim 2020: 40). The research of Bu and Duan (2021: 53) stated that the strengths approach produced positive results, but some issues and limitations exist. The issue with the strengths-based approach, according to Geels (2020:152), is that unmonitored challenges of an individual might inhibit his/her growth. This means the author believes that limitations or unresolved challenges may impede an individual's progress and long-term development. The research of Galloway, Reynolds, and Williamson (2020: 31) further stated that the strengths-based approach's disadvantage is that it over-emphasises talent and undervalues character.

According to Deckert (2020: 33), the strengths-based approach has received criticism from certain researchers, asserting that it is not particularly new or different from many other well-established approaches and is not founded on evidence of efficacy. Caiels, Milne and Beadle-

Brown. (2021: 416) emphasised that the challenging population and problem areas that have been studied in the literature make it challenging to synthesise the strengths-based approach. A study by Rigaud (2020: 147) revealed that the strengths-based approach is just another example of optimistic thinking that reframes flaws and sufferings.

This was echoed by Reynolds and Williamson (2020: 31) when they stated that the strengths-based approach is unrealistic and does not consider the harm to some young people and their families. According to the authors, some people are irredeemable. They behave in a way that many people cannot understand and accept. The strengths-based approach is also criticised for toxic positivity, focusing so intently on a positive mindset that there is little room for negative feelings or thoughts (Rashid 2015: 25).

Matron (2017: 81) further stated that some problems might not be advantages in disguise, and if the therapist says otherwise, some clients might feel rejected. Additionally, a strengths-based perspective emphasises abilities and skills that already exist, thus people who are seeking to change their lives may not find this approach helpful. According to Toros and Falch-Eriksen (2021: 15), there are several criticisms and questions about the strengths-based approaches namely whether it is an intervention model with ideas and a particular methodology or an ideological viewpoint on social practice. In response to this query, Saleebey (2013: 196) stated that although the strengths-based approach is grounded in an “ideological position,” it also functions as a “practice model,”

Research by Saint-Jacques *et al.* (2009:454) highlighted that it can be difficult to identify the methods used in strengths-based work and whether how services are delivered is consistent with the model. Slasberg and Beresford (2017: 269), believe there is a chance the approach won't account for the client's reality. Similarly, Grey (2011: 05) contended that despite having sound philosophical underpinnings, it runs the risk of being too close to modern revolutionary ideas of self-help and self-responsibility and ignoring structural inequalities that obstruct social and personal advancement, impact the well-being of people, and cause suffering and distress. Furthermore, Grey (2011: 05) claimed that while supporters of strengths-based approaches sometimes utilise descriptive case studies, there is a lack of empirical support for their supposed efficaciousness.

Daly and Westwood (2018: 108) stated that the goals of strengths-based approaches may not always be appropriate to care and implementing this approach, comes with several challenges. The research of Daly and Westwood (2018:108) also asserted that strengths-based approaches contain several assumptions. The assumption is that people should be empowered however the current manner in which service delivery occurs disempowers them. Another

assumption is that having access to informal resources empowers one and that getting official help from the government means being “disempowered.”

According to de So José, Barros, Samitca, and Teixeira (2016: 11), the strengths-based literature is unclear about the types of support that are empowering (either for those receiving care or those providing it). Daly and Westwood (2018:108) contended that the evidence does not support either of these hypotheses. Another criticism of Daly and Westwood (2018:110) is the assumption that the user’s conditions have resources (or “strengths”) that have not yet been fully utilised. The authors suggested that this should be evaluated rather than assumed because it might not be the case. The research study also mentioned a hierarchy of “resources” that prioritises some resources over others. These resources are social networks, connectivity, communities, resilience, and psychosocial health are among the privileged (Hopkins & Rippon, 2015).

This links to another criticism that strengths-based approaches are centred around individuality as opposed to being seen as focused on communities and social connections (Foot and Hopkins 2010). Foot and Hopkins (2010: 03) further stated that strengths-based approaches prioritise the development of human qualities over creating social or communal resources. Examples of these qualities include coping mechanisms, resilience, and positive adaptability. One final objection made by Daly and Westwood (2018: 108) in their work is summed up as follows: Is a strengths-based approach any different from the ones in use today?

It is argued that community-based needs assessments, especially in the caring domain, have usually been based on trying to ascertain what kind of informal support already exists (i.e., current strengths), identifying any gaps in that informal assistance, and finally identifying how the state could assist. Daly and Westwood (2018: 108) contended that this is not a deficit strategy instead, it is a strengths-based approach that accepts that there is a “strengths sufficiency threshold” that determines wellbeing outside of public services.

In addition, the authors stated that the strengths-based approach is overemphasised, inadequately theorised, and devoid of scientific proof that it has a good effect on people who use social care services. They are concerned that this approach is becoming a “false panacea” that claims to deliver “more for less” to meet the intricate, multifaceted challenges that the underfunded social care sector faces (Daly and Westwood 2018: 108). Slasberg and Beresford (2017: 269) agreed and asserted that policymakers are still searching for a “miracle cure” that will increase the individualisation of social care and reduce costs. Strengths-based practice is the most recent of these.

2.11 STRENGTHS-BASED WORK: CHALLENGES ACROSS VARIOUS PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS

According to Wise (2020: 07), the advantages of using strength-based approaches as a framework for interventions, care, and support are evident and consistently have a beneficial effect on people as well. Strength-based perspectives have been adopted by many organisations. In some situations, it might be difficult to put these ideologies into practice. Studies have shown that there is frequently a disconnect between the application and the guiding ideas of strength-based techniques. Research by Wise (2020: 07) highlighted that participants shared that there is difficulty in the implementation of this approach.

For instance, certain observations from social service professionals, support workers, and carers have revealed that this is a prevalent problem in the disability sector. According to Wise (2020: 07), despite their best attempts to implement strength-based ideas and practices, professionals in the disability sector occasionally felt compelled to adopt a deficit-focused approach while assisting children or young people in applying for funding. According to Pattoni (2012: 47), young people with varying capacities frequently find themselves forced to wrap their personal experiences and lives in deficit-based terminology. Professionals believe that to get the financial support they require, they are often required to list every aspect in which they are personally impeded (Wise 2022: 07). This puts pressure on social service professionals to use labelling and stigmatising labels for children and young people to receive funding and the necessary health services.

The research of Wise (2022: 07) also brought attention to the fact that strengths-based approaches in residential care institutions have cultural ramifications. Many authors have stated that both service providers and recipients of social care must fundamentally change their beliefs and perspectives to implement a strengths-based approach (Foot and Hopkins 2010; Ford, 2019; Guthrie & Blood, 2019; Pattoni, 2012; Tse *et al.* 2016). According to Ford (2019: 22), a “true strengths-based approach” necessitates a systemic shift in the way social care is conceptualised and collaboratively developed with individuals, families, groups, and communities.

Furthermore, Foot and Hopkins (2010: 111) highlighted that the use of the strengths-based approach calls for a change in beliefs and attitudes around the “sharing of power,” especially among professionals and councils. It also calls for an awareness of the drawbacks of adopting a “deficit” perspective on reality. This means that rather than doing things for people, professional staff, administrators of local authorities, and council members must be willing to share power and assist a community in taking care of itself (Pattoni 2012: 47).

Pattoni (2012: 47) asserted that practising a strengths-based approach may be hampered by cultural norms. The cultures of the organisations where social care providers are employed have an impact on their work. If strengths-based services are authorised, performance managed, and inspected in a risk-averse way, seek quick fixes, and prioritise outputs above outcomes, employees' potential to apply strengths-based strategies will be limited, even with the increasing emphasis on strengths-based practice (Guthrie & Blood, 2019; Stanley, 2016).

According to empirical research, practitioners may find it challenging to work in a strengths-based manner, especially if they must re-evaluate their methods to become more future-focused than past-focused, strengths-focused rather than weaknesses-focused, and problem-focused rather than solution-focused (Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown 2021: 112). Furthermore, the main issue with the technique is that it doesn't give precise directions on how to use it. The strengths-based approach is a theoretical position that could be challenging to implement in real-world scenarios (Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown 2021: 112). However, because some individuals depend on the assistance of others—such as the elderly or those with disabilities—the strategy poses a risk to them because they depend on others to take care of them, these individuals cannot rely on their strengths, which goes against the main elements of the strengths-based approach (Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown 2021: 112).

2.12 CONCLUSION

Chapter Two provided a detailed analysis of the strengths-based approach. Several research studies highlighted that the strengths-based approach is a perspective that highlights the positive traits of a person rather than the negatives. This chapter also focused on the utilisation of the strengths-based approach. Research studies stated that it has been utilised in child and youth care as a treatment model, assisting CYCWs in therapeutic interventions and programmes. This chapter also looked at the limitations and criticisms of the strength's perspective.

Many authors highlighted that the strengths perspective is not new or different from other well-established perspectives and that it is not founded on evidence of efficacy. Additionally, many studies stated that it is difficult to analyse the strengths-based because of the different focus areas but that more research must be done on the value of the strengths-based approach. This chapter was also able to highlight the core elements of the strengths-based approach, how strengths can be developed and pointed out the difference between the deficit perspective and strengths perspective. This chapter also focused on different types of strengths-based approaches and how they are used by different professionals. The next chapter will outline the research methodology, the design of the study, and the data collection methods used.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is a study's systematic design and procedure to answer research questions or test hypotheses. It refers to the tools, strategies, and steps used in data collection and analysis, ensuring that the research is structured and reliable (Hassan 2024). According to Jansen and Warren (2020), a research methodology outlines the type of data to be collected, where the researcher will obtain it, and how the researcher will compile and assess it. Mishra and Alok (2022: 11) highlighted that readers who comprehend the researcher's methodology will understand the approach and steps used to generate the results.

It can also help by providing researchers with a detailed plan to follow when doing their research. According to Mishra and Alok (2022: 12), the process of developing a methodology assists researchers in selecting the approaches that will best meet their goals. This chapter covers the study design and research strategy, population of the study, sampling method, data collection process, data analysis, trustworthiness in qualitative research, and ethical considerations. Additionally, the chapter's emphasis is on the sample of child and youth care workers (CYCWs) who use strengths-based work in three child and youth care centres in eThekweni.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY

According to Thakur (2024: 30), a research design is an overall strategy that a researcher can adopt to integrate various components of the study clearly and logically to ensure that the research problem will be effectively addressed. The research design helps the researcher to focus on the most effective research strategies for the topic at hand and organise their research for success. Furthermore, the goal is to give a study a suitable structure (Tomaszewski, Zarestky, and Gonzalez 2020: 19). Choosing a research approach is essential in the research design process because it determines how relevant data will be collected. A research strategy according to Malhotra (2017: 07), is a plan that directs research efforts and helps the researcher achieve research objectives. Developing a research strategy can help a researcher clarify research questions, identify sources, organise data and communicate findings.

This study employed a phenomenological research method. This is a qualitative research approach that seeks to explore the daily experiences of people while suspending the researchers' previous ideas about the phenomenon (Gill 2020: 02). According to Chivanga and Monyai (2021:12), a qualitative study is a scientific research method that allows researchers to explore social experiences in individual and social contexts and acquire a deeper understanding of the elements impacting these experiences. Furthermore, Allan and Skinner (2020: 177)

stated that in qualitative research, the researcher collects and analyses non-numerical information to gain a deeper understanding of feelings, ideas, and opinions. It can be applied to obtain a full understanding of a problem or to generate new ideas for research.

This study used phenomenological research design because the aim was to explore lived experiences and understanding of the strengths-based approach from child and youth care workers (CYCWs). By using a phenomenological research approach, the researcher collected different views from CYCWs regarding strengths-based work and gained a greater understanding of how they utilise the strengths-based approach at residential child and youth care centres. Through the use of this approach, the researcher was able to explore the beliefs, feelings, and perceptions of the child and youth care workers regarding the use of the strengths-based approach

3.3 RESEARCH SETTING

“The study setting is the place where data is collected” (Majid 2018: 03). In this study, data was collected from three child and youth care centres. These child and youth care centres (CYCCs) are in the eThekweni region, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. These centres had various CYCWs who hold different NQF levels. Their different knowledge, expertise and experience contributed immensely to this research study. Furthermore, these centres were appropriate for this study because they abide by the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, the main legislative framework for the social care of children and young people. The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 provides context to the legal duties that apply to social care practice and the importance of ensuring optimum growth and development for vulnerable children and young people. This means that programmes, interventions and activities should have the core elements of the strengths-based approach and promote holistic development. The primary concern of the three centres is to ensure that programmes and interventions promote holistic growth and development. The strengths-based approach in these centres is a way of working with children and youth that focuses on their abilities, knowledge, and capacities rather than their deficiencies or limitations.

3.3.1 Child and Youth Care Centre 1 (CYCC 1)

Child and Youth Care Centre 1 (CYCC1) is a non-profit and public benefit organisation (NPO & PBO) that specialises in the full-time care, rehabilitation, and support of at-risk, abandoned, and abused children in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Child and youth care centre 1 provides residential safety for 65 beneficiaries aged 18 months to 18 years. The child and youth care workers are organised into rotational shifts, ensuring continuous support and care for children and youth across different cottages. With 30 workers in total, this setup allows for flexible coverage and teamwork. It is stated that the most important goal of Child and Youth Care Centre 1 is to reunite

beneficiaries with their rehabilitated parents or families. However, not all children can return to their families, and many remain in the institution. Child and youth care centre 1 also runs a foster programme, which is crucial in providing the children with the familial experiences they seek. The goal is to meet all beneficiaries' basic needs and rights until reunification happens (Weblab 2021).

3.3.2 Child and Youth Care Centre 2 (CYCC 2)

Child and Youth Care Centre 2 has been caring for and providing essential services for children for 100 years. "Child and Youth Care Centre 2 was established in 1897 by sisters from the Society of St. John the Divine. It is one of the oldest children's homes in eThekweni, South Africa" (South African Christian Directory 2017). Children at the centre are provided with a warm environment, schooling, and the kind of help and support needed to enhance their self-esteem. The child and youth care centre has always aimed to provide underprivileged children and youth with a caring and secure environment. There are currently around 75 children living at the centre. Children come to the centre for many different reasons. The child may have been abused, neglected, abandoned, or orphaned, or the child's family may lack the financial resources to meet the child's needs. The care facility employs around 25 staff members, from CYCWs to cooks, laundry, maintenance and administration staff, to keep the facility running. The CYCC receives a subsidy from the Department of Social Development to run the facility; however, this only covers around two-thirds of the cost of running this programme. The child and youth care centre depends on additional financial support from various sources to cater for the shortfall.

3.3.3 Child and Youth Care Centre 3 (CYCC 3)

Child and Youth Care Centre 3 is a small care centre in eThekweni that provides residential care for children up to 18 years. Child and Youth Care Centre 3 is in Mayville, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The centre aims to provide guidance, protection, and mental health treatment. They also provide education and recreational programs for the children. They aim to help children return home and reunite with their families. Child and Youth Care Centre 3 has ten CYCWs, one Social Worker (SW) and an auxiliary child and youth care worker who comes once or twice a week. It has seven cottages and provides residential care to 72 boys aged four to eighteen of all different races. The Child and Youth Care Centre subscribes to the adage by Frederick Douglass, which says, "It is easier to build resilient children than to heal broken men" (Catholic Archdiocese of Durban 2024).

3.4 STUDY POPULATION

A study population is the foundation of research methodology (Willie 2024). According to Willie (2024: 02), the population represents a larger group of people with comparable characteristics in a particular setting or context. The word "study population" describes the whole group or collection of individuals, objects, or events that the researcher is interested in because they have certain characteristics that are important for the research study (Thomas 2023). It refers to the larger population from which a sample is selected. The research population is chosen by the study's objectives and the unique characteristics or aspects being studied (Majid 2018: 05). The population of this study consisted of child and youth care workers from three selected child and youth care centres in the eThekweni region, Durban, KwaZulu Natal. A sample of 18 locally based child and youth care workers were chosen to represent the population. These participants were qualified professionals holding a basic qualification in child and youth care to degree level and were registered with the SACSSP. This study's population was represented by qualified child and youth care workers who work directly with young people in their life space.

3.5 STUDY SAMPLING

The research of Mujere (2016: 107) defined a sample as a carefully selected group of the research population intended to reflect its features. To draw conclusions or generalisable results, researchers investigate this mainly in a group setting. Mujere (2016: 107) further stated that caution must be used when selecting the sample to ensure that it appropriately represents the diversity and relevant features of the research population. The goal of sampling, according to Nikolopoulou's research (2023: 13), is to ensure that a representative sample accurately reflects the key traits, variations, and proportions present in the population. Sampling is divided into two categories: probability and non-probability sampling (Thomas 2023: 17). The current study employed a purposive sampling technique, referred to as non-probability sampling.

3.5.1 Non-probability sampling

According to Berndt (2020: 224), non-probability sampling is a subjective method used to form units from a population. This method is not based on random selection; it is less stringent and depends strongly on the researcher's expertise.

3.5.2 Purposive sampling

According to Obilor (2023: 224) and Andrade (2021: 86), purposive sampling involves choosing samples only based on the researcher's expertise and credibility. Purposive sampling was employed in this study to select participants with specific characteristic relevant to the research questions. This study sampled eighteen locally based CYCWs from three CYCCs, and six were chosen from each CYCC. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on CYCWs with experiences and perspectives that would provide rich insights into the research topic. The

chosen sample size allowed the researcher to gather nuanced and context-specific information from CYCWs. According to Campbell *et al.* (2020: 653), purposive sampling technique is also called judgement sampling, as the researcher has to consider the qualities of the participants in the study. In this case, the researcher was specific in the information letter about the characteristics required for CYCWs to participate in this study. The supervisor at the CYCC recruited registered CYCWs with a minimum of two years of experience to be the study participants. In addition, these CYCWs have implemented a strengths-based programme or interventions and are involved in all the strengths-based activities implemented at the facility. The supervisor from each CYCC purposely selected the CYCWs using the inclusion criteria so that they could provide valuable data to the study based on their experiences. Participants who did not match the criteria for eligibility, were excluded from the study.

3.6 SAMPLING PROCESS

3.6.1 Inclusion criteria:

Patino and Ferreira (2018) stated that the inclusion and exclusion criteria set the boundaries of the systematic review. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are set after the research question is formed and before the search. However, scoping searches may be required to establish appropriate standards. Many factors can be used as inclusion or exclusion criteria (Keung *et al.* 2020: 47).

According to Nikolopoulou (2023: 13), the characteristics of the intended audience are referred to as inclusion criteria. In this study, participants had to be registered as child and youth care workers by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSPP). This included CYCWs with 2 years of minimum experience within their facility and have implemented a strengths-based intervention or programme. The participants resided in the eThekweni region, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Both male and female child and youth care workers are the respondents who agreed to participate in this research study.

3.6.2 Exclusion criteria:

As described by Connelly (2020: 17), exclusion criteria are characteristics of potential study participants that meet the inclusion criteria but have additional characteristics that could make the study less successful or increase the probability of undesirable results. According to Patino and Ferreira (2018), exclusion criteria include factors that can affect or influence the findings of the study. This study excluded CYCWs who are not registered as child and youth care workers by the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSPP), who had less than 2 years of experience within their facility and who have not implemented a strengths-based intervention or programme.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

According to Clark and Veale (2018: paragraph 3 line 4), the process of data collection which is also referred to as data gathering, is defined as the process of collecting and analysing data on certain variables in an already-existing system to analyse results and answer relevant questions. The research of Mazhar (2021: 45) stated that the purpose of data collection is to obtain information necessary for data analysis to generate credible answers to the questions asked. He further found that formal data collection methods are necessary because they provide accurate and well-defined data collection. Reliable data is then utilised to support possible conclusions drawn from arguments presented in the findings (Mazhar *et al.* 2021: 45).

It is stated that this process provides a baseline for comparison and, in certain cases, indicates areas that should be improved (Taherdoost 2021: 23). During the data collection process, the researchers choose the data types, data sources, and methodology. In this study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews that were digitally recorded for the analysis of the participants' responses. A semi-structured interview is open-ended, allowing for an exchange of new ideas. George (2020: 27) asserted that in semi-structured interviews participants have more opportunities to fully express themselves because questions are loosely structured. Semi-structured interviews in this study were used so that the researcher could ask a series of questions and receive reliable, comparable qualitative data from the participants. Semi-structured interviews also gave the interviewer time to prepare relevant questions beforehand.

Subsequent to obtaining approval for the research study from Durban University of Technology (DUT) and the Institutional Research Committee (IREC), the researcher sought gatekeeper permission (Appendix A) from the managers of the three CYCCs. Once the researcher was granted full permission by IREC, the researcher continued the data collection process. The researcher recruited participants with the help of the supervisors because they were responsible for setting work schedules and duties of CYCWs. Participants who met the requirements of the study were invited and the researcher clarified the research to CYCWs before they consented to participate. They were given an information letter (Appendix B) that thoroughly explained the nature of the study.

The study participants were informed that their information would be kept secure place, and their names would be anonymous. They were also informed that they would participate of their own free will and that they could withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. The study participants were given consent forms to sign (Appendix C). After consent was given, there were standard interview questions that were open-ended, which enabled the participants to elaborate on their answers whenever necessary.

The study gathered data using face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews using an interview guide, which comprised demographic information on participants and open-ended interview questions (Appendix G). The research participants were given the choice of being interviewed upon first approach or having an appointment set for the interview. Participants were encouraged to talk openly about their experiences working with young people, the value of strengths-based work in residential care, how they apply strengths-based work in residential care and the challenges they experience when applying strengths-based approaches. In addition, participants were assured of a non-judgemental and confidential environment for sharing their responses.

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

An interview is defined by McKee (2023) as a face-to-face, direct exchange of questions with a participant regarding a research problem. The conversation between the researcher and participants is structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Semi-structured interviews were used so that the researcher could ask a series of questions, and it gave the interviewer time to prepare an interview schedule which is useful in gathering relevant and valuable data. Semi-structured interviews have been defined as a 'conversation with a purpose' (Adeoye-olatunde and Olenik 2021: 13).

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is free to follow up on a new line of enquiry that the interviewee has started or to ask the participant to elaborate (George 2023: 29). In this study, the researcher developed questions (appendix G) for participants that addressed the study's objectives. This was advantageous because accurate and relevant information was captured. The interviews were audio-recorded with consent from the participants and recorded data was subsequently saved on the computer. The interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. They were conducted in English and the Isizulu languages, and thereafter the researcher thanked the participants. Data was collected over three weeks.

3.7.2 Interview settings

According to Cypress (2018: 304), an interview setting, is about choosing a proper venue for in-depth interviews. An interviewee must be comfortable, have privacy, and must not be distracted by the setting they are in. The researchers and study participants agreed on the venue for the interviews. The managers and supervisors of the three chosen child and youth care centres granted consent to the researcher to conduct the interviews in a quiet room that was also free from interruptions at the centres. After discussions with the centre manager, supervisor and the participants, it was agreed that the interviews would be conducted on weekdays since it was suitable for both the participants and the researcher. Child and youth

care workers have time during the week because the children are at school, and they do not have important activities to implement during school hours. They chose 09:00 to 13:00 because it was a suitable time for them to do interviews without distractions and neglecting their day-to-day duties. The study participants and the researcher also agreed on the interview location, dates, and times. The researcher contacted the participants a week before the scheduled day and time of the interviews to confirm.

3.7.3 The Interview Process

Each participant was welcomed upon arrival, made comfortable, and offered refreshments. They were allowed to ask questions and address any concerns. Participants were informed before the study that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. All participants consented to the audio recording. All the participants agreed to the recording of the interviews using an audio recorder. Participants were informed that confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research process and that their names would not be revealed during the interview if it was recorded, as the recording is only utilised for data analysis.

A semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix G) containing open-ended questions was used to collect data. Participants were invited to identify themselves using pseudonyms before the interview; this ensured that their identities remained confidential, and only their pseudonyms were utilised throughout the study, including in the write-up. The digital recording of the interviews ensured that the information provided by participants was accurately kept and easily accessible for analysis. All interviews were transcribed and analysed for common themes.

3.8 PILOT STUDY:

A pilot study is a small-scale research activity to assess the effectiveness of a larger initiative before investing additional time and money in it (Anesthesiol 2017: 601). Researchers can verify that the approach, target population, and methodology are all well-suited for accomplishing the aim of the study, by conducting a pilot study. Anesthesiol (2017: 601) further stated that pilot studies are an important aspect of the research process. They can assist in revealing design issues and evaluating the project's feasibility, practicality, resources, time, and cost before the core research is conducted. Anupama, Chaudhary and Lakshmi (2023: 01) further highlighted that a pilot study is the first step of the whole research which helps researchers prepare and adapt the main study. It is conducted before the main study to check the validity of the results.

Research by Aziz and Khan (2020: 75) highlighted that the pilot study aims to improve the quality and efficacy of the main research. It is also done to assess the possibility of recruitment, the safety of interventions or treatment options, the allocation of participants and the blinding

process, and to increase the researcher's familiarity with the study method (Malmqvist *et al.* 2019:18)). A pilot study is carried out following all of the main study's rules and validates the study's viability by assessing the participant's inclusion and exclusion criteria (Noonan 2023: 12).

A pilot study was conducted using the interview guide with six willing child and youth care workers at CYCC1 who were chosen through the purposive sampling method, to ensure the validity and reliability of the questions. The researcher sought permission from the manager of the CYC facility, a gatekeeper letter (Appendix A) was used to grant the researcher permission to access the CYCC and the supervisor of the CYCWS was also included in this process because in a CYCC the supervisor is also involved in decision making especially if it concerns his/her team of CYCWS.

Possible participants at CYCC 1 that also met the inclusion criteria of this study, were contacted, and provided with a letter of information (Appendix B) that enlightened the CYCWs about the nature of the study. The researcher also explained that these participants will not be part of the main study. After the first six participants read and understood the details of the study, the pilot study was conducted as a focus group discussion that lasted between 50 and 60 minutes. The interview guide (Appendix G) was thoroughly interrogated during this focus group discussion, and no changes were required.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the most crucial element in research (Jankielewics and Whiting 2023: 43). Data analysis consists of steps that assist the researcher in identifying patterns required for the research to reach useful findings. It is the process of compiling information that has been gathered and involves using logical and analytical reasoning to evaluate the data to find patterns, trends, or connections (Jankielewics and Whiting 2023: 43). According to Dawit (2020: 02), data analysis is an important process because it provides a solid foundation for critical judgements and helps to construct a complete dissertation proposal. Wickham (2016: 189) emphasised that data analysis reduces the risks involved in decision-making by providing valuable information and insights, which are usually presented in the form of tables, graphs, charts, and images.

The research of Martin, Schbath, and Hennequet-Antier (2022: 06) emphasised that data analysis is essential to conducting reliable qualitative research. "The qualitative researcher is frequently referred to as the research instrument because the capacity to comprehend, characterise, and interpret experiences and perceptions is crucial for determining meaning in specific situations and contexts". In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyse data.

According to Finley (2021: 10), thematic analysis involves methodically finding, classifying, and providing insights into patterns of meaning (themes) within a dataset. Thematic analysis, which focuses on meaning across a dataset, enables the researcher to see and understand shared meanings and experiences.

Finley (2021: 10) further stated that thematic analysis is a way of identifying and making sense of the commonalities in how a topic is discussed or written about. It is a flexible technique that allows the researcher to focus on the data in different ways. Researchers can describe the evident or semantic meaning in data, investigate the assumptions and concepts which underlie what is explicitly stated, or focus on a single particular aspect of a phenomenon (Clarke and Braun 2006). An excellent framework for doing this kind of research is presented by Braun and Clarke (2006: 04). It is a six-phase guide that thoroughly explains the crucial steps of thematic analysis.

Step 1: Become familiar with the data.

The first step involves reading and re-reading transcripts. The researcher ensured that she was familiar with the data (all the interviews and any others that will be used). The researcher also took notes and jotted down early impressions.

Step 2: Generate initial codes.

In this phase, the researcher thoroughly examines and organises the collected data logically and methodically. The researcher carefully coded each relevant fragment of data that revealed something interesting or significant about the research issue. The researcher used an open coding strategy, which entailed closely analysing the data to find emerging themes, patterns, and concepts without regard for established categories.

Step 3: Search for themes

A theme is a pattern that shows something important or interesting about the study question or data. In this phase, it was important for the researcher to refocus the analysis on themes rather than codes. The researcher classified the numerous codes into potential themes and gathered all coded data extracts within the discovered themes.

Step 4: Review themes

In this phase, the researcher assessed and developed the early themes identified in the third step. The researcher examined the facts associated with each theme to see if they truly correspond to or support it. The researcher evaluated the themes that were appropriate for the overall data set.

Step 5: Define themes

This is the final refinement of the themes, and its purpose is to justify the key points of each theme.

Step 6: Writing up

This phase involves carrying out the final analysis and writing the report. The researcher ensured that the final report was brief, and logical without repetition of themes.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The reliability or rigour of the research is the degree of trust in the data, interpretation, and procedures used to ensure the quality of the study (Connelly 2016). For readers to believe that a study is valuable to investigate, researchers should create the procedures and methodologies necessary for each study (Amankwaa, 2016). According to Leung (2015), most experts believe that trustworthiness is important in research although there has been debate over what constitutes trustworthiness (Leung 2015). Furthermore, Rose and Johnson (2020: 437), transferability, dependability, confirmability and credibility are four criteria that are used to measure the trustworthiness of data. This study ensured trustworthiness by providing adequate information about inclusion and exclusion criteria, participants' characteristics, analysis methods, settings, and data collection.

3.10.1 Credibility

The credibility of the study, or how much one can rely on the validity of the data and findings, is the most important consideration (Connelly 2016). When participant experiences are interpreted with credibility, others can identify experiences from the study. A researcher needs to examine each participant's transcript individually and search for patterns inside and among all participants to build trust (Lemon *et al.* 2020). It is stated that building credibility involves a variety of techniques, including incorporating long-term participant interaction, ongoing observation where suitable for the study, peer debriefing, member-checking, and reflective journaling.

This study ensured credibility by suggesting longer engagement. The researcher encouraged longer interviews to ensure that all the data was described in detail and to build trust with the participants. The researcher also ensured credibility by member checking. This is a method of sharing facts, interpretations, and findings with the participant. This strategy allowed participants to clarify their intentions, fix mistakes, and provide extra information if needed.

3.10.2 Dependability

According to Polit & Beck (2014), dependability is the ability of the data to remain consistent. The regularity of the results has an impact on dependability. It shows if a study were to be repeated with the same or a comparable topic setting, would the results be consistently repeated? The study satisfies dependability requirements if it can be repeated while adhering to the audit trail (Cloutier 2021: 113). There are many ways to maintain dependability in qualitative research. The most common are peer debriefing with colleagues and keeping an audit trail. Process logs are the researcher's documentation of all actions taken during the study, including decisions about what to watch and who to interview. This study ensured dependability with an audit trail. The steps were transparently described at every step of the research namely from the commencement to its development and report of the findings.

3.10.3 Transferability

Transferability is a process of abstraction used to apply information collected from specific individuals and situations to others that have not been directly researched (Drisko 2024: 10). The researchers' transparency and reliability, as well as their clear and detailed description of the environment, subjects, and analysis, support the study's transferability. It is stated that researchers must paint a clear image for readers that will both inform and resonate with them (Amankwaa 2016). The person making the generalisations has the primary responsibility for transferability. McLeod (2024) stated that transferability is an important part of trustworthiness that involves thick descriptions and readers assessing the applicability of the findings on their own.

In this study, the researcher used thick descriptions to ensure transferability. Descriptions obtained during the interviews were done in great detail. The researcher ensured that the data collection, design, procedure, and data analysis process are clearly stated so that it can be understandable to readers and be transferable to another setting by future researchers who will access it.

3.10.4 Confirmability

The degree of consistency and repeatability of findings is referred to as confirmability (Polit & Beck, 2014). In qualitative research, the researchers need to take thorough records of all the decisions and analyses they make during the research process to guard against biases resulting from the viewpoint of a single individual. According to Chung *et al.* (2020: 25), confirmability happens when dependability, credibility, and transferability are proven, which means it is the last criterion. In some studies, these notes are checked by a colleague, while in others, they are discussed in peer-debriefing meetings with a recognised qualitative researcher.

The researcher may also perform member-checking with study participants or others who are similar, depending on the study. To ensure confirmability, the researcher used an audit trail. The researcher detailed the process of data collection, data analysis and interpretation of data. In addition, the researcher ensured that participants asked for clarification during the interviews.

3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research restrictions are the study's weaknesses caused by external factors that are outside of the researcher's control (Phair 2022: 03). These factors could be time, money, equipment, information, or involvement. According to Theofanifis and Fountouki (2018: 155), research limitations may result from the research design itself. For example, one was unable to determine causality from a correlational study because correlation does not imply precise causation. In the same way, online questionnaires would not be able to collect data from participants in the same way as in-person interviews might (Theofanifis and Fountouki 2018: 155). This study was limited to three CYCCs due to the over-researched nature of other child and youth care centres in eThekweni. This limitation may impact the generalisability of the finding as the experiences and perspectives of CYCWs in these three centres may not be representative of those in other centres. A limitation in this study is also the small sample size, which may impact the transferability of the findings. With a larger population size, it is possible that more in-depth rich information would have been uncovered, and additional themes would have emerged, potentially providing a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths-based approach. The research aim could have been narrowed to gather more focused findings. Incorporating children's perspectives could have provided richer insights into the value of this approach. However, ethical considerations regarding the vulnerability and risk status of young people in these centres had to be considered.

3.12 ELIMINATION OF BIAS

Simundić (2013: 12) defined bias as "a predisposition or prejudice for or against a particular person or group, especially when done unjustly". It is unfairly endorsing or disapproving of a specific person or object due to letting opinions influence your assessment. In this study, the researcher ensured that all the ethical considerations were thoroughly followed. The results of were analysed methodically to avoid bias. To overcome researcher bias (linked to positionality), the researcher engaged in reflective journaling to document thoughts and feelings. This process helped to mitigate potential biases, ensure the accuracy of the data, and set aside personal opinions and assumptions. Additionally, the researcher used member checking to validate the findings with the participants. Furthermore, the researcher mitigated participant bias by using non-leading questions and providing clear, unbiased instructions.

3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Bhandari (2023: 22), ethical considerations in research are a collection of rules that guide the researcher's study ideas and practices. These guiding principles include voluntary participation, anonymity, informed consent, confidentiality, beneficence, risk of harm, request for permission, and respect for participants. Researchers are required to follow strict ethical guidelines while gathering data from human participants. These components maintain scientific integrity, increase the study's validity, and protect research participants' rights (Pietila *et al.* 2020: 49).

The researcher adhered to all ethical considerations. The participants were not exposed to any harm and confidentiality and anonymity were adhered to by using pseudonyms for each participant during the transcription and analysis of the interviews. Honesty and transparency were crucial ethical considerations within this study. The privacy of all participants was ensured, and identifying details were protected by the researcher. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were given an information letter (Appendix B) before data collection.

Interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. Permission was sought from participants to record. The tape recordings were kept on the USB and protected by a password. The hard copies and tape recordings were kept safely in a file, which was safely locked in a cupboard at the supervisor's office. There is only one key, and the researcher and supervisor are the only people with access. The data will be retained for 5 years, after 5 years it will be disposed of by deleting the recordings and hardcopies will be destroyed and shredded.

3.13.1 Voluntary participation and informed consent

A study volunteer should never be subjected to any form of coercion. This includes trying to win someone over by lying or persuasion. Bazzano, Durant and Brantley (2021: 81) stated that informed consent requires an individual to consent to participate in the study. A consent form serves as a trust agreement between participants and the researcher (Bazzano, Durant and Brantley 2021: 81). In this study, participants were well informed by the researcher about participation being voluntary and the researcher explained that they could withdraw from the study whenever they wished to. The participants confirmed their voluntary participation and were given a consent letter (Appendix C) to sign. Additionally, the researcher confirmed the interview dates and times with the managers of the CYCC, the supervisor and the CYCWs.

3.13.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

According to Bos (2022: 149), confidentiality is meant for or limited to the use of a certain individual or group. It is the researcher's responsibility to distribute entrusted information properly and to safeguard privileged information. Hoft (2021: 06) defined anonymity as the state

of not knowing or disclosing a participant's identity. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher sent information letters to the participants. The information letter (Appendix B) thoroughly explained that the participant's identity will not be released, and their information will be kept private. Pseudonyms were used to hide the participants' identities. The recordings of the interviews will be kept safe in the supervisor's cupboard and only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the key and recordings. Data will be permanently deleted and shredded after five years.

3.13.3 Request for permission

A request for permission is made when a researcher approaches the person in charge of a specific population to obtain access to conduct a research study (Manti and Licari 2018: 145). This study sent a gatekeeper's permission letter to the managers of the three CYCCs. Once permission was attained, the researcher proceeded to the centres to recruit participants for the study. A verbal agreement was made with CYCWs who were interested in participating in this research study.

3.13.4 Respect for participants

Alele and Malau-Aduli (2023: 16) stated that participants should always be treated with respect, including if they decline to be enrolled in a study. Participants should be respected from the moment they are approached about participating to the conclusion of their involvement. This entails maintaining the confidentiality of their personal information and honouring their right to privacy. In this study, the researcher ensured that decisions were made in the presence of the supervisor and the CYCWs. The information letter (Appendix B) and consent letter (Appendix C) were written in English and Isizulu so that the participants had a choice to choose the language they understood more. The researcher gave the participants the right to choose a venue that was comfortable and quiet enough for them. Times of the interviews were also negotiated accordingly, and participants' decisions were respected.

3.13.5 Beneficence

The beneficence principle is about the researcher's responsibility to behave in the best interests of the participant (Beauchamp 2019: 18). It is stated that the researcher must respect a variety of ethical principles that safeguard and defend the participant's rights, avoid harm, eliminate harmful situations, and protect participants who are at risk. The idea asks for promoting participants' welfare and benefiting them, in addition to preventing harm (Avant and Swetz 2020: 75). Participants were allowed to voice their opinions and ask questions when they needed an explanation. The researcher constantly checked with the participants during the interviews whether any of the questions were uncomfortable.

3.13.6 Risk of injury

Researchers need to make every effort to safeguard research subjects. The risk-benefit ratio should be the primary focus in this regard (Abdalla *et al.* 2017: 09). The authors stated that if potential hazards exceeded the positives, it would be appropriate to abandon or restructure the research. There was no risk of injury for participants involved in this study.

3. 14 CONCLUSION

The research methodology used for this study is explained in this chapter, along with all the stages of the research, such as participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and how ethical considerations were upheld throughout. A presentation and discussion of the results are provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the demographic information, data from the interviews and discussion about the themes and sub-themes of this study. The interview guide which consisted of nine questions assisted the researcher in collecting data and finding valuable information about the value of the strengths-based approach. Themes and sub-themes were created from the data gathered and an in-depth analysis using past literature was developed. The results from the interviews are presented in the order of the research objectives, which are:

- To explore the value of the strengths-based work in residential care.
- To explore how, when and under what circumstances child and youth care workers apply strengths-based work in residential care.
- To describe challenges experienced by child and youth care workers when applying the strengths-based approach.
- To provide recommendations to improve strengths-based work in residential care.

The researcher also ensured a relationship between the study objectives and interview questions. All the questions used during data collection were constructed such that it allowed the researcher to gather data that was aligned with the study objectives. Open-ended questions were used to allow new ideas to be brought up during interviews and enable the participants to elaborate more on their answers whenever necessary.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

It was crucial in this study to note the demographic features of the participants who shared their experiences of using the strengths-based approach at residential care facilities. The demographic information of the CYCWs who participated in the study is presented in Table 4.1 below. Eighteen CYCWs were interviewed of which 14 were female and four were male.

Table 4.1: Demographic profiles of participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Work experience in CYC	Qualification
Participant 1	Female	49 Years	10 Years	Auxiliary CYC (Level 4)

Participant 2	Female	39 Years	8 Years	Auxiliary CYC (Level 4)
Participant 3	Male	29 Years	5 Years	B Tech (CYC)
Participant 4	Female	47 Years	9 Years	FETC (CYC)
Participant 5	Male	28 Years	5 Years	B Tech (CYC)
Participant 6	Female	26 Years	3 Years	Bachelor's degree (CYC)
Participant 7	Female	28 Years	7 Years	Bachelor's degree (CYC)
Participant 8	Female	44 years	15 Years	FETC (CYC)
Participant 9	Female	25 Years	5 Years	B Tech (CYC)
Participant 10	Male	26 Years	3 Years	FETC (CYC)
Participant 11	Female	30 Years	6 Years	Bachelor's degree (CYC)
Participant 12	Female	27 Years	3 Years	Bachelor's degree (CYC)
Participant 13	Male	44 Years	7 Years	Auxiliary CYC (Level 4)
Participant 14	Female	53 Years	12 Years	Auxiliary CYC (Level 4)
Participant 15	Female	24 Years	2 Years	Bachelor's degree (CYC)
Participant 16	Female	33 Years	5 Years	B Tech (CYC)
Participant 17	Female	29 Years	4 Years	Bachelor's degree (CYC)
Participant 18	Female	55 Years	15 Years	Basic Qualification in Child Care (BQCC)

By far, the most female-dominated occupations are care workers, such as nurses, health care assistants, home-based workers, social workers and child and youth care workers (Boniol *et al.* 2019). This is evident in the study that child and youth care is still dominated by females despite the important role which males can fulfil in this profession. It is also clear that only a few CYCWs have a bachelor's degree which is the third highest qualification. Six of the eighteen participants hold NQF level eight, which is the highest undergraduate qualification provided in Child and Youth Care and is presently only offered by the Durban University of Technology (DUT). This suggests that to guarantee a diverse and competent workforce capable of offering children and youth comprehensive support and guidance, it is necessary to encourage more people, regardless of gender, to pursue higher education and professional development in the field of child and youth care.

The study also reveals that most participants have a basic qualification in Child and Youth Care, but it is also noticeable that they have spent many years in this profession. Four of eighteen participants have ten to fifteen years, eight of the participants have five to ten years, and two participants have three years of working experience. There is only one participant with two years of working experience as a child and youth care worker. Given the data, it can be inferred that most of the participants have a significant amount of experience in the field, with the majority having worked for at least five years in child and youth care. This suggests that they have gained knowledge and expertise through their prolonged involvement in this crucial area of social services. The three chosen CYC facilities had various CYCWs who hold different National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels. The Basic Qualification provides foundational child and youth care knowledge and skills, and training was provided by NACCW (Zondeka 2021: 70). The Auxiliary Child and Youth Care Level 4 and 5 qualification offers advanced training and certification. A Bachelor of Technology (BTech) qualification is pitched at level 7 on the previous NQF. Presently, the highest undergraduate qualification is a 4-year Bachelor's Degree (level 8 on the NQF) offered at the Durban University of Technology, providing in-depth training for professional roles in Child and Youth Care (Zondeka 2021: 70). The different knowledge, expertise, and experiences of these CYCWs contributed immensely to the depth and richness of this study. Furthermore, by the inclusion criteria for this study, all the participants were registered with the South African Council of Social Services Professions (SACSSP) and had a minimum of two years of working experience in that CYCC. All ethical considerations were adhered to by the researcher. Confidentiality, anonymity and numbers were used to protect all the identifying details of the participants and Child and Youth Care Centres.

4.3 THE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the most crucial element in research (Jankielewics and Whiting 2023: 43). This is the process of transforming raw data into interpretable and useful forms using a range of approaches such as searching, assessing, identifying, coding, mapping, exploring, and characterising patterns, trends, topics, and categories (Mezmir 2020: 15). This study used thematic analysis to analyse and interpret data. Thematic analysis is a data analysis process that focuses on the exploration, description, explanation, evidence, and linking of the themes (Kampira 2021: 5).

The researcher used an audio recorder and a notebook to record and note participants' responses during interviews. The researcher chose to use both hard and soft copies to accurately report the findings. Following the thematic analysis steps, the interviews were transcribed and validated many times to acquaint the researcher with the data. The researcher took notes and compiled initial observations. The data was then arranged by the study's objectives and interview questions. Themes and sub-themes were established by focusing on the study's aim and primary objectives.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The following section focuses on the presentation and discussion of the key themes and findings that arose from the study. The data has been organised into nine main themes and seventeen sub-themes based on participant responses. These are shown in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes derived from the data

Theme	Sub-theme
CYCWs' understanding of strengths-based work	1. Understanding strengths-based work 2. An appropriate approach for CYC work
The value of strengths-based work	1. Therapeutic and developmental interventions 2. Integrated in all CYC programmes 3. Active participation and engagement in the helping process.
Application of strengths-based work in residential care	1. Use of kind words and tone

	2. Emphasizing empowerment, collaboration, and self-determination 3. Goal setting
Potential benefits of strengths-based work.	1. Improved behaviour 2. Fosters resilience and positive outcomes for children and youth 3. The development of therapeutic relationships
The challenges of using strengths-based work.	1. Difficult to implement 2. Time consuming 3. Insufficient supervision, training and support 4. Negative attitude towards CYCWs
Suggestions for improving strengths-based work.	1. Support, training and workshops 2. Align with behaviour management techniques

4.4.1 Theme 1: CYCWs' understanding of strengths-based work

Theme 1 relates to CYCWs' understanding of strengths-based work as well as their experiences of using the strengths-based approach in residential care facilities. The thematic analysis of the experiences of CYCWs and their understanding of strengths-based work revealed two sub-themes, as indicated below.

4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Understanding strengths-based work

The majority of the research participants highlighted that they believe that strengths-based work is a language used to guide child and youth care practice. This is revealed in the following excerpts:

Participant 2: *Strengths-based work is more like a language to us (CYCWs). It is about communicating with a young person in a calming and comforting way. It is a language that sponsors growth and development in a young person. Strengths-based work is more about our tone and the words we use, when communicating with young people.*

Participant 3: *Strengths-based work is an approach that demands kindness, calmness, and respect. It is about how we approach a situation and how we communicate with the young person. In strengths-based work, we address the young person with respect, comfort the young person and mind how we talk to the young person.*

Participant 5: *I understand strengths-based work as a language and a perspective that CYCWs use in their daily work. It helps us with voice projection, how we respond and react to children's challenging behaviours and the kind of words we use when interacting with young people.*

Participant 6: *I understand strengths-based work as a language because we use kind words and a soft tone. We use words that will highlight strength and enable change and growth in a young person. Strengths-based work is not only about verbally highlighting a strength; there is a structured approach and a specific way of enhancing already-existing talents.*

Participant 12: *Strengths-based work is our language of care and protection. It is a language that instils positivity and change in a young person. It is language that guides how we speak, address or act with children. Our programmes, interventions, and activities are influenced by strengths-based practice, which begins with how we communicate and connect with young people.*

It is noticeable that the participants shared different understandings of strengths-based work. Some participants spoke of strengths-based work as a language that promotes growth and development in a young person. Proust (2023) stated that if the strengths approach is to truly guide and influence the CYC practice, it should be evident in the language of interactions with young people they serve, the language of service, team and organisational interactions, and the written documentation of service provision activities - assessment, service delivery, training, etc. Other participants added that it is responsible for care and protection and that it instils positivity and change in a young person by highlighting the strengths or positive traits that a young person can use in challenging situations. Furthermore, the majority of the study participants highlighted that strengths-based work is about highlighting a talent, skill or ability and using that strength to influence the overall growth and development of a young person. Strength-based work enables CYCWs to appropriately respond to challenging behaviours and conflict situations in their work with children and young people.

Strengths-based work is not about what they do but how they do things. It does not focus on the deficits or what the young person is doing wrong. "The strength-based approach offers a shared language and philosophy" Stoerke (2019). Strengths-based work is more about

enhancing, evaluating, and caring for a young person's talents and skills that need to be strengthened. According to Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021: 402), strengths-based work is an approach that highlights the significance of a person's qualities, the environment in which they live, and the different situations that affect their lives.

It claims that solutions should primarily focus on individuals' competencies and the resources available to them. Additionally, Chapin and Lewis (2023: 03) highlighted that strengths-based work represents one of the many methods used in a variety of professions that aims to change the emphasis of working with individuals from focusing on their weaknesses to focusing on their strengths. A study by Askew *et al.* (2020: 104) concurs with the participants' responses that strengths-based work serves as the foundation and framework for everyday activities of individuals and programmes and is often seen as "common sense" conduct.

4.4.1.2 Sub-theme 2: An appropriate approach for Child and Youth Care (CYC) work

The second sub-theme focuses on CYCWs' perceptions of the strengths-based approach as an appropriate approach for CYC work. Most participants emphasised that strengths-based work is an appropriate approach to use in CYC work that emphasises individual and personal qualities, as well as social and community connections, as revealed in the following excerpts:

Participant 6: *Strengths-based work is a perspective in child and youth care (CYC) that guides how we work and interact with young people. We highlight positive qualities that may help the child grow and learn from the situation.*

Participant 7: *Strengths-based work is an approach that highlights young people's strengths rather than their deficits or their needs. It is an approach we use to encourage and develop skills, talents, and abilities that young people have.*

Participant 11: *It is an approach to looking at a child's behaviour from a developmental point of view. We highlight good behaviour, characteristics, and qualities and use them to influence the behaviour of concern.*

Participant 14: *It is a perspective or a model that focuses on the positive aspects of the challenging behaviour or situation. In CYC, we highlight a strength or positive quality in a child to modify and manage challenging behaviours.*

Participant 15: *Strengths-based work is an approach that has transformed child and youth care because it has encouraged professionals to focus on the positive aspects of a child's life. The strengths-based approach enables professionals to move from managing weaknesses to focusing on an individual's strengths and abilities.*

Strengths-based work is viewed as a model or perspective that allows CYCWs to change and manage children's inappropriate behaviours. Brito and Boller (2020: 247) agree with the participants' responses that strengths-based work is an approach for dealing with and managing challenging behaviours children in residential care settings, exhibit. Furthermore, Stoerkel (2019) stated that a strength-based approach is an approach to people that evaluates challenges and concerns realistically and looks for chances to complement and support existing strengths and abilities, rather than focusing on and working with the problem or concern. The strengths-based approach serves as a guide on how to interact with children and young people, focusing on talents and abilities.

One participant added that the adoption of strengths-based approaches in child and youth care practice has transformed the field by encouraging more positive attitudes and values consistent with the empowering perspectives underlying these approaches. This proves that the movement has shifted away from simply managing weaknesses or issues towards developing young people's innate skills and capacities. This perspective asserts that focusing on the youth's positive characteristics and advantages, rather than their deficiencies, is critical to their development and growth (Salazar *et al.* 2020).

The excerpts additionally indicate that CYCWs have a clear understanding of strengths-based work and how to effectively implement it in their work with children and youth. It is clear that in child and youth care, the strengths-based approach is used as a guide to manage and teach children and young people appropriate behaviours, values and morals. Professionals encourage children and young people to capitalize on their strengths rather than focus on negative characteristics.

4.4.2 Theme 2: The value of strengths-based work

The second theme emphasises the crucial importance of strengths-based work in residential care facilities. A thematic analysis of the strengths-based approach's value and influence in this context identified three unique sub-themes, which are listed below:

4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Therapeutic and developmental interventions

The participants highlighted that strengths-based work is valuable since all programmes, interventions, and assessments are language and age-appropriate, and it fosters growth and development in the lives of young people. Participants believe that the strengths-based approach is a valuable tool in CYC because it governs the way they think about people and the way they go about their work daily for all actions and interactions. Participants stated the following:

Participant 5: *The strengths-based approach is useful in CYC, it guides our practice and profession. Strengths-based work is useful and important in this field because it assesses all our programmes and interventions, ensuring that they are effective in all the domains of development. The strengths-based approach is a holistic tool that can be integrated into all the models we use for care and protection.*

Participant 8: *The strengths-based approach provides therapeutic services and outcomes. It works across all developmental domains, creating a therapeutic and developmental environment. Strengths-based work benefits the young person and modifies the environment. For example, if a child experiences neglect and abuse, child and youth care workers ensure the centre's room has educational posters and motivational quotes, not triggering the child but empowering them.*

Participant 11: *The strengths-based approach has many benefits in our work with children. We can create different activities and programmes for children and in strengths-based work, we are allowed to design personal programmes (called IDPs- Individual Developmental Plans), group activities and most importantly, age and developmentally appropriate.*

Participant 15: *In residential care, children exhibit challenging behaviours. The strengths-based approach serves as a disciplinary technique that ensures that our environment and services are therapeutic and bring about change and development in a young person. Therapeutic and developmental interventions in childcare settings have huge potential for empowering young people and generating greater change in society.*

The participants believe that the strengths-based approach is a valuable tool in CYC interventions and programmes. It has the remarkable ability to address and heal the developmental domains of the young person while simultaneously creating a therapeutic and nurturing environment. It guides professionals into adopting appropriate and developmental behaviour management techniques. These behaviour management techniques ensure that children and young people are given the necessary tools to respond and react to conflict situations. Furthermore, it allows professionals to offer care and protection.

Research by the National Council of Teachers of English (2023) stated that the strengths-based approach emphasises that children can display their learning in different ways. Learning settings should allow children to exhibit their knowledge through a variety of activities, such as writing, drawing, talking, and doing. Participants confirmed this, stating that the strengths-based approach allows them to design different programmes and activities for children's individual developmental needs. A participant in the study also shared that strengths-based

work is not a one-size-fits-all approach, there are individualised programmes for children in residential care, as revealed by the excerpt:

Participant 13: *Our activities, programmes, assessments and tasks affect each child's emotional, physical, social and spiritual domain. This is ensured by the strengths-based approach because in CYC it's not used as a one-size-fits-all approach. We are flexible and creative when we utilise the strengths-based approach to ensure that it is age-appropriate and a developmental approach. We consider these factors because children do not have the same age or mental capacity. To ensure holistic development, programmes must align with those factors, and with strengths-based principles.*

It is clear that strengths-based work is not used as a one-size-fits-all strategy, but rather one that values children's uniqueness while acknowledging the significance of contextual factors in their surroundings. This is echoed by Feng (2022: 240), who pointed out that the provision of regulated services and interventions should not be a one-size-fits-all but rather aimed towards improving individual well-being and promoting the use of resources already available within or close to the individual.

According to research, a strengths-based approach recognises that empowerment is a dynamic process that must take into consideration the individual needs and circumstances of each child and family (Pulla 2017). Participants in this study also shared that the strengths-based approach has many advantages in CYC, children are exposed to different programmes/interventions, which are either in a group or as IDPs (Individual developmental plans) for their developmental needs.

Research by Wiium and Dimitrova (2019: 147) stated that incorporating internal and external strengths into each child or youth's treatment plan is an effective way to implement strengths-based care in residential treatment. The most important idea about the strengths-based approach is that people have strengths and resources

which they can use. Through strengths-based interventions, residential CYCWs can help children re-experience their sense of self in a new way, breaking down old labels and beliefs.

4.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Integrated in all CYC programmes

The study findings showed that CYCWs favour the strengths-based approach because it complements all the programmes, interventions, tasks and language. It makes their work with children easy because it is a consistent approach to their day-to-day duties. This is reflected in the responses below:

Participant 1: *I like the strengths-based approach because it is a model that complements our work. It is easy to be consistent because we use it in all our programmes and engagements with young people and the team. We have strengths-based language that we use which is guided by principles of the strengths-based approach, our engagements are strengths-based; we use appropriate language and touch, and we disengage in a strengths-based way, by preparing the child for reintegration into society.*

Participant 3: *Strengths-based work makes our work enjoyable and enables us to form better relationships with troubled young people. What is interesting about it is that it is used as the guiding model or approach in all our engagements and interactions with young people. The strengths-based approach aligns with the mission and vision of the child and youth care centre, so it is easy for us to create developmentally appropriate interventions for children.*

Participant 6: *The strengths-based approach can be used anywhere and anytime. The benefit of this approach is that it allows us to communicate in a language that we all understand, a strengths-based language. We use skills, talents and abilities in all our activities. Counselling sessions, assessments with young people and even logging require strengths-based work. Reports are written in a developmental language that avoids labelling. For example, when logging in, I do not say what Child X is suffering from, I write down what Child X is working to recover from. Strengths-based work can be integrated into different CYC assessments. The aim is to empower and foster resiliency.*

Participant 9: *The strengths-based approach is a holistic development approach in CYC. Using the strengths-based approach, we work in different areas of development. The strengths-based approach allows us to collaborate with other professionals to ensure children fully grow and develop. A child can develop resilience, leading to increased self-efficacy, self-worth, and overall well-being*

Participant 11: *Strengths-based work is such an important tool because all our programmes are either strengths-based, or they have elements of it. The elements and principles of strengths-based work guide our services and engagements with young people. The strengths-based approach is an advantage in CYC work, we collaborate with different professionals to offer the best services to children and young people.*

The broad application of the strengths-based approach is another significant advantage since it can be used in any environment and at any moment. This adaptability enables the child and youth care centres to easily integrate the ideas of strengths-based work into every element of their services. The study results align with prior research findings, which indicated that the

integration of a strengths-based approach holds great potential for improving the efficacy of interventions and generating long-term, positive change (Kam, 2021). The Empowerment-Participation-Strengths (EPS) model proposes that by building on the strengths-based approach, professionals can urge children and young people to actively participate in the helping process, ultimately empowering them to take control of their lives (Kam, 2021).

Participants in this study also shared that integration of the strengths-based approach is a holistic approach to personal and professional development. CYCWs can work with other professionals for the complete growth and development of a young person. The multi-disciplinary team addresses many issues concerning the young person's overall development. Working together contributes to team efficacy, child and youth care professionals can leverage the power of collaboration to deliver more comprehensive and personal support to children and young people. According to Rumping, Boendermaker and de Ruyter (2018: 294), one of the main reasons for the need for multidisciplinary collaboration is the awareness that complicated social issues cannot be easily confined inside the constraints of a single discipline.

Participants reported that other professionals do not struggle with understanding strengths-based work. It has resulted in improved outcomes of strengths-based services. Participants reported that it promotes resilience, leading to increased self-efficacy, self-worth, and overall well-being. Additionally, this initiative provides care workers with the tools and methods required to infiltrate, influence, and change the assessment process to reflect a more holistic and strengths-based approach (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2021).

4.4.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Active participation and engagement in the helping process

The value of strengths-based work in residential care is that professionals can collaborate with young people to improve their overall quality of life. The participants stated the following:

Participant 7: *Strengths-based work allows children and young people to also take part in the healing process. We allow them to make decisions and to also contribute to making the intervention more personal and developmentally appropriate to them.*

Participant 9: *In strengths-based work, young people are not the victims in the process, but capable individuals, who are facing a challenging situation. It is our role to allow them to actively participate in their development by making decisions and choosing which programmes they are comfortable with.*

Participant 10: *The strengths-based approach is an important model because it fosters values that enable us to teach and implement the strengths-based approach effectively. The strengths-based work demands cooperation and collaboration with young people to reach its goal. The*

young person takes control of his/her life by engaging in decision-making processes, and assessments and interacting with the CYCW in the centre. We normalise that strengths-based work demands respect and collaboration to work.

Participant 15: *For the strengths-based approach to work, we involve the young person in all the programmes. By involving, I mean that the professional must be willing to take the child's opinion into account. The strengths-based approach allows the child to take control, and gain independence and mastery by making the young person the leader of the process. There are things we confirm from the young person and things that are suggested by the child.*

The study's results indicated that active participation and engagement are crucial tools for achieving the goals of strengths-based work. Children and young people can become active partners and not only receivers in the healing process. They can achieve mastery and control over their lives. Participants shared that they allow children and young people to take part in the healing process and to make decisions that concern them. This is vital in strengths-based work because it allows young people to partner with them and actively participate in their development. This is in line with the study by Perdue and Pandelaere (2020: 72), who stated that the strengths-based approach allows children and young people not to be seen as passive, helpless, "victims" to be rescued but instead as self-empowered individuals fighting a crisis in which professionals take the role of a facilitator, instead of a rescuer.

A study by Gratton (2019: 245) highlighted that active participation helps individuals develop essential interpersonal skills like communication and collaboration. The strengths-based approach holds great significance since those skills were highlighted by the participants, stating that they are important in strengths-based work. Furthermore, the strengths-based approach bases its assumptions on "client competence" and holds each individual responsible for his or her actions and recovery (Nelson-Becker *et al.* 2020: 327). Participants shared that active participation and engagement promote long-term, sustainable outcomes and overall well-being in the child. The child can adapt and normalise to all the routines that are important in the child and youth care centre. Another participant shared that what is remarkable about active participation is that children and young people become independent, as revealed in the following excerpt:

Participant 16: *Active engagement and participation in strengths-based work allow children to be free and in control. It covers the "authority" badge, and they can see us as their parents. It also allows them to be independent because in strengths-based work, we allow them to make decisions, comments or complaints if necessary. This is a benefit because children don't become dependent on us or the resources.*

Research by Toros and Falch-Erikson (2021: 15) highlighted that a focus on and re-emphasis on pathology can encourage low expectations, result in dependence on external resources, and discourage people from developing optimally. This means that allowing and trusting the child in decision-making is one of the crucial steps in fostering autonomy. Another participant shared that it is not easy to complete the programmes or assessments if the child does not want to actively engage or participate in the tasks created for him or her. This is revealed in the excerpt below:

Participant 17: *It is very easy, and the process is effective when the child is interested in the program or engages in that activity. They are happier, relaxed and open to learning. However, when the young person is not interested or does not engage appropriately, many things go wrong. First, we struggle to reach the goal(s) of that programme, and we have to start afresh and sometimes we cancel everything.*

CYCWs value the strengths-based approach for its capability to include the young person in his or her healing journey. The participant believed that it makes children and young people responsible and improves their decision-making skills. Active participation and engagement serve as the key process in the strengths-based work. Participation, engagement and commitment from the young person intervenes to be effective and developmental. According to Kam (2021), the strengths-based approach is viewed as the foundation; participation is considered to be a useful strategy in strengths-based work; and the goal is empowerment.

Baron, Stanley, Colomina, and Pereira (2019: 52) found that working collaboratively and productively helps build and promote a collaborative and mutual working culture in which professionals and individuals can utilise their skills in a co-productive manner. Strengths-based work cultivates a culture in which interactions between individuals, organisational members, and the community are carried out in a way that fosters active engagement and participation from all involved individuals.

This research confirms that active participation is one enabler of strengths-based work. In addition, Hammond (2010: 4) stated that success will depend on various community care providers working together and adopting the same strength-based practice philosophy, as well as on staff skill development to enable effective engagement, collaboration, facilitating, and mentoring of children, youth, and their families.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Application of the strengths-based approach in residential care

Theme 3 focuses on the practical application of the strengths-based approach, emphasising how child and youth care providers incorporate this perspective into their daily interactions and

interventions with children and youth in residential care settings. This theme explores the unique techniques by which child and youth care workers identify, respond, and use innate abilities, resources, and skills of the young people under their supervision, enabling them to take an active role in their healing and development. The thematic analysis of CYCWs' application of the strengths-based approach in residential care revealed three sub-themes, as indicated below:

4.4.3.1: Sub-theme 1: Use of kinds words and tone

Participants in this study revealed that communication is key when applying the strengths-based approach in child and youth care work. The most important aspect when interacting with a young person is understanding the choice of words you use, the tone and approach, as revealed in the following excerpts:

Participant 4: *The strengths-based approach is about talking politely, using kind words and solving problems using the strengths or capabilities of a young person. I use the strengths-based approach by avoiding labelling and nicknames. I think respect is important when implementing the strengths-based approach. When implementing the strengths-based approach I am selective of my words. For example, I do not say that a child stole something, I say that a child took something without permission.*

Participant 8: *I implement it by using an educative and developmental language. In child and youth care you don't say children have "difficult or disruptive behaviours", we use words like "challenging or unacceptable". When applying a strengths-based approach, it is important to highlight strengths, positive traits and behaviours that you will use to enforce change and development in a young person. I also make use of appropriate touch. Sometimes we have to hug or hold their hands to demonstrate the love and care we have for them.*

Participant 10: *The strengths-based approach starts with how we talk. I make use of kind and developmental words. My programmes and interventions are centred around a skill or talent. For example, I do not say that a child is a slow learner or that she is not an active listener. I say that she finishes tasks quickly and with enthusiasm, but I have observed that at times she misses instructions.*

Participant 13: *I apply the strengths-based approach by focusing on the abilities, talents and skills of a young person. My role is to create an age and developmentally appropriate task or activity to enhance that talent or skill that the young person has. In crises, I use that talent or skill to remind the young person that he/she is capable of being better or that she has something good going on. To implement the strengths-based approach, you have to focus on the positive*

things only. The words and tone demonstrate respect and care for the young person. Respect is a crucial element in this approach.

Participant 14: *I implement the strengths-based approach by using attending behaviours. It is important to actively listen to the young person. I make use of appropriate touch and communicate using kind words and a soft tone. This calms a young person, and I can identify strengths and use those strengths to lead a young person through a challenging situation.*

Many of the participants highlighted that language is an important factor in strengths-based work. It is of paramount importance to mind the words, tone and approach when communicating with a young person. Research by McPherson (2020: 61) stated that the strengths approach has been praised for its respectful and developmental nature. Respect plays a major role in ensuring that strengths-based work remains growth-oriented and focused on the child's competence.

In addition, Corcoran (2011) and Edwards and Parkinson (2023) also discovered that respect is a crucial component of the strengths-based approach; it requires respecting the child's inherent value and dignity, as well as their potential for development and transformation. By maintaining a professional and respectful approach, the professional demonstrates confidence in the individual's ability to overcome difficulties and achieve their goals. Participants in this research study also shared that respect goes hand-in-hand with co-operation which is one of the main elements of the strengths-based approach. They said that it is important to choose the right words. This fosters collaboration and cooperation.

This is supported by Smith (2022: 14) who emphasised the importance of collaboration and cooperation between the professional and the child in strengths-based work. Establishing rapport and trust with individuals with care and support needs, is crucial for implementing a strengths-based approach. Different persons will require different communication ways such as interpreters, sign language, easy-to-read materials, and pictures, and it is crucial to find the most appropriate mode of communication for the individual so that they may fully participate in the strengths-based conversation (Baron, Stanley, Colomina, and Pereira 2019: 46).

Participants emphasised that in strengths-based work they avoid labelling and the use of nicknames. Additionally, appropriate touch is important, as it can demonstrate love and care for children and young people. A study by Graham (2019: 1) highlighted that appropriate touch is used to reassure, comfort, and acceptance, especially for nervous or upset individuals. The author highlighted that guiding principles should be upheld; touch should be led by the needs of the young person, not the staff. Two participants indicated the need for child and youth care

workers to familiarise themselves with child and youth care terminology, as revealed in the following excerpts:

Participant 16: *I think it is important for us (CYCWs) to know and understand child and youth care terminology. CYC language is also developmental which teaches one respect and guides how we respond or react to conflict situations. Vocabulary matters in our field. We choose the words we use and control our tone because delivery is important. We deal with behaviour from a developmental point of view by using natural and logical consequences.*

Participant 17: *To implement the respectfully and use attending behaviours to show interest in our engagement. What is important is that when you apply the strengths-based approach, you need to be aware of the responsibilities of the young person. We have the Children's Act; we incorporate the Children's Act in our work and all other principles that guide our interactions with young people. These rules, laws and regulations are important when applying the strengths-based approach in CYC practice.*

According to Hammond (2017: 2), focusing on people's strengths is widely seen as a respectful and meaningful approach to promoting good change. Abrams, Tottenham and Ellis (2017) share the same sentiment that the strengths-based approach to providing social care services is claimed to centre on respect for the worth and dignity of every individual, as well as a concern that every individual be able to reach his or her potential. This means that CYCWs have to consider respect in their line of work. Participants also emphasised that they are very selective of the words they use when communicating with children and young people. The participant shared that delivery matters in CYC work. A practitioner must be mindful of the tone, which concerns voice projection and language. Child and youth care work is guided by strengths-based language.

Participants shared that in CYC; they have a developmental point of view. They manage or deal with challenging behaviour using natural and logical consequences. According to Brosi *et al.* (2019: 33), a natural consequence is the realistic outcome of an action. Logical consequences are the consequences we create to mirror natural consequences. CYCWs use both natural and logical consequences for children to learn better behaviours. Both natural and logical consequences encourage children to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours, but in different ways (Lang 2020). They further emphasised that they incorporate the Children's Act which guides CYC programmes and their interactions with children and youth. They highlighted the importance of these rules, laws, and regulations in ensuring the success of the strengths-based approach.

4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Emphasizing empowerment, collaboration, and self-determination

The second sub-theme that emerged was by participants who believed that to implement the strengths-based approach, one must integrate different concepts (such as the empowerment theory) that ensure holistic growth and development of a young person. Empowerment is the process of helping individuals or groups to achieve mastery over their lives, make educated decisions, and take action to better their situations (Joseph 2020: 138). Many studies highlighted that this concept has become particularly significant in the context of childcare, where empowerment can create transforming opportunities for both individuals and society. Participants acknowledge that these concepts elevate the application of strengths-based approaches, as displayed by the following excerpts:

Participant 3: *The strengths-based approach is about highlighting strengths and using them for the optimum growth and development of a young person. When I implement the strengths-based approach, I make sure I consider other concepts that align with strengths work. The empowerment theory is aligned with strengths-based work, so I use it to ensure holistic development.*

Participant 7: *It is easy to apply the strengths-based approach in my work; it is all about aligning it with a programme or intervention and inviting other concepts or models of care to either enhance or speed up the process. Sometimes we organise short-term programmes and we have to consider other models to either improve or enhance the outcomes. Empowerment theory emphasises independence, self-worth and determination which is all about enhancing children's existing skills and talents. These concepts enable us to trace the roots of disempowerment in young people.*

Participant 10: *Collective strengths-based application empowers children to gain independence; it enhances their decision-making skills and enables them to participate in their growth and education. Integrating different elements and theories like empowerment allows us to fully assess how we can use the child's strengths to work on the areas of development.*

The participants regard the strengths-based approach as an approach that can be integrated into other models or approaches. The benefit of this is that it does not change strengths-based work but rather improves the approach, process and results. Participants reported that the collective strengths-based application empowers children to be independent, make informed choices and actively participate in their growth and development. The strengths-based approach draws on several models and theories, comprises a partnership between the

professional and the young person, and analyses and evaluates the young person's strengths as the foundation for the intervention's planning (Nash 2020).

Research by Virginia Commonwealth University (2023) highlighted that social service practitioners can use additional approaches and evaluation frameworks within the strength-based approach, but at the centre of each of these is the same principle: individuals are the agents of change in their own lives, and they all can make improvements in their condition. These statements confirm that the strengths-based approach has a remarkable ability to be integrated into other concepts. In CYC, empowerment plays a major role in ensuring that children and young people reach their full potential.

The strengths-based approach ensures flexibility and adaptability of other theories and assessment tools that benefit CYC work. Research by Joo *et al.* (2019: 69) emphasised that the empowerment theory is an excellent concept that connects an individual's strengths and abilities, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviours to social policy and societal transformation. Empowerment-oriented interventions improve wellness by creating space and opportunities for young people to learn the knowledge and skills they need for their healing and journey (Zimmerman and Eisman 2017: 173)

According to Kam (2020: 329), empowerment refers to "the intent to, the processes of, assisting individuals, groups, families, and communities to discover and expend the resources and tools within and around them". This approach considers an individual's intrinsic strengths rather than taking a deficit approach to their difficulties, which does not provide them with the resources and options they require to deal with their challenges (Saleebey, 2009; Kam, 2020; Segal, Gerdes, and Steiner, 2019). It is also called the strengths-based perspective, with an emphasis on empowerment. This means that through this collaborative model, CYCWs can integrate the strengths perspective as a theoretical basis with empowerment as a goal, using participation as the method. This is called the SPACE framework, and it builds on and expands Kam's (2020) EPS model (Empowerment, Participation, and Strengths). Ultimately, the strengths-based approach is an approach that promotes increased empowerment, resilience, self-development, and positive outcomes for young people.

4.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Goal setting

The general sentiment is that helping children and young people to set goals is a crucial part of a successful strength-based approach, as revealed in the following excerpts:

Participant 9: *It is important to first figure out the goal of the intervention. Strengths-based work is about helping the young person to reach his or her developmental goals. The intervention,*

assessment or programme has developmental goals that the young person must reach. The strengths-based approach in CYC is not a process but an approach that guides our interventions and programmes.

Participant 11: *When we design strengths-based interventions and programmes, we ensure that there is a goal. This is important because the goal must meet the developmental needs of a young person. Strengths-based approach demands discipline, consistency and commitment for the young person to reach the goals of the intervention*

Participant 13: *Setting a goal is essential in strengths-based work because it means you have thoroughly assessed the needs of the child and the strengths or skills you will use to either enhance the already existing strengths or try to bridge the gap that exists.*

According to Zhang *et al.* (2023), goal orientation is the underlying motivating attitude that people use in achievement situations, which can influence their behaviour, persistence, and performance. Participants in this study shared that goal setting is one of the most important elements of strengths-based work. They believed that for a successful implementation of the strengths-based approach, one must ensure that the programme or intervention has a goal that the young person has to reach. This assures that the professional has thoroughly assessed the developmental needs of the young person and was also able to integrate the strengths of a child into the intervention or activity.

Furthermore, participants highlighted additional crucial aspects of goal setting in a strengths-based approach. They believed that it demands discipline, consistency and commitment for the young person to reach the goals of the intervention. This means that the young person must be actively involved and committed to reaching the developmental goals of the intervention. Research by Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021: 403) highlighted that children are regarded as the 'experts' in their situation, with practitioners serving as partners whose theoretical and technical knowledge must be applied to assist them, especially by empowering young people rather than labelling them.

Participants also shared that the strengths-based approach is not a process but an approach in CYC. Professionals need to decide on the goal(s) of the strengths-based intervention. Sawyer and Cole (2020: 23) also highlighted that that what is interesting about the strengths-based approach is that it is “an approach” not an outcome or a process. This suggests that the strengths-based approach in CYC is a method that doesn't require a series of steps, but it is a way of dealing with situations or challenges. Several participants also stated that goal orientation is important because it empowers the professional and the young person. They also

highlighted that the most important aspect of goal setting is to decide whether the goal is action-oriented or outcome-oriented. This is reflected in the excerpts below:

Participant 15: *Goal setting in strengths-based work is very important and as professionals, we have to identify if the strengths-based goal is action-oriented or outcome-oriented. Action-oriented goals have an action to follow, and outcome-oriented goals have a clear target and can be broken down into more manageable steps.*

Participant 17: *Strengths-based approach to goal setting offers the best option for fostering productivity, personal development and growth. It gives the intervention the purpose and direction while empowering the child to achieve the goals.*

A study by Roberts (2024) highlighted that the strengths-based approach to goal setting derives from the idea that people and organisations perform best when they focus on strengths and build on them. Strengths-based goals focus on expanding an individual's skills and competencies to move them closer to their desired goals. Applying the strengths-based approach in goal setting allows children and young people to identify and use their skills to reach their full potential and advance their personal and professional development (Grammer and Bernhardt 2021: 64).

Participants also shared that strengths-based goals are more involved with the individual's development and growth. A strengths-based approach to goal setting is the best option for fostering productivity, personal development and growth. This approach increases an individual's persistence and thus transfers effort into commitment and motivation. Research by Virginia Commonwealth University (2023) discovered that goal orientation is essential in the strengths-based approach. This means that it is essential for CYCWs to set goals that reflect improvements or the results of an intervention. The process of setting goals is always person-centred and client-led with a strengths-based approach. Rapp *et al* (2008) suggested six standards for identifying a strengths-based approach and highlighted goal orientation as the first step. In this step, individuals must set goals for their developmental needs. Goal setting is important because it encourages individuals to transform the visions, they have of themselves and their lives into reality, and it can lead to feelings of satisfaction, which is advantageous to their mental health (Bennet 2022).

4.4.4: Theme 4: Potential benefits of the strengths-based work

Theme 4 relates to the advantages of employing strengths-based work at residential care facilities. The thematic analysis revealed three sub-themes, as indicated below:

4.4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Improved behaviour

The majority of the research participants highlighted that the strengths-based approach has a positive effect on the child's behaviour, as revealed in the following excerpts:

Participant 1: *The strengths-based approach is an ideal model for behaviour modification. This technique teaches the young person a language of kindness, calmness, and respect, which influences how the young person behaves or speaks. A child may have been exposed to an environment that encourages any language, including vulgar language, but in our centres, we normalise gentle and developmental language. The application of the strengths-based approach modifies the behavioural patterns of a young person, which is the main goal of our interventions.*

Participant 5: *I think what I love more about the strengths-based approach is that it changes the behaviour of a young person. We use the principle of normalisation where we make their lives to be normal. Respect and kindness are compulsory and normalised. I believe that the values of the strengths-based approach are essential in our programmes and interventions because they teach the young person mannerisms, discipline and respect. We are consistent with these values so that children and young people can imitate, adapt and normalise these behaviours.*

Participant 14: *Strengths-based work is responsible for behavioural change. It fosters beliefs and actions that influence the young person's mindset. The strengths-based approach teaches children and young people how to handle challenging situations, the value of respect and kindness, and how to be sensitive to diversity and cultural boundaries. All of these values influence how young people behave, build interactions with these aspects, and how they engage with us from a strength perspective.*

Many participants agreed that the strengths-based approach teaches children and young people behaviours that impact behaviour change and management. Children and young people acquire respect, kindness, healthy communication, and strengths-based language. Participants also shared that they use the principle of normalisation, which emphasises the normality of life in the lives of children and young people living in residential care facilities.

According to Montessori (2018), normalisation is a process that occurs when children and young people are engaged in meaningful activities. It is when children have independence, and an environment tailored to their developmental needs. This environment may allow them to concentrate intensively, engage in their tasks, and emerge from it energised, constantly developing their inner discipline and peace. Participants shared that they normalise values and

morals that impact the overall behaviour of a young person. This means that CYCWs will be committed to ensuring the child and young are exposed to learning activities that promote their developmental needs from the perspective of normal, healthy development – socially, mentally, physically and emotionally.

In recent years, there has been a lot of interest in the idea that behavioural change interventions are most effective when they focus on improving people's innate strengths rather than addressing their inadequacies (Gillison *et al.* (2019: 110). This suggests that integrating the strengths-based approach fosters a more constructive and empowering environment, where children and youth feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute their best.

Madrid (2020: 121) suggested that the strengths-based approach demands another way of viewing children and their families. Everyone must be seen in the context of their abilities, competence, potential, and vision, no matter how hopeless or depressed they may be as a result of oppression or trauma. Another participant shared that it is easy to change the behaviour of a young person using the strengths-based approach. It is important to view the young person as a person who is trying to reach a goal as opposed to a person who is struggling. This is highlighted in the following excerpt:

Participant 15: *It is critical to consider the young person as someone who can change. This allows the young person to focus on the aims of the interventions. In strengths-based work, we emphasise the positive qualities that the young person possesses or the positive events that may occur in the future. This promotes positivity and empowers young individuals to do more and, to do better.*

Kelly and Gates (2010) stated that the strengths-based approach differs from typical problem-solving procedures, which may unintentionally promote the impression of young people as "broken" or in need of repair. The participants strongly believe using the strengths-based approach, focusing on the positive characteristics of a young person, alters the child's behaviour and attitude. This is advantageous since CYCWs can focus on programmes that may improve the child's development.

A strengths-based approach seeks to create long-term transformation by making children and families more resourceful and capable of solving challenges in the future. This change is brought about by learning and experiencing growth, which builds on strengths (Proud 2023). CYCWs in residential care centres believe it is important to view the child for the change that he or she can be. In that way, children and young people are motivated and encouraged to change and to constantly improve their behaviour.

4.4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Fosters resilience and positive outcomes for children and youth

Participants in this study also believe that this approach not only generates excellent outcomes for professionals but also offers a more sensitive and calmer environment for children to acquire the required skills for reintegration into society. The following excerpts reflect the participants' responses:

Participant 6: *The advantage of strengths-based interventions is that they teach children and adolescents how to deal with many stressful situations. We have created a safe space for young people to communicate and show different emotions. This promotes resilience and autonomy.*

Participant 8: *The strengths-based approach teaches young people how to overcome challenges on their path to success. All our activities and initiatives teach young people how to form positive relationships with peers and other adults. We create programmes and therapy sessions that help them manage uncertainty, cope with setbacks, and involve them in decision-making tasks. All of these initiatives minimise the incidence of childhood depression and anxiety, as well as the risk of developing adult mental health problems.*

Participant 10: *The strengths-based approach educates young people to be independent and compassionate, to accept mistakes, and to question their views. We incorporate the empowerment concept into our work to promote resilience and cultivate a positive self that a young person can be proud of. Resilience goes a long way since it enables them to tackle obstacles that they face in the centre and prepares them for life outside of the child and youth care centre.*

Participants in this study shared remarkable benefits of strengths-based work. They shared that activities and different initiatives teach young people important relationship-building skills. They can create programmes and therapy sessions that help young people in managing stress and uncertainty. Children who engage in strengths-based work develop self-reliance, empathy, an understanding of failure, and an awareness of their behaviour. Furthermore, participants believe that strengths-based initiatives minimise the incidence of childhood depression and anxiety, as well as the risk of developing adult mental health problems.

The participants also shared that the strengths-based approach is beneficial in child and youth care, because it enables young people to develop resiliency and other positive traits that help them deal with difficult situations. According to Masten and Barnes (2018: 98), resilience is “the process of capacity for or outcome of successful adaptation, despite challenging or threatening circumstances”. Common definitions of resilience include the ability to deal with stressors, risks, and difficulties. However, authors in resilience (Cooper *et al.* 2013) argue that resilience is

associated with not only bouncing back after experiencing a setback but also leads to an increased capacity to cope with any future challenges and threats, i.e., positive adaptation (Pillay-Naidoo and Nel 2022: 2).

It is important to note that this is beneficial because it allows children and young people to develop independence. Independence helps young people complete individual tasks in the child and youth care centre and prepares them for life outside. It is noticeable that participants' views concur with Zolkoski & Bullock (2012: 2295), who claimed that fostering resilience in child and youth care requires an integrated approach that takes into account human and environmental factors. Developing self-regulation, problem-solving, and emotion control can help children and young people navigate challenges and come up with better solutions. Lonczak (2019) highlighted that by providing a supportive environment with open communication and competent parenting practices, children have a significant start in developing resilience.

The strengths-based approach provides resilience-promoting skills essential for supporting children and young people in establishing critical emotional protection and confidence that will allow them to thrive in challenging situations. Participants expressed various perspectives on resiliency in children, with some adding that the perspective also helps them develop resilience. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

Participant 11: *The strengths model fosters resiliency and positive attitudes in children and us. We go through a lot every day to help children and young people to reach their developmental goals and that causes stress and anxiety but when we see change or development from children, we get empowered to do more and to trust all models. We can help more children and design even more programmes for them.*

A study by Dewa and Dewa (2023: 03) highlighted that CYCWs work in a traumatic and stressful environment daily, which causes stress and burnout. Resilient CYCWs are likely to continue providing efficient and effective services to children and their families. This means that the strengths approach does not only help children but also professionals to overcome different challenges in their line of work. Resilience is critical in CYC work because it allows CYCWs to offer effective long-term care for vulnerable children and families. The goal is resilience, which provides children and adolescents with a theoretical framework for prevention and evaluation. The child's resilience and overall functioning in the family and community are improved (Stoerkel 2019)

Resilience is a central concept within the mental health promotion framework. Resilient children are empathetic, which means they understand and sympathise with the emotions of others. They are often good communicators and problem solvers. They show a strong interest in school and are committed to learning. They are motivated to achieve their goals. They participate in different developmental tasks. They're optimistic about the future. They have an established relationship with one or more adults. They live in safe families and communities (Barankin and Khanlou 2009).

4.4.4.3 Sub-theme 3: The development of therapeutic relationships

The study participants expressed that the strengths-based work allows them to build relationships of trust and rapport with young people, as revealed by the excerpts:

Participant 2: *The strengths-based approach allows us to form therapeutic relationships with young people. Our programmes and interventions require cooperation and participation from the young person hence by highlighting strengths and respectfully approaching the young person, we can build a positive relationship.*

Participant 3: *We can build positive relationships with young people. The way we talk, address and interact with them allows us to build therapeutic relationships with them. Building positive relationships helps children develop resilience, promotes physical, mental, and emotional well-being, supports positive outcomes, and may help to reduce the risk of young people forming relationships that may result in abuse or exploitation*

Participant 7: *The benefit of this approach is that we can build meaningful relationships with children and young people. Strengths-based work is only successful when the young person is co-operating and trusts you with his or her personal feelings. It is often difficult to work with a young person when he or she is not willing to fully engage or participate*

Participant 11: *The strengths-based approach fosters the development of healthy relationships. We collaborate with children and young to identify and mobilize their existing strengths, rather than focusing on their deficits. This helps to build a relation of trust and rapport.*

Participant 13: *I believe the strengths-based approach is an important model because it allows us to form healthy relationships with children and young people. By forming healthy relationships children and young people get a sense of belonging which is an important aspect of CYC work and the first principle of the circle of courage. This allows them to excel in their academics and also reach their developmental goals or treatment goals. Building relationships of trust is the first step in child and youth care work. The engagement stage in assessments or*

any IDP is relationship building. Relationship building is important because a child opens up and we can record necessary details.

The study results highlighted that CYCWs believe that the strengths-based approach is responsible for the development of healthy and fulfilling relationships. The study results align with prior findings, which stated that the strengths-based approach cultivate relationship qualities that can augment the holistic approach to children and young people (Berberian and Davis 2019: 19). Research by Ehlers and Muller (2020: 01) further stated that the strengths-based approach concerns itself principally with the quality of relationship that develops between those providing support and those being supported, as well as the elements that the person seeking support brings to the table.

Participants also emphasised the challenge of using the strengths-based approach when the young person is still unwilling to have a relationship with the professional. CYCWs believe that building positive relationships helps children develop resilience, promotes physical, mental, and emotional well-being, supports positive outcomes, and may help to reduce the risk of young people forming inappropriate and risky relationships that lead to exploitation or abuse. Research has emphasised the importance of therapeutic interaction in producing positive results for children and young people (Ryan *et al.* 2021). Empathy, warmth, and a collaborative alliance have been proven to correlate more strongly with successful treatment.

According to Welfare *et al.* (2013: 146), the establishment of solid therapeutic relationships is an essential component of successful strengths-based practice. Practitioners must prioritise cultivating empathy, warmth, and collaborative partnerships with those they serve, as these interpersonal characteristics are important for attaining meaningful and long-term change. The participants also shared that building therapeutic relationships in the centre helps young people perform better in school and there they are able to develop critical skills to handle social encounters and make significant connections with their peers.

Positive relationships with teachers, mentors, or other influential adults can fulfil a child's need for security and acceptance, which are critical to their social and emotional development (Zainullah *et al.* 2023: 76). Participants also expressed that building relationships of trust is the most important step of child and youth care work. The engagement stage in assessments or any IDP is relationship building. They shared that once a solid relationship has been established, they can record and thoroughly evaluate a young person, allowing them to disclose important information necessary to create a suitable programme.

The programmes and interventions that CYCWs create require cooperation and participation from the young person hence by highlighting strengths, they can form positive relationships and give young people a sense of belonging. The South African welfare system has adopted the Circle of Courage a model to promote efficient child and youth development (Chimange and Bond 2020: 5). Chimange and Bond (2020: 5) further stated that child and youth care workers are required to implement the Circle of Courage in child and youth care centres. The Circle of Courage is a youth empowerment model which highlights the four essential components for effectively guiding young people. The four vital quadrants are belonging, independence, generosity, and mastery. Professionals believe these growth needs are crucial for a young person's well-being and overall development (Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern 2013: 67). In this context, the concept of belonging is closely related to attachment theory. This theory emphasises relationships and long-term bonds.

The idea behind the Spirit of Belonging is that trusting relationships foster the fundamental need for human ties, enabling children to declare, "I am loved." A study by Wessels-Maluleke (2023) highlighted that without healthy relationships and belonging, our capacity to restrain our impulses, integrate with others, cultivate empathy, accept and celebrate individual diversity, and act with dignity towards ourselves and others is greatly hampered. The use of a strengths-based approach in residential care settings has many benefits. Children and young people are exposed to different interventions and activities that enhance existing strengths and skills.

4.4.5. Theme 5: The challenges of using the strengths-based approach

Theme 5 relates to the CYCWs' experience when using the strengths-based approach. The thematic analysis of CYCWs facing challenges in strengths-based work revealed three sub-themes, as indicated below:

4.4.5.1 Difficult to implement

The participants shared that sometimes it is difficult to implement or integrate the strengths-based approach in the interventions or programmes. The participants felt that the guiding standards and principles sometimes do not help them implement the strengths-based approach. This is reflected in the following excerpts:

Participant 3: *The strengths-based approach is difficult to implement since it must be consistent with a young person's developmental needs. The programmes may contain specific themes, but we are expected to reintegrate the strengths-based approach's values, concepts, and standards.*

Participant 4: *I believe that the strengths-based approach is too flexible in CYC work. There are many elements and principles to consider. Although this is draining, I also believe that the flexibility and the inconsistency of this model are necessary for life space work.*

Participant 5: *The strengths-based strategy is very flexible, making it difficult to adopt at times. This makes the strengths-based approach confusing, and young people tend to lose concentration because of the changing elements and ideas. There are too many concepts and standards for using the strengths-based approach, and sometimes it is difficult to integrate them all into a simple, brief intervention.*

Participant 9: *I believe that the strengths-based approach is appropriate for CYC yet too “soft”. Children and young people do not respect or listen to us because they think we are too soft or weak and we are only treating them like this because we are scared of losing our jobs. They do not understand strengths-based work.*

Many participants shared that it is difficult to implement and integrate the strengths-based approach. The challenge arises from the principles, standards and elements of the strengths-based approach. This is in line with Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021: 416), who highlighted that the strengths-based approach is difficult to synthesise because of the different populations and problem areas examined in the literature. This means the strengths-based approach can be associated with any methodology, and any methodology can convey the strengths-based approach. Participants also believe that children and young people do not understand strengths-based work. This is difficult because it means that children do not acknowledge and understand the approach they work with.

Participants also expressed that sometimes the strengths-based approach is a difficult model to use in child and youth care work since it entails many problem areas. This is supported by McDonald, Drolet and Sehgal (2021: 56) who suggested that philosophically, practitioners find it challenging to articulate some of the core principles of their profession, including the application of the strengths-based approach. This means that sometimes professionals and proponents of the strengths-based approach fail to integrate some of the core elements and principles of the strength's perspective into their daily work such as activities, interventions and programmes. Participants shared that there are too many concepts and standards for using the strengths-based approach, and sometimes it is difficult to integrate them all into a simple, brief intervention.

Studies have also concluded that child and youth care workers may struggle to explain and operationalize strengths-based approaches in their daily practice. This disparity between the

theoretical foundations of the method and the realities of frontline workers could create significant challenges to its successful implementation (McDonald, Drolet and Sehgal 2021: 56). The strengths-based perspective differs significantly from traditional, deficit-focused models, and changing this engrained way of thinking and working may be a difficult and time-consuming process for many practitioners in the profession.

The strengths perspective has different contextual implications depending on whether it is employed in an assessment, intervention, or result evaluation process (Pulla 2017). This lack of consistency in understanding the strengths-based approach can cause misunderstanding and opposition among practitioners and agencies (Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown 2021: 416). Participants in this study shared that the flexibility of the strengths-based approach is confusing and sometimes young people lose focus because of the changing principles and elements. A participant highlighted that this is a challenge since it would have been better if it was consistent in all the programmes but believed that the flexibility and inconsistency of this model are necessary.

A participant also shared an interesting input that, the strengths-based approach is difficult to implement in residential care settings because children and young people think that they are “too soft”, and that some of the principles of the strengths-based approach are too soft for the challenging behaviours they face in CYC facilities. The participants’ views concur with Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021: 417), who highlighted that the issue with the strengths-based approach is the idea that it is “soft” or not a serious part of the change process. According to Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021: 417), this view may result from the fact that the strengths perspective is an applied idea that functions through the medium of a specific intervention, rather than a modality whose efficacy can be independently examined.

4.4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Time-consuming

It was noted that many participants agreed that the strengths-based approach is not efficient enough. They believe the time and resources required to implement the strengths-based approach exceed the potential benefits, particularly in CYCCs because of the limited time in their programmes, resources, and funds. This is reflected in the following excerpts:

Participant 1: *I think what makes strengths-based work difficult is that children and young people do not understand the goals of it. We model positive behaviours with strengths-based work, which has nothing to do with our personality or strengths. Strengths-based work demands calmness and respect. This is time-consuming because we spend time explaining our work and then facilitating the programme that the child needs.*

Participant 3: *The strengths-based approach is time-consuming. There are so many things that you need to consider in strengths-based work. You need to be mindful of the words, align or integrate the strengths-based approach with the CYC programme and consider the principles or standards before implementing it. It is time-consuming and drags our interventions. It is an adaptable approach, but we spend too much time perfecting it.*

Participant 5: *The strengths-based approach wastes too much of our time. It comes with too many politics that slow down our progress and the efficiency of our programmes. It is even more difficult because sometimes the CYCC doesn't provide the necessary resources and budget for these activities.*

Participant 7: *The strengths-based approach is not efficient enough for our work. We work with too many children and design many activities and interventions, so the strengths-based approach sometimes derails our progress because of the elements and principles we integrate.*

Participant 8: *The strengths-based approach is time-consuming because we figure out which resources we will need for that activity and sometimes have to wait for weeks to receive those resources or try to use what we have to substitute for those resources. It is easy to adapt the approach in our work, but resource provision is poor in individual assessment and multidisciplinary contexts.*

The participants in the study raised valid concerns about the efficiency and feasibility of implementing a strengths-based approach in their work. They highlighted that the time-consuming nature of the approach slows down interventions and impacts the overall productivity of the programmes. The necessity to incorporate the elements and ideas of the strengths-based approach is viewed as a potential barrier to the seamless implementation of their programmes.

Research by Endale *et al.* (2020: 89) highlighted the time and resources needed to assess an individual's capabilities, devise specific interventions, and monitor their progress might be prohibitive, especially in situations with limited time or budgetary constraints. Participants in this study stated that the CYCC does not supply sufficient resources. CYCW believe that the strengths model is adaptable and will sometimes require additional resources to undertake any programme or intervention. This is a challenge because child and youth care workers may want resources to display or strengthen existing skills, talents and items that may be valuable in multidisciplinary contexts.

Participants also highlighted that many children do not get the aims of strengths-based work. Highlighting the strengths of children sometimes negatively affects them. The participants

shared that some children become overly reliant on their strengths and fail to recognize the need for continuous self-improvement or the acquisition of new skills and competencies which derails the changing process. This is reflected in the following excerpts:

Participant 16: *Another time-consuming thing is the strengths-based work we approach a problem using a child's strengths, I believe the strengths-based approach would have been efficient and effective if the problem was assessed in the process.*

Participant 17: *Strengths-based work is like a long process, and it's draining sometimes because we cannot track progress. Young people are not consistent with this approach and by always focussing on their strengths, they become overconfident and arrogant because we do not highlight their negative behaviours.*

The participants believe that the strengths-based approach is time-consuming and inefficient. They claim that analysing the problem during the process may result in a more efficient and successful intervention. This is in line with Bu and Duan (2021: 53), who stated that one of the primary criticisms of the strengths-based approach is its potential to overlook or downplay the importance of addressing individual weaknesses or areas of development. This aligns with the participants' belief that the strengths approach would have been more efficient if problems were highlighted. According to Peters (2020) defining strengths can be time-consuming, and it is necessary to employ legitimate and reliable strengths assessment tools that are also relevant to the context in which you are implementing them. This statement by Peters (2020) proves why CYCWs believe that the strengths perspective is time-consuming.

There are many strengths assessment tools that one needs to consider in a strengths-based intervention, programme or activity. According to Stoerkel (2019), assessing an individual's strengths, developing interventions, and monitoring their progress can be a time-consuming and resource-intensive process which may not be feasible in fast-paced or high-pressure environments. Moreover, some argue that an exclusive focus on strengths may neglect the importance of addressing critical gaps or areas of weakness, which can also hinder an individual's overall development and performance.

A study by Stevens *et al.* (2024: 2485) highlighted that the strengths-based approach is useful in social care. However, to overcome the barriers to implementation, practitioners must continue to advocate the strengths-based approach, provide training and resources, and work to transform the dominant assessment and intervention paradigms. This multidisciplinary strategy is needed to ensure that the strengths-based perspective is deeply ingrained and applied in social care settings.

4.4.5.3. Sub-theme 3: Insufficient supervision, training and support

The participants spoke of inadequate emotional support, financial support and care for CYCWs. Participants believe that the CYCC use the “the customer is always right” phrase since their side of the story does not matter, as indicated below:

Participant 1: *It is hard to implement the strengths-based approach because when we fail to finish the programme, reach the goal or when a young person is not cooperating, we do not have support. When we report the problems, we are also expected to have solutions and show up for our work.*

Participant 10: *We do not have support and that’s the main problem. We do not have workshops to sharpen our skills or someone to mentor us. We go through a lot without support and guidance. The strengths-based approach only caters for the child’s developmental needs.*

Participant 13: *The child is always right in this process, even if the child ends up hitting you, you have to calm down later you are expected to continue working with that child. When we report these cases, the question is always, “What did you do for child x to do this?” or “What can you do to solve this?”.*

Participant 15: *We are wounded healers in this process. We take in a lot for the strengths-based approach to our work, but no one has our backs. We are emotionally and physically drained.*

Based on the above, it is evident that implementing the strengths-based approach in child and youth care work might be difficult due to a lack of proper supervision and support for CYCWs. When dealing with setbacks, unwilling partners, or challenging ethical issues, CYCWs assigned to use the strengths-based approach frequently feel unsupported. This suggests that the strengths-based approach holds great promise, but its success depends on providing CYCWs with the necessary direction, training, and support.

A study by Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021:402) highlighted that supervision and support are essential components of good strengths-based practice because they assist social service professionals in navigating the complexity of this approach and ensuring that it is applied in a way that is truly empowering and beneficial to children and young people. Without proper supervision and assistance, social service professionals may struggle to recognise and capitalise on children’s strengths, or they may mistakenly revert to more traditional, problem-focused modes of intervention (Lamothe *et al.* 2018:14).

Participants in this study shared that support would empower them to focus on the positives and improve their work with young people. It was noticeable that many participants reported that stress and mental breakdowns affect their connection with young people. They have started taking medication to help them cope because they do not have support from the directors of CYCC, and colleagues are also struggling, and they also do not have much time to spend with their families. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

Participant 18: *What worries my colleagues and I, is that we are constantly anxious, which is bad for our interactions with children and young people. We do not have the tools or personnel to help us deal with everything we encounter when adopting strengths-based work. We now rely on anxiety and depression medication, and we routinely use prescription medicine for stress-related health issues.*

As the participants have stated, CYCWs frequently feel overwhelmed and unsupported when applying this approach, which can lead to increased anxiety and dependency on medication to cope with the emotional and physical demands of strengths-based work. This situation is serious because it not only compromises the CYCWs' ability to provide high-quality, empowering services to children and young people, but it also harms their own mental and physical health. The participants' view concurs with Dewa and Dewa (2023: 01), who stated that child and youth care work is mentally demanding and challenging, and CYCWs must be highly competent and resilient to manage unexpected events, recover from crises, acquire strength, and even nurture their future success in carrying out their duties.

Research by Frosch *et al.* (2019) also highlighted that child and youth care workers (CYCWs) encounter difficulties in their line of work that hinder their efforts and goals to deliver quality services to young people and their families. This suggests that CYCWs should be exposed to resources that assist them with destressing or improving their skills. Organisations and authorities must prioritise the provision of strong supervision and support structures for CYCWs who engage in strengths-based practice. This can include but is not limited to, regular check-ins with experienced supervisors, access to mental health services and counselling, ongoing training and professional development opportunities, and the formation of peer support networks (Frosch *et al.* 2019).

4.4.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Negative attitude towards CYCWs

The study findings revealed that CYCWs often experience negative attitudes and behaviours from children and young people in the CYCC. Child and youth care workers (CYCWs) shared that some children and young people disrespect them by using hurtful words, and vulgar

language, deliberately ignoring them and backchatting. For instance, participant 2 highlighted, *"They do not respect us at all. They do not think we are using the strengths perspective, but they believe we are too soft as professionals. They can throw stuff on you and call it a bad day and still we have to provide counselling later"*. Some participants spoke of the negative attitude towards CYCWs, as stated by participant 4, *"OMG, they are so rude, especially in the morning. They won't listen and they will always backchat. They go as far as using vulgar language or rude facial expressions"*.

A study by Brown *et al.* (2019: 219) highlighted that children and young people frequently do not recognise or understand the importance of child and youth care workers. This lack of knowledge might be caused by a lot of circumstances. Many young people may perceive these professionals as authority figures or merely as part of the "system" they navigate, rather than recognising the actual care and assistance they provide. This suggests that young people may not see the full extent of care professionals' responsibilities or the tremendous beneficial influence they can have. This is reflected in the responses below:

Participant 9: *They don't always take us seriously, and they decide when to answer politely. They are inconsistent with our routine or strengths-based approach, and they manipulate us. The problem with this is that when they don't respect us, it is difficult to continue with the activity or programme. Engagement is ineffective after a crisis incident.*

Participant 11: *They have their days of behaving and misbehaving. They sometimes hit us and then apologise, use harsh language, and tease us with names we don't understand or know.*

Participant 14: *They do not want to be warned and occasionally refuse to follow simple rules in the bathroom, kitchen or living room. They even plan to "show us flames". They ignore us and refuse to participate in any intervention or activity.*

Participant 17: *They only behave when they are in a good mood. The misbehaving is worse in the morning because some don't want to go to school. They will either refuse to follow instructions, hit you or use vulgar language. They do not respect us because they know we would never shout at them or hit them back and sometimes it is because adults have put them in traumatic experiences.*

Participant 18: *Their behaviour sometimes is draining. Rude and inconsiderate.*

The issue of disrespect towards child and youth care workers is a prevalent and concerning problem that deserves attention and investigation (Lonne *et al.* 2012). The study found that many participants agreed that they do not receive respect and appreciation from children and young people. When children misbehave or disrespect CYCWs, it is difficult for them to continue

with the activity, which disrupts everything. Engagement following a crisis incident is ineffective and unproductive. Participants also mentioned that, for the most part, children and young people respond based on their moods and decide when to show them respect. The majority of the participants claimed that the morning is the most challenging time since children do not want to go to school. They respond in different ways, with some even being physically aggressive. Participants stated that managing these behaviours is exhausting.

Participants in this study stated that children and young people in the CYCC have been exposed to traumatic events and some do not respect adults because of the situation adults have put them through. So, it is common for a young person to hate or disrespect an authority figure. For instance, participant 8 highlighted, “*They will shout at you and rudely say “You are not my mother, close your mouth”. They do not want guidance from us*”. This concurs with Brown *et al.* (2019: 219), who stated that children and youth who have experienced difficult or traumatic situations may resist forming meaningful connections with adults tasked with supporting them.

This suggests that sometimes children do not want to form relationships with CYCWs because of trust issues (Brown *et al.* 2019: 219). This is a problem in strengths-based work because collaboration or partnership is essential to the success of an intervention. These negative attitudes affect the relationship between the practitioner and the child and the progress of the intervention. Research by Phaswana and Erlank (2023: 44) suggested that some children may have developmental delays and challenges. CYCWs are then confronted by these young people and struggle to manage their behaviour. This means that these negative attitudes may be a result of past traumatic experiences or the fact that some do not have the necessary coping skills. There is a need for CYCWs to address the issue of disrespect since it affects the effectiveness of the intervention and engagement.

4.4.6 Theme 6: Suggestions for improving the strengths-based approach

Based on the findings, participants expressed that the challenges they experience while using the strengths-based approach can be addressed. Many problems of the strengths-based approach can be solved by training, support or education. It is clear that the strengths-based approach is a helpful tool that guides CYCW programmes therefore improvements are necessary for effective and efficient services to young people. The thematic analysis for the suggestions for improving strengths-based approaches revealed two sub-themes, as indicated below:

4.4.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Support, training and workshops

As indicated in the excerpts below participants believe they need support from the organisation, professional training and monthly workshops, to enhance their skills.

Participant 5: *The strengths-based approach is sometimes difficult to implement so I think workshops could help us. Monthly workshops and short-term learning programmes can help us better implement the approach and the professional development, and we can solve the challenging situations of this model as a team. This can be advantageous because we would learn how to align strengths-based elements with our everyday duties.*

Participant 6: *I think we struggle a lot with integrating the strengths-based approach in some of the programmes or interventions. I think an expert or academic can help us with information, and the dos and don'ts of this approach. I think training for this approach would be beneficial since the strengths-based approach guides CYC work. If we want to offer the best services to young people, then we need to be trained and educated about strengths-based work.*

Participant 9: *We need support from the organisation. Anything that can help us with implementing or applying the strengths-based approach in our work. We need therapy for emotional support, and professional training to sharpen our skills and get more knowledge.*

Many participants shared that CYCWs need professional development and support. They suggested that regular workshops would assist the team in better understanding the contextual implications and practical uses of the strengths-based approach. This would allow practitioners to better align the strengths-based approach with the specific needs and situations of young people.

Participants also recognised the need for organisational support to ensure the successful implementation of the strengths-based approach. This could involve offering emotional and professional development tools, such as therapy and training opportunities, to ensure that practitioners have the skills, knowledge, and emotional well-being to fully participate in strengths-based work. Research by Zondeka, Sibiya and Siluma (2024: 04) highlighted that professional development and support for child and youth care workers is critical for ensuring the well-being and positive outcomes of the children and youth in their care. This suggests that organisations and stakeholders should come up with a multi-pronged approach that will focus on improving working conditions and enhancing training and support systems

Participants also highlighted that workshops and short-term learning programmes are necessary for professional development in child and youth care since some of them have basic child and youth care qualifications. A study by Kim *et al.* (2020: 839) stated that building CYCWs'

competencies could benefit the organisation by having more content workers, improving behavioural outcomes, and lowering high turnover rates. This suggests that the organisation and stakeholders must assist workers in implementing the strengths-based approach. By valuing and empowering child and youth care workers, they can foster a more supportive and collaborative environment that ultimately benefits the children and families they serve.

Furthermore, Cook (2020: 970) highlighted that the shortage of skilled child and youth care workers in child and youth care centres leads to increased workloads for existing child and youth care workers, which in turn leads to poor quality of services, decreased staff satisfaction, and an increase in the number of CYCWs leaving the profession. The retention of skilled child and youth care workers in child and youth care centres is a critical issue that must be addressed by all concerned about the quality of services provided to young people in CYCCs (Haffejee and Levine, 2020).

These challenges can be addressed by incorporating strengths-based ideas into student and professional training and education, which can enhance this approach as an essential element of successful practice (Otto and Griffiths 1963). This can also be accomplished by providing new practitioners with the knowledge and skills required to effectively use strengths-based strategies, allowing the field to evolve and better serve the individuals and communities it strives to assist.

4.4.6.3 Sub-theme 2: Align with behaviour management techniques

The general sentiment is that the strengths-based approach does not align with behaviour management techniques, as revealed by the excerpts:

Participant 4: *I feel like the strengths-based approach should align with behaviour management techniques. A child cannot misbehave and have professionals using his/her strengths to correct that behaviour. The strengths-based approach should align or complement behaviour management techniques that do not bring the child down but rather teach him/her a lesson.*

Participant 9: *The strengths-based approach should also offer disciplinary measures. In residential care, children exhibit challenging behaviours and sometimes we must use another approach and not highlight or work with strengths. A strengths-based approach can be more effective when it is aligned with the right disciplinary measures.*

Participant 13: *I think the strengths-based approach would work better with disciplinary measures. Children and young people are not learning anything from a strengths-based*

approach because highlighting only strengths, sends a wrong message that they are perfect and that causes overconfidence, arrogance and disrespect.

Participant 15: *I think the strengths-based approach lacks behaviour management techniques. I think we should work as professionals to align the strengths-based approach with disciplinary techniques. We cannot highlight how good a child is in a situation where the child should be learning discipline. Discipline should also be straightforward, without using strengths, a wrong is wrong.*

The participants believed that the strengths-based approach would be effective if used with appropriate disciplinary measures to handle challenging behaviours in residential care settings. While the strengths-based approach focuses on finding and building upon a child's assets, interests, and abilities, it is vital to recognise that this method may not always be sufficient in dealing with more severe or chronic behavioural disorders. Participants believed that the strengths-based approach does not complement or align with behaviour management techniques, and it is unnecessary to highlight strengths in a situation where a child should be learning about discipline.

Another concern highlighted by the participants is the overuse of the strength perspective. They believe that it promotes unwanted behaviours and attitudes like overconfidence, arrogance and disrespect. According to Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021; 168), the strengths-based approach should not be abandoned in its entirety, since it is still an effective framework for creating a good and helpful learning environment. However, it is critical to combine this strategy with clear and consistent behaviour management measures that target both good and challenging behaviours. This could entail using a combination of positive reinforcement, skill development, and rational consequences to assist young people develop self-control and responsibility (Orúzar *et al.* 2019:127).

In addition, Sobeck & Reister (2020: 70) stated that integrating two complementary approaches can lead to significant improvements in young people's behaviour and overall academic and social-emotional outcomes. Preventative behaviour management strategies, such as establishing clear expectations, providing structured routines, and teaching self-management skills, can be particularly effective when combined with a strengths-based approach. This suggests that the strengths-based approach can be a helpful tool in residential CYCCs. Child and Youth Care Workers can respond better to young people's challenging behaviour without moving away from strengths-based work

Moreover, Sobeck & Reister (2020: 72) highlighted that educators and carers can construct a more holistic and effective behaviour management system by balancing a strengths-based approach and disciplinary measures. This integrated strategy can support personal growth while establishing clear expectations and providing the treatments required to address difficult behaviours. They further stated the goal should be to empower children, boost their self-esteem, and promote their general growth, all while providing a safe and loving environment for all children. It is noticeable that CYCWs support the use of the strengths-based approach. However, they believe that challenges that exist can be solved by the integration of other models of care into it.

Participants in this study also shared that when handled wisely and developmentally appropriately, disciplinary measures can be an essential supplement to the strengths-based approach, especially when a child's behaviour endangers themselves or others. Van Gink *et al.* (2018: 355) suggested that an emphasis on strengths and positives, as well as concentrating on strengths-based behaviour management in interventions with young people is crucial in fostering positive behaviours in young people. Participants in this study recommended that the strengths-based approach should incorporate these measures so that children and young people understand that wrong behaviour has consequences and that consequences exist to teach people appropriate behaviours.

4.4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented data analysed from individual interviews conducted face-to-face with the participants. The study revealed the importance of the strengths-based approach, how CYCWs utilise strengths-based approaches in residential care facilities, the challenges they face and the suggestions to improve strengths-based work. The study results were confirmed and linked with prior research on strengths-based work in child and youth care. The following chapter will include the conclusions derived from the research study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore the value of the strengths-based approach at residential child and youth care facilities in eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal. The objectives were to obtain insight into the value and application of strengths-based work in residential care, to inquire about the challenges experienced by child and youth care workers when applying strengths-based approaches and to make recommendations to improve strengths-based work in residential care. In this study, data was collected from three child and youth care centres. These child and youth care centres (CYCCs) are in the eThekweni region, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. A sample of eighteen registered child and youth care workers (CYCWs) were recruited as participants.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, which enabled the researcher to ask a series of questions and to receive reliable, comparable qualitative data from the participants. Six significant themes and seventeen sub-themes emerged and were sufficient to answer the research questions. These themes emerged from the participants' views, experiences and understanding of the strengths-based approach at their child and youth care centre. This chapter includes a summary of major findings, recommendations, limitations and a conclusion of the study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Table 5.1: Themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
CYCWs' understanding of strengths-based work	1 Understanding strengths-based work 2 An appropriate approach for CYC work
The value of strengths-based work	1 Therapeutic and developmental interventions 2 Integrated in all CYC programmes 3 Active participation and engagement in the helping process.
Application of strengths-based work in residential care	1 Use of kind words and tone 2 Emphasizing empowerment, collaboration, and self-determination

	3 Goal setting
Potential benefits of strengths-based work.	1 Improved behaviour 2 Fosters resilience and positive outcomes for children and youth 3 The development of therapeutic relationships
The challenges of using strengths-based work.	1 Difficult to implement 2 Time consuming 3 Insufficient supervision, training and support 4 Negative attitude towards CYCWs
Suggestions for improving strengths-based work.	1 Support, training and workshops 2 Align with behaviour management techniques

The following is a discussion and summary of the major findings that emanated from the study.

5.2.1 CYCWs' understanding of strengths-based work

The first objective of the study was to explore CYCWs' understanding of strengths-based work. In line with this objective, it was concluded that CYCWs believe and understand the strengths-based approach as a language that guides child and youth care practice. It is a language that supports growth and development in a young person. It demands calmness, kindness and respect. Additionally, strengths-based work is a language of care and protection that helps CYCWs with voice projection, how they respond and react to children's challenging behaviours and the choice of words they use when interacting with children and young people. The research findings concur with those of Bryant *et al.* (2021: 14) who stated that a strengths-based approach avoids stigmatising labels that individuals in need may have become accustomed to and accepted, leaving them feeling unable to make changes. Without a doubt, that deficit language hurts their life.

According to Hammond (2020: 291), strength-based practitioners use this perspective to inculcate hope and optimism by focusing on strengths. Additionally, the language that is used shapes the world, affecting not just the children and their families but also the carers. The

findings pointed out that CYCWs believe that strengths-based work is the influence and guiding approach in all of the programmes, activities, interventions and assessments they use. This means that CYCWs incorporate the strengths-based approach by considering it a language that instils positivity, growth and holistic development. Gharabaghi (2008: 105) stated that residential CYCWs have a special way of interacting with young people and their families and they ensure that their language is age and developmentally appropriate.

Moreover, the findings revealed that other participants understand the strengths-based approach as a perspective that complements child and youth care. It is about highlighting a talent or skill and using that to foster growth and change in a young person. The strengths-based approach as a perspective demands a unique way of highlighting strengths; there is a structured approach and a specific way of enhancing already existing talents in CYC work. Research by Madrid (2020: 121) asserted that the strengths perspective allows one to look at individuals, families, and communities uniquely. It was revealed that the strengths-based approach is used as a guide to manage and teach children and young people appropriate behaviours, values and morals. This was echoed by Dao *et al.* (2019: 98), who asserted that focusing on one's strengths rather than weaknesses provides people with control and a new perspective to view their lives.

Furthermore, Epstein *et al.* (2003: 17) highlighted that multiple researchers have studied this perspective and concluded that the strength perspective demonstrates that every individual has potential and that their unique talents and abilities will define who they are and determine how their life progresses, rather than their limitations. It was also shared that this approach is valuable because the strengths-based approach serves as a disciplinary technique. After all, it ensures that the environment enables healing and growth, and all behaviour management strategies are therapeutic and bring about change in a young person. The general sentiment in this study is that the strength-based approach is a shared language and philosophy of child and youth care work and the claims made by participants is that the strengths-based approach is a language of interaction, care and protection in child and youth care.

5.2.2 The value of strengths-based work

It was important in this study to explore the understanding of the strengths-based approach and, more importantly, the value of this approach in child and youth care because many studies have concluded that the strengths perspective is not particularly new or different from other well-established perspectives and that it is not founded on evidence of efficacy. Gray (2011: 05) claimed that there is a lack of empirical support for the supposed efficaciousness of the strengths-based approach. In this study, a majority of participants shared that strengths-based

work is valuable in child and youth care because it assures that all the programmes, assessments and interventions are age and developmentally appropriate. A remarkable benefit is that the strengths-based approach is responsible for therapeutic and developmental interventions.

This concurs with Semigina (2019: 96) who stated that strengths-based work also assists in identifying any limitations the person may have, allowing professionals to provide thorough treatment and appropriate interventions for their developmental needs. This means that the strengths-based approach is utilised in child and youth care as a treatment model, assisting CYCWs in developing therapeutic interventions and programmes. Participants also revealed that the value of the strengths-based approach is that it is a holistic tool that can be integrated into all the models they use for care and protection. The strengths perspective is known to be multidisciplinary and holistic (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2021). Child and youth care workers can design or create different programmes and interventions that will impact the developmental domains of young people while simultaneously making the environment therapeutic and developmental. In addition, the participants shared that it serves as the guiding approach in all the engagements and interactions with young people. They shared that strengths-based work is valuable because it allows them to collaborate with other professionals to ensure the holistic development of a young person.

In children and youth, a multidisciplinary team assesses and creates an individual development plan for each child determined to require care and protection, after which they are placed at a CYCC (Western Cape government 2022). One of the main reasons for the need for multidisciplinary collaboration is the awareness that complicated social issues cannot be easily confined inside the constraints of a single discipline (Rumping, Boendermaker and de Ruyter 2018: 294). The findings pointed out that the strengths-based approach is valuable in child and youth care because children and young people can develop resilience, leading to increased self-efficacy, self-worth, and overall well-being. Moreover, the strengths perspective fosters active participation and engagement in the helping process. According to the Social Care Institute for Excellence (2018: 11), to provide children and young people greater control over the support they receive, strengths-based approaches promote their involvement in decision-making alongside their families.

Moreover, the findings established that the participants believed that the strengths-based approach views children and youth as capable individuals dealing with difficult circumstances rather than being the victims of the process. This allows CYCWs to trust them to make important decisions about their growth and progress. A study by Suarez-Balcazar (2020: 261) revealed

that it is important to understand that the strengths perspective considers the reality that when a problem takes precedence over a person's life and becomes the key focus of attention, people become dependent on helping professionals, which lowers their expectations and prevents them from making positive changes in their lives. This suggests that the strengths-based approach promotes a young person's independence and resilience. Participants appreciate the strengths-based approach for its ability to involve the young person in his or her healing path. They mentioned how it simplifies strengths-based work, improves assessments, and guarantees that children are happier, calm, and open to learning.

5.2.3 Application of Strengths-based Work in Residential Care

A further finding from the views of several participants achieved the second objective of this study, which was to explore the application of strengths-based work in residential CYCCs. It was concluded that the most important aspect of strength-based work is communication. Participants emphasised the use of kind words and tone. CYCWs explained that it is instrumental in strengths-based work to choose appropriate words, and a respectful tone and consider a strengths-based approach when solving a crisis. They shared an important element of avoiding labels and stigmatising language.

The research findings concur with those of Herfelt, Poulsen, and Hoang (2020: 89), who asserted that strengths-based work starts with a bigger picture and emphasises a person's assets and skills throughout the change process. It avoids labelling, assumes that children and their families are capable of providing for themselves, and sees carers more as partners than specialists in the process of change. Furthermore, it was concluded that respect is an important aspect of strengths-based work and that children's challenges and situations must be respected and approached respectfully.

According to Hyams *et al.* (2018), a person-centred language prioritises people above things. Using person-centred language means recognising each individual's dignity, value, distinctive characteristics, and strengths. The words used to describe a person strongly impact their identity and self-image. Participants also highlighted the use of body language in the context of respect. They highlighted the importance of active listening and using attending behaviour to demonstrate respect and care for children and young people. The findings established that the participants applied the strengths-based approach by focussing on CYC terminology, which they deemed as developmental and positive. Child and youth care workers have adapted to a unique vocabulary, that controls and guides their tone and delivery.

It was noted that another way of applying strengths-based work in child and youth care is by emphasising empowerment, collaboration and self-determination. The findings revealed that

CYCWs must integrate different concepts and models to employ strengths-based work. It was shared that CYCWS must consider other concepts and theories that align with the strengths-based approach. The empowerment theory was praised for its ability to align and enhance the strengths-based approach. The strengths-based approach is an ideal strategy for many programmes and interventions since the ultimate goal of caring services focuses on empowerment (Choptik *et al.* 2021: 23). This means that when CYCWs integrate the empowerment theory they can create transforming opportunities for both individuals and society. Participants shared that the empowerment theory is ideal because it emphasises independence, self-worth and determination enhancing children's existing skills and talents.

It was discovered that another crucial aspect when applying the strengths-based approach is goal setting. The general sentiment is that helping children and young people to set goals is a crucial part of a successful strength-based approach. The goals of strengths-based work must align with the developmental needs and goals of the young person. It was highlighted that goal setting demands discipline, consistency and commitment for the young person to reach the goals of the intervention. This means that the young person must be actively involved and committed to reaching the developmental goals of the intervention. According to Macdonald (2014: 26), a strengths-based approach focuses on the goals that individuals hope to achieve rather than problems that lead them to seek assistance. If young people are encouraged to focus on choosing their solutions rather than receiving solutions from others, they may often behave and think differently. Research suggests that approach-oriented goals which emphasise achieving positive outcomes, tend to be more effective than avoidance-oriented goals, which focus on avoiding negative outcomes (Oscarsson *et al.* 2020). Moreover, it was concluded that goal setting in strengths-based work gives interventions purpose and direction while empowering the child to reach their full potential.

5.2.4 Potential benefits of strengths-based work

To further explore the effectiveness of the strengths-based approach in child and youth care, it was important for the researcher to enquire about the benefits of strengths-based work. The general sentiment is that by employing the strengths-based approach, CYCWs can improve the behaviours of children and young people. Children and young people who exhibit attachment and behavioural issues constitute an enormous challenge for parents, child and youth care workers, and society (Mhidza and Nhedzi 2023: 171). Participants in this study expressed that a strengths-based approach is an ideal model for behaviour management. Behaviour management is when people or professionals employ strategies or treatment procedures to improve behaviour by adjusting a person's existing environment to help the person operate better in everyday life (Alpatanni 2018: 4).

It was concluded that the strengths-based approach teaches young people a language of kindness, calmness, and respect, which guides them to respond and react to different crises. This is advantageous because participants reported that the value of the strengths-based approach in their programmes and interventions teaches young people mannerisms, discipline, respect, sensitivity to diversity and cultural awareness. They further emphasised the benefit of employing the strengths perspective by highlighting that it promotes positivity, empowers children and young people to engage in positive activities and behaviours and consistently focus on developing existing skills and talents.

Another benefit of child and youth care is that the strengths-based approach teaches children and young people how to manage, control and maintain challenging circumstances. They can withstand and recover from challenging situations quickly. The research findings concur with those of Dewa and Dewa (2023: 2), who stated that resilient young people have higher intellectual capacity than normal. In their study, Dao *et al.* (2019: 98) found that children and young people develop resilience and perform better in their families and communities.

It was concluded that the strengths-based approach is educative. It educates young people to be independent, more compassionate and to accept mistakes, and it leaves them feeling unique, important, and optimistic. They made interesting remarks that the strengths-based approach minimises the incidence of childhood depression and anxiety, as well as the risk of developing adult mental health problems. This concurs with Pulla (2017: 99) who stated that this approach can help people with depression or anxiety, and it can also help them feel more confident and boost their self-esteem. Participants also shared that young people develop autonomy and they can acquire the required skills for reintegration into society. Participants believed that strengths-based work enabled children to build positive relationships which helps enhance their social and emotional development, perform better in school, develop critical skills to handle social encounters and make significant connections with their peers. Overall, it enhances their physical, mental, emotional and social well-being.

5.2.5 The challenges of using strengths-based work

The third objective of this study focused on inquiring about the challenges that CYCWs experience in implementing strengths-based work. It was concluded that the strengths-based approach is sometimes difficult to implement. Participants raised interesting concerns that the strengths-based approach demands consistency, and they integrate it into different programmes for the developmental needs of children and young people. Participants also pointed out that they need to consider too many elements when integrating the strengths-based approach.

Research by Saint-Jacques *et al.* (2009: 454) highlighted that it can be difficult to identify the methods used in strengths-based work, and whether how services are offered is consistent with the concept. Studies have also shown that there is frequently a disconnect between the application and the guiding ideas of strength-based techniques (Wise 2020: 07). These findings explain why CYCWs may believe that it is difficult to implement the strength-based approach. Another challenge is the perceived “softness” in the strengths-based approach. Participants expressed that children and young people do not understand the strengths-based approach or the underlying concept.

Using the strengths-based approach is viewed as a weakness as children believe CYCWs are soft professionals who use this approach to save their jobs. However, another important discovery is that CYCWs believe that sometimes it is too soft for other serious and challenging behaviours they deal with. Research by Caiels, Milne and Beadle-Brown (2021: 417) highlighted that the strengths-based approach can be viewed as being "soft" or not a serious part of the change process because the strengths perspective is an applied idea that functions through the medium of a specific intervention, rather than a modality whose efficacy can be independently examined.

This means that for the strengths-based approach to be assessed and examined, it must be integrated into interventions or with other concepts. According to Frost *et al.* (2018), “Child and youth care work is emotionally demanding and challenging and requires childcare workers to be highly competent and resilient to manage unexpected events, recover from crisis, acquire strengths, and cultivate their future success in executing their duties”. This leads to another challenge the strengths-based approach is time-consuming. Participants believe that the time and resources required to adopt this strengths-based approach exceed the potential benefits, especially in CYCCs because of the limited time in their programmes, resources, and funding. Peters (2020) also highlighted that defining strengths can be time-consuming. Participants said that when integrated with child and youth care work, the strengths-based approach feels like a long daunting process with too many politics. “The CYC work environment is fast-paced and requires conscientious on-the-spot decision making” (Mhidza and Nhedzi 2023: 20). This means that using an approach needs precision and appropriate planning.

Participants highlighted, as important, a lack of attention and emotional support for CYCWs in this field. It was noticeable that CYCWs are subjected to undesirable working conditions. It was concluded that they were not receiving adequate supervision, emotional and financial support and appropriate care. They expressed that they are not provided with workshops and mentorship programmes to enable them to provide strengths-based care. Participants stated

that this has resulted in many CYCWs being diagnosed with anxiety, depression and others, routinely using prescription medicine for stress-related health issues. A study by Mhizha and Nhedzi (2023: 172) highlighted that CYCWs play a wide range of roles, and burnout can manifest as emotional exhaustion, detachment and lower levels of achievement.

Participants also expressed an important concern about disrespect. It was revealed that most of the participants have to deal with disrespect and negative attitudes from children and young people. Participants also reported inconsistency in strength-based work; highlighting that children and young people choose when to cooperate. This results in programmes and interventions being delayed or discontinued. Managing these behaviours is exhausting and these negative behaviours undermine the efficacy of strengths-based work and the effort CYCWs put into these programmes and interventions. This confirms that several challenges need to be addressed in the effective implementation of strengths-based work.

5.2.6 Suggestions for improving strengths-based work

The fourth objective sought to explore ways in which strengths-based work can be improved in child and youth care. The findings revealed that CYCWs believe that the limitations and challenges of employing the strengths-based approach in residential can be addressed. The majority of participants shared that the strengths-based approach in child and youth care can be improved by appropriate training programmes, support and education. Participants shared that they need care and support structures that would enable them to deal with challenging behaviours, execute the strengths-based approach appropriately and those that would allow them to destress and regain their strength. According to Zondeka (2021: 21), training and education serve as vital components in addressing challenges CYCWs experience and the professionalism of CYC. The skills and information needed and anticipated in this field are refined by training and education from training providers as well as the body of knowledge in CYC.

Participants expressed that workshops can be beneficial because they need skills and knowledge to implement and integrate it with child and youth care work. They further stated that support from the organisation can be advantageous because that would mean that their feelings are considered in this line of work and necessary resources are provided for them to improve their work with children without neglecting their personal and professional development. Research by Cook (2020: 970) highlighted that the lack of skilled CYCWs in child and youth care facilities increases the workload of current CYCWs, which lowers staff satisfaction, lowers service quality, and causes more CYCWs to leave the field.

The findings also revealed that CYCWs believe that emotional support should be provided for them. Moreover, CYCWs in a study by Dewa and Dewa (2023: 5), stated that CYCCs should have a resident psychologist on duty to help with the challenges that might affect the young person or professionals. These experts must exist so that CYCWs can receive the essential support and tools to effectively deal with their emotions without ignoring their responsibilities. In the concern of strengthening strengths-based work, CYCWs also shared that children need education and knowledge about the approach. Strengths-based work can be improved if the child and the professional know how to execute it.

As much as the participants shared that one of the potential benefits of strengths-based work is linked to enhanced behaviour management, they also shared that strengths-based work can be improved by aligning it with behaviour management techniques. Child and youth care workers believe that certain situations are only appropriate for consequences, and using the strengths-based approach tends to take away an opportunity for teaching and learning from a child. The emphasis on strengths should not be considered when a child should be taught a lesson or reprimanded for negative behaviour. The findings of this study reaffirm the need to improve the strengths-based approach with clear and consistent behaviour management measures that target both good and challenging behaviours. They believe that the strengths perspective can be more efficient, effective and appropriate for residential CYCCs if it is combined with positive reinforcement and rational consequences to assist young people to develop self-control and responsibility

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Recommendations for practice

The study extracted valuable information from the participants on the value of the strengths-based approach in residential care. An important theme emerged, which highlighted that there is difficulty in the implementation of the strengths-based approach. It is, therefore, recommended that more training based on strengths-based work is undertaken since the strengths-based approach is a fundamental instrument in child and youth care. It was evident in the study that the strengths-based approach guides many children and youth care programmes, interventions and activities. Therefore, training and workshops are necessary to address the challenges arising, when implementing this approach.

Skills development is an important aspect of improving life space work, therefore it is recommended that CYCWs should get the necessary skills to respond and react to children's different behaviours and to learn beneficial skills to work on their personal and professional development, especially mental health. It is also recommended that managers introduce or

facilitate the process of ensuring that child and youth care workers acquire relevant skills training and workshops to enhance existing skills or obtain new ones.

Education is of paramount importance. The field of CYC is evolving and CYCWs should always aim to learn a new body of knowledge relevant to the CYC profession. In this study, it is evident that most CYCWs have an entry-level qualification (Level 4 qualification). Therefore, CYCWS must register to either upgrade or acquire new skills and knowledge. The field of CYC has developed and many changes, regulations and new information have been introduced. It is therefore important for all CYCWs to be aware of all the developments in the field that will impact the quality of their work.

It is also recommended that more effort be put into education and resource provision. Education, training and skills development need to be encouraged by providing attractive incentives so that CYCWs may aim for higher levels of qualifications by the government or Department of Social Development (Mhizha and Nhedzi 2023: 188). It was highlighted by Zondeka (2021: 20) that “educational courses, certification programs, professional associations, and codes of ethics have all been formed in the field of CYC. This was done to regulate those who practice through legislation and programme accreditation. This means that CYCWs have an opportunity to study and gather more knowledge that it is updated and relevant to the CYC profession. The new body of knowledge that exists has been created to align with life space work and has been written by authors who understand the field of child and youth care.

The recommendation of resource provision means that managers and organisations should be willing to provide necessary resources and funding for child and youth care workers to implement strengths-based activities. In cases where professionals are suffering from burnout and anxiety, the organisation should be able to assist the CYCW with mental health-related resources for example therapy or counselling sessions or one-on-one meetings with other CYC experts or managers of the CYCC. According to McLean (2015: 347), supervision is an important tool for empowering child and youth care workers in their work with young people in CYCCs. Therefore, adequate supervision should be part of child and youth care work.

The management should open space to listen and support CYCWs both personally and professionally. This has been proven that support from managers promotes higher levels of well-being, better coping skills, a longer healthier life, reduced depression and anxiety and reduced stress (Belyh 2020). It is recommended that children and young people are also taught and educated about child and youth care work. They should know what child and youth care entails and understand the approaches and models implemented by CYCWs.

5.3.2 Recommendations for policy

Policymakers should establish or expand child and youth care approaches, theories, and models to equip child and youth care workers with diverse treatment strategies. This would enable CYCWs to create effective, efficient, and holistic treatment plans tailored to each child's unique needs. Child and youth care requires flexibility due to the diverse and challenging behaviours exhibited by children and young people. Developing new approaches can help professionals tailor interventions to address specific behaviours, adjusting duration, intensity, and frequency as needed. To enhance the child and youth care profession, policymakers should develop training programs that focus on evidence-based practice, strengths-based approaches, and behavior management strategies.

The provision of adequate funding for ongoing training and education is crucial for supporting child and youth care workers and ensuring they can deliver high-quality care. According to Dewa and Dewa (2020: 08), CYCWs are often underpaid, facing pay disparities, and require continuous professional development to stay updated on best practices and enhance their skills. Policymakers should prioritise funding for regular workshops, training sessions, conferences, and seminars that enable CYCWs to learn from experts and share their experiences. Flexible learning opportunities, as well as access to relevant books, journals, and online resources, are also essential for CYCWs to continue developing their expertise in child development and care. Zondeka (2021) stated that CYCWs must be recognised as a crucial part of the care professions by guaranteeing equal recognition within the social service professions. By investing in the ongoing education and professional growth of CYCWs, policymakers can empower them to provide exceptional support and services to children and youth. Furthermore, encouraging certification programmes that recognize CYCWs' specialised knowledge and skills can further strengthen the field and uplift the status of this vital profession.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research restrictions, in their most basic form, are the study's weaknesses caused by external factors that are outside of the researcher's control (Jansen 2022: 03). This study was limited to mostly female participants. Male participants were four out of eighteen. This is proof that the CYC field is still dominated by female CYCWs. This study was also limited to three CYCCs in one province, KZN. This limits the findings because there may be unique experiences and challenges of strength-based work in other CYCCs with diverse groups of children. Additionally, the study sampled 18 participants. The small sample size could limit the transferability of the results. A larger population may have provided more in-depth insights and additional themes, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths-based approach.

5.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This research study focussed on the value of the strengths-based approach at residential child and youth care facilities from the perspective of child and youth care workers. However, future research should focus on young people's perceptions and experiences of the strengths-based work at residential child and youth care centres. This would clearly outline the value of this approach. The views of the children would provide significant facts about the use and efficiency of this approach. Another area of future study is to investigate if children and young people would prefer another treatment model or approach since CYCWs revealed that they feel that it is sometimes not effective for challenging behaviours. The views of children can either enhance the effectiveness of the strengths-based approach or lead to the creation of a new more advanced approach for child and youth care work.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the value of the strengths-based approach at residential child and youth care facilities in eThekweni. It was crucial to explore the understanding and application of strengths-based work in residential care, to inquire about the challenges experienced in implementing strengths-based work and to make recommendations to improve it in residential care.

The findings demonstrated that CYCWs have an understanding of the strengths-based approach as a treatment model in children and youth care, and they were able to highlight the significance of this approach in the profession (CYC), in residential care (life space work), and the lives of children and youth. The study produced valuable and relevant information on the strengths-based approach. The other sections of this study which consisted of the literature review and data collection method, assisted the researcher in defining the strengths-based approach in a child and youth care context and finding the true value of this approach in the CYC profession. The challenges the CYCWs encountered when applying the strengths-based approach were examined, and rich information from the participants was extracted and outlined in this study.

It was revealed that the strengths-based approach is a powerful tool in child and youth care, and many CYC programmes and interventions have benefitted from using this approach. It was also noticeable that this approach is responsible for many beneficial outcomes, like the creation of holistic and multidisciplinary interventions, improved behaviour from children and young people, and the promotion of resilience and empowerment. However, the study results revealed that there are challenges with the implementation of this approach; the negative behaviours displayed by children towards it, and insufficient support, training, and supervision. It was also

clear that education, training, resource provision and combining this approach with other concepts can address the challenges and improve strengths-based work. It is recommended that CYC managers and organisations invest more in workshops, specialised training, and support structures to enable CYCWs to improve their work with children. Training and skill development are critical to the success of this approach in child and youth care.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

11 June 2023

CYC Manager
93 Ethelbert Road
Durban
4001

Request for permission to Conduct Research

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Nkosingiphile Khumalo, a Child and Youth Care student at Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for master's Dissertation is about the value of strengths-based approach at residential Child and Youth Care facilities in eThekweni, KwaZulu Natal.

I am hereby seeking your permission to use the facility (CYC centre) to conduct my research study.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools, letter of information and consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC). If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on (0794354422) or email, 21901773@dut4life.ac.za. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Nkosingiphile

Durban University of Technology (DUT)

APPENDIX B



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: The value of strengths-based approach at residential Child and Youth Care facilities in eThekweni, KwaZulu Natal.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Nkosingiphile Khumalo: Child and Youth Care

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Dr Fathima Dewan

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

Strengths-based practice is holistic and multidisciplinary and works with the individual to promote their wellbeing (Schutte and Malouff 2019: 11). The purpose of this study is to explore the value of strengths-based work and the challenges Child and Youth Care workers experience when using it. This study aims to provide recommendations and guiding principles to improve strengths-based work. This study design will be qualitative and exploratory and will gather information through semi-structured interviews from eighteen registered CYCWS. Interviews will be held online or at a convenient meeting place. Each interview will be between 30-45 minutes.

Greeting:

Good day, I hope you are well.

Introduce yourself to the participant:

I am a student at Durban University of Technology (DUT) doing research for my master's degree in child and Youth Care. I am conducting interviews and asking for help so that I can get crucial information for my literature.

Invitation to the potential participant:

I would like to invite you to participate in my study regarding the value of Strengths-based approach at residential Child and Youth Care Facilities.

What is Research?

Research is defined as the creation of new knowledge and/or use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, you are not forced to participate in any way, and you are welcome to withdraw from the study at any given point. If you feel that you are uncomfortable with the interview, you are not obligated to continue. You will be provided with the consent form so that you indicate that you agree to participate in this study.

Outline of the Procedures:

This study will use a qualitative research methodology to explore the application of the strengths-based approach and the challenges CYCWs experience while using it. An initial sample of 18 registered Child and Youth Care workers will be recruited to participate. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews to collect the necessary information. The interviews will take about 30 to 40 minutes for each participant. The participants are required to share their thoughts and experiences on the research topic. The interviews will be recorded online or with an audio recorder to gather the necessary information and they will be handled with confidentiality. Thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data gathered and presented into themes and subthemes. The

responsibility of the participant is to be present on time. Interviews will be held online or at a convenient meeting place, depending on the participant's preference.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore the value of strengths-based work in residential care.
- To explore how Child and Youth Care Workers apply strengths-based work in residential care.
- To inquire about the challenges experienced by Child and Youth Care Workers when applying strengths-based approaches.
- To provide recommendations to improve strengths-based work in residential care.

INCLUSION CRITERIA:

- All participants should be registered as Child and Youth Care workers by the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSPP)
- Participants should reside in the eThekweni municipal area of KwaZulu- Natal
- All participants should have a minimum of 2 years' experience within their facility as a CYCW.
- Participants who have implemented a strengths-based intervention or programme.
- Male and Female Child and Youth Care Workers.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Participants who are not registered as Child and Youth Care workers by the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSPP)
- Participants who do not reside in the eThekweni municipal area of KwaZulu- Natal
- All the participants who have less than 2 years' experience within their facility as a CYCW
- Participants who have not implemented a strengths-based intervention or programme.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

No risks or discomfort are anticipated during the course of this study.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study:

You are entitled to withdraw from this study at any time should you wish to do so. If there is non-compliance, illness, adverse reactions, etc., this study may be terminated. Should you feel uncomfortable in any way, you are allowed to withdraw. You can speak to the researcher and state your reasons of withdrawal and be released.

Benefits:

There will be no direct benefits to you. However, this study aims to explore the understanding of Strengths-based work and the challenges CYCWs experience. This study will therefore provide recommendations to improve Strengths-based work, which will help you (CYC professionals) to know the other elements of Strengths- based work.

Remuneration:

No remuneration will be awarded to you (i.e., no payment)

Costs of the Study:

This study will not require you to cover any costs.

Confidentiality:

Data and personal identities of participants in the research study will be kept confidential. There will be careful supervision to ensure that the researcher adheres to the best practices in protecting the confidentiality of all participants' data. In this study, all identities of the participants will be kept anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used during reporting and no identifying details of the participants will be published.

Results: The results will be out on a journal/article so that the participants get to see the findings.

Research-related Injury:

There are no injuries anticipated. However, no compensation will be provided but you will be taken to the nearest clinic or hospital.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings

Tape recordings will be kept on the USB and protected by a password. Both the hard copies and tape recordings will be kept safe on a file, which will be safely locked in a cupboard at the supervisor's office. There will be only one key, the researcher and supervisor are the only people who will have access. This data will be retained for 5 years, after 5 years it will be disposed of by deleting the recordings and hard copies will be destroyed and shredded.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: (Supervisor and details) Please contact the researcher (cell no 0794354422), my supervisor (tel no 031 3732807) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr Linganiso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

APPENDIX C



CONSENT [Main study]

Title of the Study: The value of Strengths-based work at residential Child and Youth Care facilities in eThekweni, KwaZulu- Natal

Names of Researcher: Nkosingiphile T Khumalo

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Nkosingiphile Khumalo, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: 167/23,
- I have also received, read and understood the above-written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, and initials will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- Given the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature

I, Nkosingiphile Khumalo herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

<u>Nkosingiphile</u>	<u>11/06/2023</u>	<u></u>
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature

APPENDIX D



17 October 2023
CYC Manager
93 Ethelbert Road
Durban
4001

Isicelo semvumo yokwenza ucwaningo

Sawubona

Igama lami ngingu Nkosingiphile Khumalo, umfundi weChild and youth Care enyuvesi yase eThekwini (DUT). Ucwaningo engithanda ukuligubha ezifundweni zami zobukhosi kwinkulumo-mpikiswano zimayelana nokubaluleka kokusebenzisa umbono osekela amandla ema Child and youth Care facilities eThekwini, KwaZulu Natal.

Ngalencwadi ngicela ukugunyazwa nguwe ukuthi ngisebenzise igumbi lakho lokusebenza phecelezi CYC centre ukuze ngikwazi ukwenza ucwaningo lami.

Ngiphinde ngakuhlinzeka nge ngekhophi (umfanekiso) wesiphakaniso naso esinamakhophi okuthi idatha lizoqoqwa kanjani, incwadi yemininingwane necwadi yemvumo ezosetsenziswa ekuqhubekeni kocwaningo. Ngizophinde ngihlinzeke ngencwadi ephuma kwa Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC). Uma uzodinga imininingwane ebanzi, ngicela ungangabazi ukungishayela ucingo ku 0794354422 noma i-meyili, 21901773@dut4life.ac.za . Ngiyabonga ngesikhathi sakho nokungicabangela ngaloludaba.

Yimi ozithobayo

uNkosingiphile

iNyuvesi yaseThekwini (DUT)

APPENDIX E



INCWADI YOLWAZI

Isihloko socwango: uKubaluleka kokusebenzisa umbono osekela Amandla ema Child and youth Care facilities

Umphenyi/ umphenyi oyinhloko: Nkosingiphile

Osizana nomphenyi oyinhloko: Dr F Dewan

Isingeniso esifushane ngenhloso yocwango: uMbono wamandla usebenza ngokuphelele futhi usebenza nemikhakha eminingi. uMbono wamandla uphinde usebenze nomuntu umkhuthaze ukuthi ephile kahle. Inhlalo yalolucwango ukuhlola ukubaluleka komsebenzi wombono osekela amandla nokuthi kutholakale izinselele ama Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCW) abhekana nazo uma sebenzisa umbono osekela amandla. Inhlalo yalolucwango ukunika amaCYCWs izincomo nezimiso esiyiziqondiso ukuze kwenze umbono osekela amandla ubegcono. uMklamo walolucwango uzoba owekhwalithi (ucwango lwekhwalithi) nelihlalo (ucwango oluhlalo) futhi luzothola imininingwane ngesigama esihlelekile senkulumoluhlolo kuma CYCWs awu18 (ishumi nesishagalombili). Abahlanganyeli ngizohlangana nabo endaweni yabo yokusebenza, okunye ukuthi inkulumoluhlolo izothatha imizuzu ewu30-45.

Ngiyakubingelela, ngiyethemba uyaphila.

Zichaze kumhlanganyeli: Ngingumfundi eNyuvesi yaseThekwini (DUT) ngenza uCwango lwezifundo zami zobukhosi phecelezi Masters yakwa Child and Youth care. Ngenza inkulumoluhlolo futhi bengicela usizo lwakho ukuze ngithole ulwazi olubalulekile engizolibhala.

Isimemo samhlanganyeli: Ngizocela ukuthi uzohlanganyela kucwango lwami elumayelana nombono osekela amandla ezindaweni eziganda ingane ezidinga usizo phecelezi residential Child and Youth Care facilities

Yini I research: uCwango luchazwa ngenge ndalo yolwazi olusha noma ukusebenzisa olwazi obeluvele lukhona ngezindlela ezintsha ukuze uthole imiqondo, izindlela zokwenza kanye nokuqonda okusha.

uKubamba iqhaza kulolucwango ukwenza ngokuzithandela, awuphoqelekele ukuthi ubambe iqhaza futhi uvumelekele ukuthi uhoxe noma uzikhiphe kulolucwango noma yini. Uma uzizwa ngathi awuphathekile kahle kwinkulumoluhlolo awuphoqelekele kuthi uqhubeke. Uzonikwa incwadi yemvumo yokugcizelela ukuthi uyafuna yini ukubamba iqhaza kulolucwango.

uHlelo: Lolucwango luzosebenzisa indlela yokwenza ebizwa ucwango lwekhwalithi ukuze luhlale ukusetshenziswa kombono osekela amandla kanye nezinselele amaCYCWs abhekana nawo uma sebenzisa umbono osekela amandla. Idatha lizoqoqa ukusetshenziswa isakhiwo sesigamu senkulumoluhlolo ukuze kutholakale idatha ebalulekile. Inkulumoluhlolo izothatha imizuzu engu 30 eya 45 umhlanganyeli eyedwa. Abahlanganyeli kubalulekile kuthi bekhulume ngemizwa yabo nabahlangene nakho. Inkulumoluhlolo zizo zizoqoshwa ngetheyiphi rikhoda ukuze kuqoqoke ulwazi olubalulekile noludingakalayo, lolulwazi lizophathwa ngemfihlo. uMhlaziyo otemathikhi uzosetshenziswa ukuze kuhlaziwe idatha etholakele, kuzolandela ukuveza

idatha njenge ndaba ephathwayo nange ndaba encane ephathwayo. Umthwalo wemfanelo yomhlanganyeli ukuthi ebekhona ngesikhathi. Inkulumoluhlolo izobanjelwa lapha okusebenza khona umhlanganyeli.

Objectives:

- Ukuthola ukubaluleka kombono osekela ngamandla ezindaweni ezihlala izingane ezidinga usizo nokunakekelwa phecelezi residential care.
- Ukuthola ukuthi amaCYCWs awusebenzisa kanjani umbono osekela amandla.
- Ukubuzisa ngezinsalela amaCYCWs abhekana nawo uma besebenzisa umbono osekela amandla.
- Ukunika imincomo ukuze kwenziwe umbono osekela amandla ubencono.

Inclusion criteria:

- Bonke abahlanganyeli funeke bebhaliwe ukuthi bangama Child and Youth Care Workers ku South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSPP)
- Abahlanganyeli funeke behlale kumasipala waseThekwini waKwaZulu Natali.
- Abahlanganyeli ababeneminyaka emibili kuyaphezulu besebenza endaweni yabo ngenjenge CYCW.
- Abahlanganyeli abake basebenzisa umbono osekela amandla komsebenzi wokungenelela noma kuhlelo thizeni.
- AmaCYCWs wesifazane nawesilisa.

Exclusion criteria:

- Abahlanganyeli abangabhalisiwe ukuthi bangama Child and Youth Care Workers ku South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSPP)
- Abahlanganyeli abangahlali ngaphansi komasipala waseThekwini waKwaZulu Natali.
- Abahlanganyeli ababeneminyaka engekho mabili kuyaphezulu besebenza endaweni yabo ngenjenge CYCW.
- Abahlanganyeli abangakaze bewusebenzisa umbono osekela amandla komsebenzi wokungenelela noma kuhlelo thizeni.

Izingozi noma ukuphazamiseka komhlanganyeli: Azikho izingozi empilweni noma okunye ubungozi ngezikhathi zezingoxo.

Isizathu/ ukuthi kungani umhlanganyeli angase akhishwe esifundweni: uma kwenzeka ukufuna ukuhoxa ngeke kube nemiphumela emibi ngokuba ukubamba iqhaza kungokuzithandela.

Izinzuzo: Ayikho inzuzo ebhekene nomhlanganyeli kodwa lolucwaningo lizokwazi ukufundisa ngobuzali futhi lithole kahle izitayela ezingasiza abazali kanye nezingane ukuthi beqonde kahle ukukhulisa nokukhuliswa.

Iholo: Alikho iholo elizotholakala ngoba ukubamba iqhaza kungokuzithandela.

Izindleko zocwaningo: Azikho izindleko ozothweswa zona ngalolucwaningo

Okuyimfihlo: igama lizobe liyimfihlo kuzosebenziswa ikhodi endaweni yegama.

Ukulimala okuhlobene nocwaningo: Akukho ukulimala okulindelekile kulolucwaningo, yonke into ezobe inokuphepha.

Abantu ongaxhumana nabo uMa kungenzeka ukuba unenkinga noma unemibuzo: (osiza umphenyi oyinhloko) Ngicela uxhumane nomphenyi (inombolo 0710016885) Osizana nomphenyi (iNombolobo 0313732664) noma isikhungo socwango (Research Ethics Administrator) ku 031 373 2375. Izinkinga zingabikelwa uMphathi (Director): Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Langaniso kwi 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

APPENDIX F



IMVUME

Isihloko socwaningo: uKubaluleka kokusebenzisa umbono osekela amandla ema Child and youth Care facilities.

Igama lomcwaningi: uNkosingiphile

Isitatimende sesivumelwano soku bambiqhaza kucwaningo

- Ngiaqinisekisa ukuthi ngazisiwe umcwaningi (Nkosingiphile) ngesimo, ukuziphatha, inzuzo nengozi yocwaningo
- Ngitholile, ngafunda, ngaqonda, izincwadi ezibalwe ngaphezulu (incwadi yolwazi ngeqhaza engizolibamba) ezimayelana nocwaningo
- Ngiyazi ukuthi imiphumela engizoyithola kucwaningo ekubala imininingwane emayelana nobulili, iminyaka, usuku lokuzalwa, iziqalo, nokuxilongwa kuzoba imfihlo umangabe sekushiwo umbiko wocwaningo.
- Uma ngibuka izidingo zocwaningo ngiyavumelana nokuthi ulwazi engilitholayo umangenza ucwaningo ngiizoliquhuba ngendlela yekhompuyutha yo mcwaningi
- Kungenzeka kwesinye isigaba ngaphandle kokubandlulula ngikhiphe imvume yami bese ngibamba iqhaza kucwaningo.
- Sengithole isikhathi esanele sokubuza imbuzo esuka ngaphakathi kumina ngiyazibophezela ukuthi ngizobamba iqhaza kucwaningo.
- Ngiaqonda ukuthi imiphumela ebalulekile ingaqhamuka ngisenza ucwaningo ingaba nomthelela ekubambeni kwami iqhaza.

**Igama eliphelele lomhlanganyeli
Isigxivizo sesithupha**

Usuku

Iskhathi

Isiginesha

Mina, uNkosingiphile ngiaqinisekisa ukuthi umhlanganyeli ngimazisile ngokuphelele ngemvelo, ukuphatheka nezingozi ezingaba kulolucwaningo

Nkosingiphile Khumalo
Amagama Lomcwaningi

11/06/2023
Usuku


Isiginesha

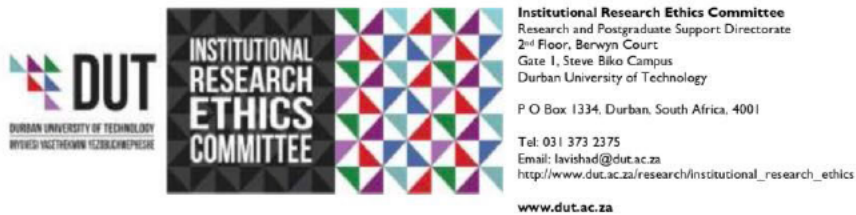
APPENDIX G



INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What do you understand about the term “Strength-based work”?
2. Do you implement the strengths-based approach in your work? If yes, how do you implement it?
3. How often do you use strengths-based approach?
4. What are the potential benefits of the strengths-based approach?
5. What do you think are the main elements of strengths-based work at residential care?
6. What are the challenges you experience when you are using a strengths-based approach?
7. What do you need from a young person to be able to implement a strengths-based approach?
8. How do you think strengths-based work can be improved?
9. How can the Child and Youth Care Centre assist you in implementing strengths-based work?

APPENDIX H: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY



13 December 2023

Ms N T Khumalo
33 Maud Mfusi Street
Durban
4001

Dear Ms Khumalo

The value of strengths-based approach at residential Child and Youth Care facilities in eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal
Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 167/23

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.

Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: DUT-IREC



ST. THERESA'S HOME

*Tel: 031 209 2166/7
Fax: 031 209 2160
002 - 240 NPO
P.B.O.930003915*

*7 St. Theresa Road
Mayville
Durban 4091*

25

October 2023

Dear Sir / Madam

Nkosingiphile Khumalo has been granted to conduct his research in 2024 @ St Theresa's Child and youth care centre.

Kind Regards

Sandy Maduray

Child and Youth Care Manager

239 Clark Road, Glenwood, Durban 4001

Tel: 031 2011261

Fax: 031 2010082

E-mail: info@stmartinshome.org.za

Website: www.stmartinshome.org.za



11/08/2023

06 November 2023

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that **Nkosingiphile Khumalo** has been granted permission to conduct her research study at St Martins Diocesan Home for children.

Should you require any further information, kindly contact the undersigned.

Kind regards

**St. Martin's Diocesan
Home for Children**
239 Clark Road
GLENWOOD, 4001
(031) 201-1261

 Zituta
Social worker



Ethelbert

Child and Youth Care Centre

93 Ethelbert Road | Malvern | 4093
PO Box 39226 | Malvern | 4055
002-283 NPO | 130002180 PBO

(+2731) 464 6555
(+2731) 86 494 7376
www.ethelbert.co.za

25 October 2023

To Whom It May Concern

This letter serves to confirm that **Nkosingiphile Khumalo** has been granted permission to conduct her research study at Ethelbert Child and Youth Care Centre.

Should you require any further information, kindly contact Mrs Vanessa Theophilus on 031 464 6555.

Kind regards

V Theophilus

Director

V. Theophilus | Director
K. Buchanan | Chairperson
D. Cory | Treasurer
Dr K. Corbishley | Secretary

Dr M. Chettiar
J. Pitchers
J. Sagadevan

M. Dlungwane
S. Gxeyane
Rev K. Bishop

APPENDIX I: TURNITIN REPORT

 N.T KHUMALO FINAL DISSE... 



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APPENDIX J: THE EDITOR'S LETTER

MS PREM COOPOO



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pcoopoo@gmail.com

EDITING AND PROOFREADING SERVICES

BA Social Work, BA Honours (Psychology), M Med.Sc Social Work (UKZN, South Africa);
Certificate in Strategic Quality Planning (Kangan Batman Tafe, Australia).

18 March 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This confirms that I, Prem Coopoo, edited Ms N Khumalo's dissertation for the Master of Child and Youth Care Degree. She is a registered student at the Durban University of Technology and her student number is 21901773.

I have provided her an edited version with tracked changes and a clean copy.

Sincerely,

Prem Coopoo