EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY FAMILIES DEALING WITH DELINQUENT CHILDREN IN BOTSWANA

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Sexual abuse is not being reported adequately. Teachers are in an ideal position to deal with and report sexual abuse, but they are not sufficiently trained in this regard. Therefore it was necessary to evaluate whether training programmes could be effective. The research that informed this article focused on presenting a specific training programme to twenty primary school teachers after which two focus group interviews were conducted. The aim was to explore the participants' perceptions regarding the programme. The teachers benefitted from the relevant information, they valued the group consolidation, they felt confident about sharing experiences and they were more prepared to act in sexual abuse cases.

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INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Child or juvenile delinquency covers criminal acts committed by children under the legal age of 18 years (Siegel & Welsh, 2009; Botswana Children's Act, 2009) and offences that warrant discipline, such as running away from home, absence from school and disobeying the lawful commands of parents or legal guardians (Shoemaker, 2010, 2013). Common acts of delinquency include vandalism, stealing, simple assaults, underage drinking, truancy, bullying and sexual acts (Malete, 2007; Matsoga, 2003; Central Statistics Office, 2014; 2015). United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2013) showed that 8,531 juveniles came into formal contact with the police and/or the criminal justice system in Botswana in the year 2011. Formal contact with the police and/or criminal justice system here refers to persons suspected, arrested or cautioned for a criminal offence at the national level (UNODC, 2013). In addition, the Central Statistics Office (2015) reported that there was an increase in primary school dropouts, from 3,026 to 3,350, documented between 2011 and 2012. They further identified teenage pregnancy, bullying, truancy and substance abuse as some of the reasons for primary and secondary school dropouts in Botswana. In 2012 they recorded 77 cases of teenage pregnancy, 35 cases of bullying, 2,345 cases of truancy and 32 cases of substance abuse at primary schools. In addition, they recorded 801 cases of teenage pregnancy, 20 of bullying, 1,408 of truancy and 19 of substance abuse at secondary schools. These high numbers of delinquent acts are a matter of national concern and as such warrant attention at home and in the community.

Factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency include economic and social issues, urbanisation, family matters, the media, the neighbourhood and peer influence (World Youth Report, 2003; Shader, 2004). Sociological and psychological effects have also been cited as contributing factors to juvenile delinquency (Ardoin & Bartling, 2010). Hoeve, Dubas, Eichelsheim, Van der Laan, Smeenk and Gerris (2009) postulated that juvenile delinquency is associated with poor parenting and lack of support from the same-sex parent. Doggett (n.d.), however, argues that children who spent the minimum amount of quality time with their guardians are more likely to be delinquent, irrespective of whether they are from a single-parent or two-parent household. Research also indicates that youths from low-income families may be more vulnerable to adolescent delinquency compared to those from high-income families (Mason, Hitch, Kosterman, McCarty, Herrenkohl & David Hawkins, 2010). Of all the factors linked to delinquency, family structure and the relations that parents have with their children have been cited as the main contributing factors leading to juvenile delinquency (Apel & Kaukinen, 2008; Leiber, Mack & Featherstone, 2009). While the statistics on delinquent children and the possible causes are well known, understanding the experiences and challenges of those who experience the effects of raising these children is necessary. This study therefore attempted to understand what experiences and challenges families with delinquent children encounter. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1979, 2004), which views human development as a matter of person-in-environment, meaning that the way in which an individual interacts with his/her environment moulds his/her behaviour, in conjunction with the theory of social constructionism, formed the theoretical underpinning of this study.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach and design

A qualitative approach with an explorative-descriptive research design was utilised for this study to investigate the salient aspects of the subject (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) through interviews and focus group discussions. This permitted the researcher to have direct interaction with the participants in their

own natural setting, which facilitated the yielding of rich descriptive data (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010; Hicks, 2004).

Selection of participants

Three sets of participants were purposively selected for this study: (1) children, (2) their families/guardians, and (3) staff members. Purposive sampling implies thoughtfully and openly selecting participants who could provide rich data on the topic of discussion from a larger population (Hennink *et al*., 2010). The purposively selected sample of children were required to be between 12 and 18 years old and have a history of delinquent or anti-social behaviour; they chosen from a bigger population at the Bana Ba Metsi School. The families with children at the Bana Ba Metsi School were identified with the assistance of the school social worker. The sample size comprised 33 delinquent children at the Bana Ba Metsi school, 10 families (selected with reference to the 33 delinquent children), and four staff members (one school social worker, two teachers and a counsellor).

Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with families/caregivers and staff members. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to focus on the full picture of the participant's experience and insights into the topic under study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011). Furthermore, focus group discussions were held with learners as such discussions promoted self-disclosure among participants (De Vos *et al*., 2011). Field notes made while observing behaviour and activities at the research site (Creswell, 2009) were taken during the Focus group discussions (FGDs) and the interviews. Individual interviews and FGDs were guided by the use of three sets of interview schedules: one designed for learners (utilised for FGDs), one for families/caregivers, and a third for staff members. Participants were interviewed until data saturation was reached (Saumure & Given, 2008). Krysik and Finn (2010) contend that in qualitative research the goal is to understand the phenomenon studied rather than generalisation, and as such data saturation is reached when the participants repeat the same information, at which point the data-collection process is terminated.

Data analysis

Thematic data analysis according to Creswell's (2007) five steps was conducted after the interviews, focus group discussions and field notes had been transcribed. This entailed: (1) identification of recurring patterns and organising data into smaller units; (2) perusing the text, making marginal notes and forming initial codes, reading and re-reading the data; (3) categorising clarified information received from the participants and placing coded data together into groups called themes; (4) interpretation of information to give meaning to the participants' experience and refining themes; and (5) reducing codes to themes and grouping them into meaningful units, thereby creating the research point of view to emphasise the data findings and themes.

Ethical aspects

Ethical clearance was secured from the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee. Permission was also obtained from the Ministry of Education and Skills Development and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Botswana. Other ethical considerations involved signed consent forms after participants' were provided with full information on the aims and objectives of the study. Consent for the children was obtained from the social worker, who was their legal custodian. The informed consent form included adequate information about the research (De Vos *et al*., 2011). Participation was voluntary and participants were able to withdraw at any time during the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; De Vos *et al*., 2011), without prejudice. The participants were assured of confidentiality and their right to anonymity, meaning that the data shared during the data-collection process would not be disclosed, or their identity revealed, to anyone (De Vos *et al*., 2011). Permission to audio record during data collection was obtained.

Trustworthiness

The principles of credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability were applied to assess trustworthiness (De Vos *et al*., 2011; Flick, 2009). Credibility was achieved through the researcher spending extended time with participants, collecting data and seeking clarification from participants (De Vos *et al*., 2011; Rubin & Babbie, 2011). Additionally, the researcher applied the principle of triangulation, utilising multiple sources of data (interviews, focus group discussions and field notes) to ensure clarity and collecting additional data to produce rich, credible findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Transferability was achieved by using purposive sampling to collect rich, detailed data (Flick, 2009; Rubin & Babbie, 2011) as transferability seeks to determine whether the results of study could be transferred to other contexts. Dependability, which is concerned with the replicability and consistency of results, was   were achieved by using the same data-collection tools for different participants (Shenton, 2004). Dependability was further enhanced by the use of the services of an independent coder.

Research findings

Five focus group discussions were conducted at the Bana Ba Metsi School. All participants were male, as the school currently only admits male students. The school social worker, two teachers and a counsellor were also interviewed. Demographic details are summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF CHILDREN IN FOCUS GROUPS

Focus group	Age range (years)	Participants per group	Participants home villages
1	13 – 16	6	Maun (3), Ghanzi, Francistown, Kanye
2	12 – 17	6	Nokaneng, Etsha (6), Hukuntsi, Maun
3	13 – 17	6	Maun (2), Ghanzi, Kanye, Mahalapye Selebe-Phikwe
4	12 – 15	7	Maun (2), Malotwane, Letlhakane (3), Bobonong
5	12 – 17	8	Letlhakane (4), Mochudi, Maun (2), Mahalapye
Total		**33**	

Ten families (see Table 2) in three different areas of Botswana (Maun village, Letlhakane village near Orapa Township, and Mahalapye village), were interviewed.

Several themes emerged from the transcribed data: (1) the impact of different family structures on delinquent children; (2) families' experiences with delinquent children; (3) challenges families face in dealing with delinquent children; (4) and families' coping strategies in addressing challenges. However, themes that will be discussed in this paper relates to families' experiences with delinquent children, as well as the challenges families face in dealing with delinquent children.

TABLE 2
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF FAMILIES INTERVIEWED

Family number	Family structure	Marital status	Education level	Employment status	Religion and church affiliation	Number of children in the house	Participant's home village
1	Extended family	Cohabiting	Primary	Unemployed (TUDRP)	Christians (Apostolic Faith Church)	8	Maun
2	Single-parent family	Never married	Primary	Self-employed	Christians (ZCC)	3	Maun
3	Single-parent family	Never married	Primary	Unemployed (TUDRP)	Christians (Rara Apostolic)	7	Maun
4	Single-parent family	Never married	None	Unemployed (CADUBG)	Christians (Apostolic Church)	2	Maun
5	Single-parent family	Never married	Secondary	Unemployed	Christians (Old Apostle Church)	2	Maun
6	Single-parent family	Never married	Primary	Unemployed	Christians (Rara Bapati Church)	5	Maun
7	Extended family	Never married	None	Unemployed (CADUBG)	Christians (Share the Fire Church)	4	Letlhakane
8	Extended family	Cohabiting	None	Unemployed	Christians (Simione Church)	11	Letlhakane
9	Two-parent family	Married	Secondary	Employed	Christians (Baptist Church)	2	Letlhakane
10	Extended family	Never married	Secondary	Unemployed	Christians (Roman Catholic Church)	4	Mahalapye

TUDRP   = Temporary under drought-relief programme
CADUBG   = Classified as destitute by Botswana government

Theme 1: Families' experiences with delinquent children

The findings of this study suggest that families experience the same ordeal of psychological pain, shame and embarrassment from delinquent behaviour as well as family disintegration when dealing with delinquent children. Similarly, they are all delighted when children reform.

- **Experienced shame and embarrassment**

Most of the interviewed families felt that the display of children's bad behaviour resulted in familial humiliation. This was common among all families.

"I used to steal and people were coming to our home to complain, it was not a good thing because I felt like I am destroying my family's name. It was like I am pulling my mom's name in the mud, and also destroying my own name" (FGD 01)

"Some of them were eating at the dumping site and it pains because people think they are not fed at home. It is a shame to the family" (Interview Family 01, Maun)

This finding is in accordance with the findings about the parents of children who were involved in gangs (Aldridge, Shute, Ralphs & Medina, 2011), as they expressed the view that their children's involvement with gangs makes them feel ashamed and humiliated, when having to face their neighbours and other members of their community.

In contrast, most mothers blamed themselves for failing in their children's upbringing which led to the criminal behaviour (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2011). In addition, Selwyn and Meakings (2015) assert that adoptive parents were ashamed of failing their adoptive children, as they had been evaluated and found to be fit to raise these children, as the responses below indicate:

"It is not an easy thing, especially orphans, they like to misbehave and they take advantage of the loss of their parents and even talk anyhow to us. It is not easy raising children that are not yours" (Interview Family 01, Maun). *"(Laughed) … you know I'm not laughing, it is not easy to raise somebody's child. You feel useless, as if there is nothing you can do. It is difficult to raise someone's child because you cannot treat him or her like your own. For example, if they misbehave, you do not care much, but your own child you get worried"* (Interview Family 10, Mahalapye)

The findings of this study indicated that most families were not happy that their children are not at school.

- **Experienced psychological pain**

Almost all the participants expressed the same sentiments about the effects of children's bad behaviour on the entire family. The families interviewed believed that it was hurtful, as well as stressful, and was not easy to deal with. The situation caused both familial distress and disturbed family, friends and neighbours:

"It was painful and I was so stressed up that I landed in hospital and was admitted" (Interview Family 02 Maun)

"To be honest, I was giving my parents headache, I was seriously naughty. I remember when I was accused to have impregnated a girl, she fainted" (FGD 05)

"It is generally painful or hurting to some families… Some parents come here crying saying, 'I do not want to see my child go through what I went through'. Another parent came here crying… the mother is now sick due to the pain of now seeing her child in that state …there is one child that tried to commit suicide and last night I could not sleep thinking about her" (Interview Staff member 04)

These findings are consistent with those presented in the study conducted by Gault-Sherman (2012), which revealed that parents of delinquent adolescents are overwhelmed and frustrated by their children's involvement in delinquent activity, resulting in less time spent with them. In addition, mothers of offending children reported a huge amount of stress, which also manifested as tension disorders, such as hypertension and migraine headaches (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2011).

Theme 2: Reasons for delinquent behaviour

- **Family is uncertain about what led to delinquent behaviour**

The results suggested that most families were helpless, not knowing what really led to their children's antisocial and criminal behaviour. Parents often internalised feelings of guilt as they considered how

they may have either contributed towards or might have prevented their child's delinquent behaviour. Ultimately, they believed that they had done their best, but could not prevent it. They started blaming their children's behaviour on other people (God, bad friends, witches, neighbours and even teachers). However, the children confirmed some of the suspicions of their families and staff members as indicated below:

> *"When it started I could not sleep, I asked God why He hates me so much, but also prayed for my child's protection"* (Interview Family 05 Maun)

> *"I used to steal from other people, and they got tired and bewitched me. They messed up with my mind"* (FGD 02)

> *"I was not living well, always had pain in my heart, asking myself so many questions like what is wrong with my child"* (Interview Family 09 Letlhakane)

- **Poverty**

Some participants associated their children's bad behaviour with poverty. Children's problem behaviour may also have developed because of negative parenting as a result of the parental mental problems and inter-parental fights associated with financial stress (Ponnet, 2014). In addition, a poverty-stricken background could influence children to commit criminal acts, such as stealing, in order to survive (Omboto, Ondiek, Odera, & Ayugi, 2013) as the following excerpts indicate:

> *"I think it may be caused by poverty and when children are hungry (go sena mo maleng) they end up going to eat in dustbins"* (Interview Family 07 Letlhakane)

> *"I left school because I didn't have jersey and during winter I will refuse to go to school until I was kicked out of school"* (FGD03)

The following quote indicates that there were many factors which, the families believed, contributed to their children's delinquent activity, apart from the lack of food. They reported that the environment contributed to child delinquency, as their neighbours were drinking too much alcohol and did not value education. Consequently, they were not encouraging children to go to school. The environment and the neighbourhood have been cited by many researchers as factors that could contribute to child delinquency (Valdimarsdóttir & Bernburg, 2014; Omboto *et al*., 2013; Furr-Holden, Lee, Milam, Johnson, Lee & Ialongo, 2011; Handley, Rogosch, Guild & Cicchetti, 2015).

> *"I suspected he did that because there was no food at home, but he continued doing that even if we managed to buy some food. Environment contributes to such behaviour. For example, when we moved to this area, we found that people here drink alcohol too much, and parents did not encourage their children to go to school"* (Interview Family 08 Letlhakane)

The environment and neighbourhood have been identified by numerous researchers as risk factors contributing to child delinquency (Valdimarsdóttir & Bernburg, 2014; Omboto *et al*., 2013; Furr-Holden *et al*., 2011; Handley *et al*., 2015). Bocar, Mercado, Macahis and Serad (2012) confirm that community attitudes or certain behaviours, such as alcohol and drugs use by individuals in a certain neighbourhood, could contribute to child delinquency. Additionally, poor societies have been identified as having a predisposition to deviant adolescent behaviour compared to wealthier backgrounds (Caicedo & Jones, 2014). Additionally, the bioecological systems theory attests to the notion that the environment influences the child's development and behaviour, since there is a reciprocal relationship between the two (Lewthwaite, 2011; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

- **Substance abuse**

The comment *"I ran away from school because I was bullied by others at school. They used to make us steal from others. I ended up drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes"* (FGD 04) indicates that fear could lead to truancy among learners, fuelling school non-attendance. This exposes adolescents to negative influences, such as using alcohol and smoking cigarettes at a young age. Bullying is a serious

concern at Botswana schools and could lead to a drop in academic performance among victims, because of their fear (Tjavanga & Jotia, 2012). Children confirmed some of their families' suspicions that they were indeed influenced by friends. This is according to the study by Mason, Mennis, Linker, Bares and Zaharakis (2014), who found that substance use could develop as result of peer influence. Some participants in this study said:

> "My friend is not schooling and he liked to tell me to go to the bars at night. He influenced me since he is older than me, he used to buy cigarettes and asked me to smoke. My friend used to tell me to sniff glue to be a man (lejita), but I refused … decided to smoke cigarette. All this happened due to friend's influence, right now the other one is in jail" (FGD 05)

> "We used to go and break in at my aunt's place since we knew she liked going to church. We influenced each other as friends to do bad things" (FGD 05)

Staff members were of the opinion that children copy behaviour or learn from their family members.

> "I think some of the contributing factors are issues from the families. For example, you will find traditional beer is made in the home and parent's drink, so the child grows up knowing that it is okay to drink. Other children are influenced by their peers at school even when their parents are not drinking" (Interview Staff member04)

This is in accordance with social learning theory as postulated Albert Bandura, which declares that children learn not only by being taught, but also through observing and modelling the behaviour of others (Cech & Martin, 2012). In addition, this is consistent with bioecological systems theory, which indicates that behaviour is shaped by how an individual interacts with the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Families with children who display delinquent behaviour also experience discrimination and judgement from the societies in which they reside, as illustrated by the discussion of the next theme.

Theme 3: Consequences of delinquent behaviour

- **Family disintegration**

Parents are forced to send their children to Bana Ba Metsi School as a result of their bad behaviour with the hope of rehabilitating them. Family separation caused uncertainties in some families, as they believed that it was their responsibility to reside with and care for their children. Separation and reintegration of families could have negative emotional effects, especially between mothers and children (Gindling & Poggio, 2009).

> "I ask myself so many questions about his wellbeing while at school" (Interview Family 03 Maun)

> "He is still young, so it concerns me as a parent not knowing how he is" (Interview Family 04 Maun)

> "When he left I was worried if he was going to cope and I was not sure they are being taken good care" (Interview Family 06 Maun)

In addition, Suárez-Orozco, Bang and Kim (2010) indicated that children who are separated from their families experience more depression and anxiety compared to those who reside with their parents. Similarly, parents who were separated from their children suffered separation anxiety (Kins, Soenens & Beyers, 2011). Some families were quoted as follows:

> "The only concern is that other children miss him because he is now far away from home. I also miss him" (Interview Family 10 Mahalapye)

> "It is not an easy thing to separate from family members, we miss him a lot ever since he went to Bana Ba Metsi School, because we used to stay with him" (Interview Family 01 Maun)

According to the bioecological systems theory, family, as part of the microsystem, is responsible for child development and socialisation (Bremner & Wachs, 2010). The separation of children from their families troubles the parents, as they believe it is their responsibility to care for their children. In addition, the chronosystem layer of the ecological systems theory signifies this separation of families from their children as a state in which changes in events occur in their environment (Wilmshurst, 2013).

- **Happiness about reform**

The Bana Ba Metsi School was established in order to rehabilitate youths at risk. The school therefore exists to provide therapy to these children. The expressions communicated by parents were characterised by positivity as they were all delighted by the transformation the Bana Ba Metsi School provided for their children. Parents commented:

> *"He was misbehaving and used to disappear visiting his father without anyone knowing, but ever since going to Bana Ba Metsi School he has been behaving well. He now understands that he should let us know when he wants to visit his father or friends"* (Interview Family 01, Maun)

> *"He is civilized now and he never went back to the dustbins during school vacations"* (Interview Family 07, Letlhakane)

> *"He was a naughty boy and honestly he has slightly improved now, but still needs time to be encouraged to change his behaviour. I am happy that he is schooling and getting education"* (Interview Family 09, Letlhakane)

The bioecological systems theory asserts that family is the socialisation layer within the microsystem in which the behaviour between parents and children affects each other (Wilmshurst, 2013); consequently, the reformation of children was associated with the parents' feelings of happiness. Alternatively, social constructionism holds that people's behaviour and mental affects are a construction of what they encounter in their lives (Pritchard & Woollard, 2013).

Theme 4: Challenges families face in dealing with delinquent children

The major challenges facing these families, as extracted from the collected data analysed, are the lack of resources to help their children and the difficulty of communicating with their children.

- **Challenges regarding the lack of resources to help their children**

The lack of resources was cited by all participants as distressing, as the families wanted to assist the children at the school. Almost all the families reported that they were not working, while others engaged in freelance employment with no fixed income to rely on. These findings are consistent with results presented by Chui (2010), who indicates that partners of incarcerated men, who were the breadwinners, expressed financial strain was a serious challenge in providing for their families, like buying food, clothes and paying school fees for their children. Although the majority of the participants in this study were single mothers, not formally employed, the findings by Chui (2010) shed light on the financial strain experienced by single-parent families, since almost all families in this study reported financial constraints as a major challenge in supporting their children because of unemployment. The following extracts provide some evidence from the participants:

> *"It is far and I have to call him frequently to show him support. Therefore, it is expensive for us"* (Interview Family 09, Letlhakane)

> *"They said it will cost them a lot of money since it is too far away from home. The main problem is money; our parents cannot afford it"* (FGD 04)

Financial constraints were the major resource deficiency that led to the failure of families to provide for their children. A study on '(en)gendering responsibilities: experiences of parenting a young offender' conducted by Holt (2009) shows economic strains as the chief problem facing single mothers in paying

for fines and court costs, as their economic situation was already fragile. In this study most of the parents or caregivers were not working and their financial burden had a severe impact on them, especially those who had to repay people from whom their children stole. One child felt ashamed that his parents had to pay for the damages he caused to one family, as he sadly said:

> *"I used to steal from people, and as such, my parents had to pay for the damages… My parents used the money that could have been used to buy food for our family"* (FGD 01)

Families appreciated the assistance they received from the government and non-governmental organisations such as the Bana Ba Letsatsi Centre, in Maun.

> *"Social welfare office helps with uniform and toiletry…"* (Interview Family 10, Mahalapye)

> *"I get help from social welfare office regarding my needs, but it is not enough"* (Interview Family 04, Maun)

> *"As a centre we give psychosocial support to families and children in need, it might be those families who are in poverty. We assist them with toiletry and other small necessary things like uniform and some clothes that we get from donors"* (Interview Staff member 04)

- **Challenges regarding the lack of communication**

Participants reported that they do manage to talk to their children occasionally, but generally it is not enough, since they can only call during weekends. As a result, communication is not the same as when the children were home and live with them. These results are similar to those of a study by Enroos (2011), who indicated that, for women prisoners, keeping relationships with family, was a challenging matter, since there were serious restrictions on when, and how long, to speak to their loved ones on the phone. Learners are not allowed to own mobile phones at school, so parents can only reach their children on weekends on the School Director's phone.

> *"They have never visited me, saying they are working, but they call once in a while to check on me"* (FGD 05)

> *"My mother only checks on me by phone"* (FGD 05)

In her study on children's experiences of contact with their imprisoned parents in four European countries, Sharratt (2014) found that keeping up communication with the family is important in order to continue daily routine interactions, receive updates on daily life and provide assurance that they are doing well and are safe. In addition, families worry about the wellbeing of their children while far away from home. Therefore, maintaining communication might help allay their concerns. Some noted that calling their children was too costly for them:

> *"It is far and I have to call him frequently to show him support. Therefore, it is expensive and last night he was telling me that he is leaving school because other children have stolen his clothes"* (Interview Family 09, Letlhakane)

The school conducts meetings at the beginning and end of term with the parents at Maun in order to share with them their children's progress at school. Unfortunately not all parents are able to make it to the meetings because of the distance. One participant stated:

> *"We only have a meeting with parents and social welfare officers twice a term, which is during the beginning and the end of the term. The meeting is held at Bana Ba Letsatsi in Maun, where we discuss children's progress at school. … they hardly attend the meetings"* (Interview Staff member 01)

According to the bioecological systems theory, the microsystem layer includes settings like the school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, as indicated by the above extract, the school tries to close the communication gap, but because of the financial constraints the families fail to attend these essential meetings.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study attempted to understand the experiences and challenges faced by families with delinquent children. Without exception, all families interviewed whose children were involved in delinquent activity experienced stress, psychological and emotional pain, but they appreciated the little difference made when their children were admitted at the Bana Ba Metsi School. The findings of the study have indicated that the participants experienced more negative consequences than positive ones in dealing with delinquent children. However, they were happy and appreciated what the Bana Ba Metsi School was doing in relation to the children's transformation. Financial scarcity, coupled with the lack of family support, led to the inability of families to visit their children at school, or even to keep in contact with them more often because of the long distance for communication or travel.

The recommendations include the following: the Department of Social Services should educate the communities they serve about their services and responsibilities such as counselling and the role of the social worker/counsellors; social services, through the social workers in various communities, should identify families experiencing similar difficulties and assist them to form support groups. It is also recommended that the findings of this study be shared with learners in schools so that they can understand the impact of delinquency on their families. Future research should address the experiences and challenges of families in dealing with female delinquent children in Botswana, as this study included only boys.

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