

**An analysis of the intergenerational family economic support expectations and responsibilities amongst Black South African employed graduates:  
Implications for social work practice**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I, Prudence Mafa hereby declare that this thesis submitted to the University of Limpopo for degree purposes has not been previously submitted to any other institution of higher learning. I further declare that this thesis is my own academic work and that all sources used in compiling this document have been properly acknowledged by use of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Prudence Mafa', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Prudence Mafa

29/01/2024

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This body of work is wholly dedicated to me. I appreciate myself for not breaking down when I encountered challenges during the course of this study. I am thankful for my persistence and resilience which carried me through the difficult times when I could have otherwise given up. This thesis is a true depiction of self-assurance.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ASGISA - Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa.

BBBEE- Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment

BEE- Black Economic Empowerment

CHAT- Cultural Historical Activity Theory

COVID-19-Coronavirus Disease-19

CSG- Child Support Grant

DTIC- Department of Trade, Industry and Competition

EPWP -Extended Public Works Programme

GEAR –Growth, Employment and Redistribution

IPV- Intimate Partner Violence

NDP- National Development Plan

NGO- Non Governmental Organisation

NRDS - National Rural Development Strategy

NSFAS- National Student Financial Aid Scheme

RDP- Reconstruction Development Programme

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

STATSA- Statistics South Africa

UIF- Unemployment Insurance Fund

## **ABSTRACT**

The practice of providing support to kin is an activity which has been passed down through generations amongst black people. This was done to ensure that the needs of individual members and those of a family as a whole are catered for by the family.

This current study sought to explore and describe the socio-economic merits and limitations of economic support provision in black families. These are the objectives which made it possible for the study aim to be achieved: to identify determinants of economic intergenerational support provision; to determine how economic support is utilised in the family; to appraise benefactors' experiences with regards to providing economic support to family members; to assess the impact of economic intergenerational support on family dynamics; and lastly to formulate strategies to ease the burden experienced by graduates who provide economic support to their intergenerational families. The study was done so that the phenomenon of intergenerational economic support provision could be analysed with social work lenses as it has social implications on the lives of both benefactors and their beneficiaries. The social work profession is committed to alleviating human suffering in all its forms. As such, this study was able to illuminate socio-economical burdens

and benefits associated with intergenerational economic support and recommended ways to mitigate discomforts brought by this phenomenon.

This study employed a phenomenological approach to study the essence of intergenerational economic support in black families and to find out what this phenomenon means to the participants. This was a qualitative, exploratory descriptive study in which data was collected by means of individual interviews. Interviews were held with ten employed black South African University graduates who were providing economic support to their extended family members. These participants were from the following provinces: Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, North West, KwaZulu-Natal, and Free State. Data was presented according to the themes which emerged during the data analysis process. The study findings revealed that intergenerational economic support is a complex and multi-layered issue. It was found to be a personal, family, and structural problem which could persist for generations to come if the family and environmental circumstances do not change. This proposed study therefore proposes a family centred programme on the intergenerational family economic support provision to help ease the burden of support provision.

Keywords: Intergenerational economic support; Black; family; university graduates; social work; South Africa

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

South African Black people mostly live in intergenerational homes in which members rely on each other for protection and survival. In this type of living arrangement, family members are responsible for the provision of both instrumental and affective needs for their kin. This is done through the provision of physical resources such as food, shelter, clothes and emotional support (Peterson & Green, 2009). Black South African families have, however, experienced hardships in terms of financial capabilities to provide for their immediate and extended family members, mostly due to a poor performing economy compounded by racial divides that led to unequal distribution of resources (Makgetla, 2020), which left most Black people living in less than desirable conditions.

A bulk of economic responsibilities in Black families is placed on employed graduates who are perceived to be having 'good jobs' and thought of as being able to provide for themselves and other individuals. The benefactors are then left having to fulfill theirs and their extended family members' needs (Fongwa, 2019), which may lead to feelings of inadequacy as they struggle to satisfy their own needs, resulting in possible resentment towards the situation of having to share limited resources with family members. African people generally ascribe to the philosophy of Ubuntu, which is based on egalitarianism and gregariousness. In the South African context, sharing limited resources seems to be one of the ways of ensuring survival for most Black families because as shown by Statistics South Africa (2021), Black people have an

unemployment rate of 51,1 percent, which is the highest compared to other races. The gregarious act of sharing resources thus brings some relief to family members who would otherwise be destitute.

Even with assistance from family members, there are individuals who might still require assistance beyond the means of their families. This external assistance may be provided by both public social welfare departments and private civil society organisations. To this end, social work services might be sought to help mitigate the challenges faced by these families. Social work is concerned with helping to implement developmental programmes aimed at improving the lives of the poor through developmental social work and people-centred development policies (Dinbabo, 2011). The current study, therefore, intended to explore and describe the limitations and benefits of intergenerational economic support in African families with the aim of recommending strategies that would help improve the lives of both givers and receivers of the said support.

This type of study has been carried out in other fields such as economics and psychology. The researcher saw it fit that intergenerational economic support be analysed with social work lenses as it has social implications on the lives of both benefactors and their beneficiaries. The social work profession is committed to alleviating human suffering in all its forms. As such, this study was able to illuminate socio-economical burdens and benefits associated with intergenerational economic support and recommend ways to mitigate discomforts brought by this phenomenon. This does not only have a bearing on the lives of the people affected, but will also paint a picture of how past policies continue to affect disadvantaged people and how, if new ones are bringing positive changes in their lives. This study also addressed the gap that exists in literature on the topic from a social work perspective by suggesting ways in which social workers can help clients address their economic issues while preserving their families.

## **1.2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The history of the South African welfare system is one that was skewed to respond to the needs of the white population. Standing and Samson (2003) point out that this particular social security system left a legacy of inadequacy in terms of addressing issues faced by majority of the population, such as supporting sustainable livelihoods



in communities that are grappling with long-term, structural unemployment and overlapping dimensions of poverty. Policies such as Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Welfare White Paper and the Growth, Employment & Redistribution (GEAR) programme are said to have done little to address the plight of the poor majority (Brockerhoff, 2013). These macroeconomic policies have failed to create an environment that is conducive to sustainable and equitable economic and social development (Patel & Hochfeld, 2013). This, according to Karriem and Hoskins (2016), is a challenge which the post-apartheid government has been struggling with since 1994.

A high unemployment rate in South Africa is a discouraging factor for job seekers, heavily affects the youth, and perpetuates high levels of poverty and inequality, which indicates that the country's poverty alleviation rate is spiralling down (Khambule & Siswana, 2017). This translates into more black families that have limited or insufficient income with which to sustain themselves.

The most common and convenient form of family amongst black South African is the intergenerational household. This arrangement provides a safety net for family members who are without careers or income prospects (Makiwane et al., 2012). The multigenerational household guarantees mutual support and the wellbeing of their members throughout their lives (Bigombe & Khagiagala, 2004). This kind of set up, however, according to Peterson and Green (2009), promotes idleness since all members are assured of the basic necessities of life, even without taking interest in productive activities because members of these families have cultural or moral obligations to support their families even if they choose to move out of their families of origin.

A family is a system that requires that all its parts play their assigned roles for it to be functional. When poor parents fail to fulfil their instrumental roles of providing for their family's basic needs, the entire family is negatively affected. In an intergenerational family, such a responsibility falls on the shoulders of the next generation. Peterson and Green (2009) point out that behavioural problems and depression are associated with failure to perform one's role in a family. This denotes that poverty has psychological implications on families that experience it. As such, social workers need to intervene in order to enhance these individuals' social functioning.

As alluded to earlier, young professionals are expected to put their families first, irrespective of their place of residence as they are seen as agents of change to their family situation. The family expectations include remitting money home for food, medicine, school fees for siblings, house improvements, family ceremonial gatherings and anything else to the benefit of the family (Matlala & Shambare, 2017). The authors state that young professionals who provide financial resources to the family are often college or university graduates.

There are mixed views as to whether assisting one's family is a burden or not. The differences are well outlined by Msibi (2019), who categorises this assistance into three types which they termed voluntary black tax, involuntary black tax and financial black tax. According to this author, "voluntary black tax is the type of assistance that is done willingly. Involuntary black tax, on the other hand, is done unwillingly. Financial black tax is support given to family that is monetary, such as buying groceries, paying school fees, or paying a bond to support family. Non-financial support is any other kind of support that is not monetary, such as providing skills to support family, providing shelter for family and providing emotional support to family".

As with the categories, there are varied motives why people offer economical support to their family members. One major driver of the provision of support is to break the deprivation trap which many black families have had to grapple with for generations. This is also done in the hope that it will be reciprocated unto one's children by the current beneficiaries should the contributor pass away while their children are still minors (Msibi, 2019). Some may see this as an investment for the future.

When children are born, they inherit their parents' social identity such as social class, race and ethnicity, religion and other social identifiers. This means that the family into which one is born plays a significant role in how children interact with their environment or how they are received by society. Most importantly, one's family of origin has an effect on their life chances because families pass on their wealth to their children (Peterson & Green, 2009) and Black families are not exonerated from these dynamics.

It is, therefore, inevitable that children born in less fortunate families will be the ones who start their lives on the back foot. As established earlier, Black people are the most affected by social inequalities. In line with the philosophy of Ubuntu, to which Black people mostly ascribe, family members in black communities feel a sense of obligation

to put others before themselves. This practice is, however, as highlighted by Fongwa (2019), met with mixed feelings as others see it as a 'crippling practice that limits young black professionals from achieving personal and professional aspirations, as family members exploit their good gestures'. As such, it is seen as having a negative impact on their financial trajectories. Indeed, Mpete and Daya (2017) in Matlala and Shimbare (2017) have noted that 94 percent of South African retirees are unable to support themselves financially and have to depend on families and government. The authors further note that taking care of one's family's financial needs hinders one to save money for themselves to ensure a better and debt-free future.

A benefactor can be trapped in their family's cycle of poverty because if one does not save for a comfortable retirement at an earlier stage or as a young professional, they will have to depend financially on their children, thus to a certain degree disabling those children to save for the future. Although possible, it is difficult to break free from the depravation trap and be able to save for one's personal needs such starting a family, or buying a house or car due to the amount of money that goes towards helping the family. Mikioni (2019) reports that in some cases, as much as half or more of one's salary is used to address their family needs. This is despite their qualification and well-paying employment. Family needs are reported to be leading to indebtedness (Msibi, 2019), which makes it difficult to experience financial relief. Mikioni (2019) suggests that group saving initiatives such as stokvels are one way of dealing with economic burdens.

### **1.3 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

#### **1.3.1 Intergenerational support**

Intergenerational support is a multifaceted, receiving or giving assistance among family members of different generations (Proteasa et al., 2017). This definition is adopted for use in this study with emphasis that the support alluded to will be of an economical kind.

#### **1.3.2 Intergenerational cycles of poverty**

"This where people are born into families and households whose great grandparents and grandparents as well as parents lived in income poverty and experienced deprivations in health and education capabilities, and as a result, they do not have

access to resources to move out of poverty and remain in such conditions” (Triegaardt & Taylor, 2018:119). This concept is also known as the deprivation trap, and its definition will be used in the context of this study.

### **1.3.3 Benefactor or contributor**

A person who gives money or other help to another person or cause (Hobson, 2001:44). For the purpose of this study, the term will refer to someone who either voluntarily or otherwise takes the responsibility of addressing their family members’ financial needs. These words are used interchangeably throughout the study.

### **1.3.4 Beneficiary**

A person who derives advantage from something (Hobson, 2001:44). In the context of this study, the term will refer to a person who is not the legal dependent of the benefactor but receives economic support from the benefactor.

**1.3.5 Ubuntu** – “an all-inclusive worldview, stands for universalised humanness (ubuntu/botho) values, which are shared across cultures, and which include care, respect, tolerance, honesty, hospitality, compassion, and empathy.” (Koenane & Olatunji, 2017). This definition is adopted in this study.

## **1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Intergenerational economic support expectations and responsibilities in African families seem to be widening and compounding in spite of efforts to improve the livelihood of this population group. Unless this phenomenon is well researched and interventions proposed, sufferings will continue unchallenged. There has always been a difference in how families are constituted across the various races in South Africa. White people have had financial means to live independently, while Black Africans, on the other hand, as Makiwane (2010) suggested, depended on a strong extended kin system, and lived in multi-generational households. In apartheid South Africa, Black people were systematically and purposely restricted to participate in meaningful education, economic and social spheres of the economy, meaning that they could not amass generational wealth for their dependents (Msibi, 2019). The remnants of such practices are still visible and felt even after the attainment of political freedom, which brought a glimpse of hope for the poor.

It is estimated that roughly half of the South African population lives in poverty, despite a significant expansion of social service delivery, leaving many people unable to support themselves and their immediate family members (Standing & Samson, 2003). The responsibility to take care of such people falls squarely on their working family members (Makiwane et al., 2017), who are expected to assist their unemployed relatives who may not be recipients of social grants. Working graduates provide some sort of social security net for their unemployed family members. This act of responsibility earns them the title of saviours or change agents to the family (Matlala & Shambare, 2017). Having to depend on the goodwill of others may, however, be disempowering to adult beneficiaries. This could lead to social consequences that could potentially disturb family relations.

Despite the fact that the act of helping out family members is seen as a cultural or moral obligation in black communities, Fongwa (2019) notes that more Black professionals have described it as an exploitation that leaves them in a vicious cycle of poverty and financial deficits; a situation that is perpetuated by the fact that they begin their careers at a disadvantage compared to their peers in other race groups. The author also notes that this situation has a potential to prolong generational poverty, the possibility of which has the likelihood of leading to other problems. Benefactors may incur debts as they attempt to address their family needs, which leaves them with feelings of being stuck in the current situation; they may also experience stress or emotional strain/exhaustion, which may lead to depression, suicide, drug use and alcoholism (Msibi, 2019). Consequences on the family system are imminent as benefactors may feel that their family members are not considerate about their personal wellbeing and needs. There is also a potential shift in the family dynamics as contributing members are treated favourably over those who cannot (Msibi, 2019). Contributors may also feel some sort of resentment towards their families regarding the way they spend their money. An added strain on interpersonal relationships between parents and their adult children comes from an intergenerational conflict that comes about when benefactors are told by their parents not to spend money on themselves before fulfilling the needs of the family (Button, 2016). Owing to the demands of the beneficiaries, the benefactor may struggle to fulfill their own personal financial obligations such as saving for the future, thereby exposing their own children to the deprivation trap or the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

Government has initiated various programmes that are aimed at assisting young entrepreneurs to help ease the burden on black families. Matlala and Shambare (2017), however, contend that the youth from poor backgrounds are not interested in starting their own businesses, which is crucial in the fight against intergenerational poverty, but are rather focused on finding a job that will provide them a reliable stream of income in order to support their families as opposed to having to contend with the financial uncertainties that come with owning a business.

## **1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **1.5.1 Aim of the study**

This study sought to explore and describe socio-economic merits and limitations of intergenerational economic support in Black families.

### **1.5.2 Objectives of the study**

The following objectives were formulated to achieve the aim of the study:

- To identify determinants of economic intergenerational support provision.
- To determine how economic support is utilised in the family.
- To appraise benefactors' experiences with regards to providing economic support to family members.
- To assess the impact of economic intergenerational support on family dynamics.
- To formulate strategies to ease the burden experienced by graduates who provide economic support to their intergenerational families.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the proposed study can help improve family dynamics by helping family members communicate openly about expectations and responsibilities about the provision of economic support. The findings can also enrich nuclear families of benefactors by teaching them (benefactors) to be open about their economic obligations in their families of origin. Benefactors can also be guided in setting boundaries and coming up with strategies that would be beneficial to all concerned, thereby promoting family solidarity. Given that the responsibilities of being a benefactor have the potential to affect one's performance at work, wellness

practitioners at workplaces may use the findings of this study to help design intervention strategies for those affected.

In line with Ubuntu practices, the findings of this study may provide ways in which healthy relations can be maintained between members of intergenerational families. The study may help provide guidelines for affording income tax relief to people who provide economic support to their extended family members.

### **1.7 STUDY LIMITATIONS**

- ❖ This study was limited to higher education institutions graduates. Therefore, generalisations cannot be made to other benefactors who are not graduates.
- ❖ All the participants involved in this study were of the African race, therefore do not reflect the demography of the country as it excluded other racial groups.
- ❖ This study was carried out with providers of economic support. Future studies can include beneficiaries of support to explore their experiences regarding intergenerational family economic support provision.
- ❖ Potential benefactors who were not providers of economic support did not participate in this study. Future research can be conducted with this target group to determine their reasons for not assisting their extended family members
- ❖ Children and romantic partners of benefactors were not involved in this study. Future research could seek to explore their experiences regarding the provision of intergenerational family economic support by their parents and partners.

### **1.8 LAYOUT OF THE THESIS CHAPTERS**

This research thesis comprises nine chapters as outlined below:

#### **Chapter One - *General Orientation of the study.***

The chapter introduces the study by looking at key issues that necessitated the study. These include the research problems, aim and objectives of the study, motivation of the study, conceptualisation of key terms as well as significance of the study.

**Chapter 2 – *Theoretical Frameworks of the Study.*** The theoretical perspectives which guided this study are the focus of this chapter

**Chapter 3 – *Ubuntu’s influence on the provision of intergenerational support.***

Central to this chapter is the nexus between the Ubuntu concept and the provision of intergenerational support amongst Black people in Africa

**Chapter 4 – *An overview of the concept of intergenerational support.*** This chapter intends to give an exposition of the concept of intergenerational support. Motivations for providing support and the types of support given and received by family members are also outlined in this chapter.

**Chapter 5– *State and Social work interventions in improving the livelihoods of the South African poor population.*** This chapter focuses on some of the poverty reduction strategies which were implemented by the government and the social work profession in the enhancement of poor people’s livelihoods.

**Chapter 6 – *Research Methodology.*** The focus of this chapter is to outline how this study was carried out. This includes providing justifications for the research methods used; from the study approach, design, sampling, population, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

**Chapter 7 - *Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion.*** Research findings are presented and discussed in this chapter.

**Chapter 8 – *Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.*** This chapter summarises research findings and give conclusions and recommendations. It is the concluding chapter of the study.

**Chapter 9 - *Proposed programme: Family-Centred Programme for intergenerational family economic support provision.*** This chapter presents the proposed programme to help ease the burden of support provision based on the study findings.

## **1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This first chapter of the thesis provides a backdrop against which this study was based. A brief overview of the phenomenon under study is provided in this chapter. The main concepts of the topic were explained, the research problem was stated as well as the aim and objectives of the study. The chapter also provided an outline of the layout of the thesis for ease of reference.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This current study was based on the tenets of two complementary theoretical frameworks which made it possible to analyse the phenomenon of intergenerational economic support in Black South African families. The first framework is the Cultural Historical Activity Theory, which was complemented by the Family Systems Theory.

#### **2.2 CULTURAL HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY**

Amongst other theories, CHAT was adopted because it provided a framework which facilitates the analysis of multitudes of relations within an activity system at a particular time and as it evolves over time. This theory also made it possible for the researcher to analyse intergenerational relationships or interactions between contributors and their family members.

##### **2.2.1 HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF THE CHAT**

The CHAT has not been popular amongst researchers in the social sciences owing to its Marxist roots. The Cultural Historical Activity Theory is based on Karl Marx's materialistic view of historically developed human consciousness (Kaatrakoski, 2009; Grimalt-Alvaro & Ametller, 2021). The theory's philosophy is rooted in the work of Karl Marx, (Engeström et al., 1999), thus it was born from revolutionary roots, and for all sundry and purposes, is a Marxist approach (Sannino & Engeström, 2018).

The Cultural Historical Activity Theory, which is at times referred to as the Activity Theory, was founded by Russian psychologists Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Luria for the purpose of theorising and research in the 1920s (Engeström et al., 1999; Grimalt-Alvaro & Ametller, 2021). The theory is derived from the Vygotskian theory of cultural mediation, which states that human activities are influenced by culturally developed

artifacts (Grimalt-Alvaro & Ametller, 2021). This is to say that the economic support provision as an activity is embedded in the culture of those providing this support.

Stetsenko (2013) sees the activity system as not just doing certain things in order to obtain outcomes, but as a creation of new forms of reality while engaging in the process of reframing and re-fabricating ongoing activities and social structures and therefore, a process of moving beyond them in creative acts of doing, being, and knowing. The theory is used in various research fields to understand contextualised human activity, with an emphasis on transformation (Grimalt-Alvaro & Ametller, 2021). Thus, the researcher chose to use this theory as the strategies recommended to alleviate the burden of economic family support are geared towards transforming the lives of the employed black graduates and their families, families of origin and nuclear families.

### **2.2.2 CHAT TENETS**

CHAT's common features are that: "human activity is mediated, objective, social and historical in nature" (Kaatrakoski, 2009:7). History is therefore an important element in the analysis of phenomena, prompting the researcher to take into consideration the broader cultural and historical context in which the phenomenon under study takes place (Fiedler & Kaner, 2009). A researcher using this theory therefore does not only focus on one particular 'thing' or activity, rather their focus should also be on the relationship between wider social processes that have a bearing on the activity. Fiedler and Kaner (2009) emphasise that the activity under study should be perceived as a historical and developing phenomenon.

Gretchel et al., (2015) explain the CHAT acronym as follows:

- 'Cultural'- positions humans-the subject of activity theory – as beings shaped by their cultural views and resources.
- 'Historical'-highlights the inseparable influence of our histories on our actions, and how this history shapes how we think.
- 'Activity-' refers to the doing of people, together, that is modified by history and culture, and situated in context.

The following excerpt unpacks each letter of the CHAT acronym:

*“There is significance in each word in the label cultural-historical activity theory. Cultural points to the premise that humans are enculturated, and everything people do is shaped by and draws upon their cultural values and resources. The term historical is used together with cultural to indicate that since cultures are grounded in histories, and evolve over time, therefore analyses of what people do at any point in time must be viewed in light of the historical trajectories in which their actions take place. The term activity refers to what people do together and is modified by both cultural and historical to convey its situatedness. Theory is used in this label to denote a conceptual framework for understanding and explaining human activity” (Foot, 2014:3).*

It is to be noted that the idea of activity is centered on human collectives rather than individuals, thereby indicating that activity involves people working jointly in a system of relations with other people, institutions, and with the natural world (Foot, 2014). Miles (2020) avers that all the elements of the activity systems are not independent but are actually a node among various interdependent systems. As the activity is geared towards a certain outcome, it becomes imperative for all involved to participate fully in order to achieve the outcome. This is what is referred to as the activity system, in that it is not just an individual involved in the activity. Foot (2014) asserts that this activity system is comprised of interlinked actions which subjects or actors engage, enact, and pursue an object or outcome. It is therefore through the activity system that the outcome would be achieved.

In the context of economic intergenerational support, both benefactors and beneficiaries ought to play their part in working towards the alleviation of distress or poverty in their homes. To achieve this, the CHAT trichotomy has to be in effect.

### **2.2.3 MAIN CONCEPTS OF THE CHAT**

CHAT is founded on a trichotomy of main concepts which are the subject, object, and outcome (Blunden, 2007). These concepts are critical in making the activity purposeful.

Below is an outline of this trichotomy by Foot (2014):

- A subject may be an individual or a group. In the context of this study, the subject is the benefactor.

- Object is the thing at which activity is directed, the thing to be acted upon which may be in material or ideal form or simultaneously both. In the context of this study, the object is the benefactor's family who are the beneficiaries of the economic intergenerational support. The object is the impoverished situation that the family find themselves in, the inability to access basic needs. The object is what gives the activity system a determined direction (Foot,2014).
- Desired outcome- improved functioning. In the CHAT, an outcome is achieved when a subject acts on an object. For this study, the outcome is an enhanced well-being of the family.

In earlier writings, Fiedler and Kaner, (2009) explained the CHAT concepts in the following way:

- An object is a problem which an activity is directed at. It could also be something that the subject is doing. The aim of an activity is based on the object, and this aim can evolve over time.
- Tools -these are what a subject utilises to create, understand or manipulate the object. They are used by the subject to interact with the object. Tools can be observable or physical, symbolic, or psychological.
- Community- this is an element of the CHAT wherein human activity takes places. This can be a group of people who share the same object for instance, one's family or colleagues at a workplace.
- Rules, norms, and conventions- these are what the interaction of the subject with the community is guided or governed by. The interaction which occurs between the subject and the community takes place within the bounds of these formal or informal rules and norms.
- Division of labour – this is what occurs when the community takes part in the activity. It is the intersection of the community and the object wherein labour can be divided horizontally or vertically. The vertical division of labour involves tasks allocated across various divisions of power, whereas the horizontal division of power involves tasks allocated across community members who are approximately of the same status.

The division of labour which occurs in the contributors' families is not only limited to economic support provision. It also encompasses provision of support in its broader term. Family members who are employed and are benefactors have the responsibility of providing economic support. Whereas those who are not contributing to the economic upkeep of the family may be tasked with the responsibility of taking care of the home and children of those who provide economic support. That way, all actors in the family system have a role to play in ensuring that the needs of the family are met.

Authors such as Roth et al. (2012) as well as Miles (2020) have reported that the subject-object relationship defines the activity and is mediated by tools and community. The tools referred to can be physical, psychological, or technical things such as computers, language, ideas, or models etc (Roth et al., 2012.). These tools are things that are used to enable the subject to achieve the desired outcome. In the context of this study, this is the money that the benefactors spend on their families.

Activity is dependent on contextual conditions in which it occurs (Grimalt-Alvaro & Ametller, 2021). The activity cannot therefore be analysed separately from the context in which it takes place. From the above description of the CHAT elements, it is clear that activity involves context and purpose, which in other words denotes that subjects or actors are involved in an activity in order to transform something. In this light, the economic support provision is for the families to meet their needs or to a larger extent, help alleviate poverty or lessen its effects. The activity carried out by subjects is driven by a motive to achieve the desired outcome.

#### **2.2.4 WHAT MOTIVATES CONTRIBUTORS' ACTIONS AS EXPLAINED USING THE CHAT**

Motivation emerges when an object meets a need which leads to an activity, essentially denoting that need and object result in the activity (Kaatrakoski, 2009). Foot (2014) recognises that a state of need in an activity system gives rise to the process of object formation. Additionally, Stetsenko (2020) notes that an individual's motive is determined by circumstances and conditions which one is grappling with and strive to change and rise above. The notion of commitment to an activity is influenced by or associated with a continuing struggle to achieve one's goals (Stetsenko, 2013). Stetsenko emphasises that a person does not merely anticipate the future, but they rather actively work towards making the future a reality through their actions, often

against the odds, even if the actions require struggle and striving to achieve the anticipated future or desired goals. For the contributors, what is important is to see their beneficiaries having access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. They would thus strive to ensure that this goal is achieved despite the struggles they have to endure and personal sacrifices. In so doing, contributors are not merely wishing for a better life for their families, they actively work towards their aspirations which are shared by their beneficiaries. In that way, benefactors work toward the transformation of their beneficiaries' lives.

The activity for one to provide economic support to their extended family members stems from social motives, motive-stimuli, and one's emotions.

- *Motive-stimuli motivated person*

A motive-stimuli motivated person is one that is motivated by a certain person or situation to engage in an activity (Burkitt, 2021). For instance, one may engage in an activity as a way of showing appreciation to someone or to prove someone wrong. A contributor's attainment of success is not in this instance perceived as a motive-stimuli for the contributor, it can also be an address to another person-someone who did not believe in the contributor, or a more altruistic act of rewarding the family who was supportive of the contributor's ambitions or pursuit of their studies. Adult employed children in this sense engage in the activity of support provision as a way to give thanks to their families for some kind of support that they were given.

- *The emotion-driven motive*

The emotion-driven motive for support provision is associated with the deep feelings the contributor has for the beneficiary (Burkitt, 2021). This is when one does something for the next person purely out of feelings of love. Here, the main focus is not necessarily the desired goal, but rather the emotions which the activity performed by the contributor will invoke in the beneficiary. Burkitt (2021) brings to the fore the notion that a person's emotions are formed early in childhood and are influenced by one's culture and history. The author postulates that one's emotional experience is created within joint activities and reciprocal relations they have with other people. It is these emotions that not only influence an individual's activity within their social relations, but they also influence the inner conversation one has with oneself. In other words, one's decision to provide economic support out of their own volition is still influenced by the

emotions attached to the relationship between the benefactor and beneficiaries. This according to (Burkitt 2021) is because the emotions people feel are essential in the development of cognitive thinking such as fantasy, imagination, and more relevant in this study, motivation or desire to provide economic support.

For the contributors, the emotional connection they have with their parents and other extended family members plays a critical role in influencing the provision of economic support.

- *The social motive*

The social motive of support provision has much to do with the implicit and explicit rules which govern a particular society. Taking into account that an activity is a collective effort, the decision is therefore taken by all actors about the responsibilities of each actor within the activity system in order to achieve the desired goal (Chilvers, 2011). What is central to the construction of an object is the interaction between aspects of the subject's personal experiences, their relationship with significant others with whom the object is pursued, and cultural-historical properties of the object (Foot, 2014). The activity of provision of any kind of support to family members is essentially done within the parameters of history and culture.

In this sense, every individual in the activity system has a role to play towards the attainment of the desired outcome. It is also expected that every person would carry out their responsibilities as set out by all actors. The involvement of all actors leads to division of labour within the activity system, wherein no person should benefit without making an effort towards the goal. In the context of the study, it should not be the sole responsibility of the benefactors to ensure that the family's needs are met. Family members who do not have economic means should indeed engage in other home building activities such as house chores and/or child rearing to their physical capabilities. The social motive is based on the expectation of the community which the benefactor is part.

At times people may engage in an activity without having a particular subjective conception of what they are doing (Blunden, 2007). This is to say that people do not necessarily have to fully understand why they engage in a particular activity so long as it is something they learnt from their adult members of the culture. As such, the subjects of this study may not need a concrete reason or explanation for providing

economic support because the act of helping one's own people has been passed down from generation to generation. This as explained by Stetsenko and Arievitch, (2004) is because according to Activity Theory, the self is profoundly sociocultural and historical and that engaging in an activity is grounded on the notion that making a contribution to social life is the essence of humanness (ubuntu) and human individuality.

Regardless of the motive a contributor may have for providing economic support, what is important is that people are not just passive observers of what goes on in the world, however they are actively trying to transform the world they live in (Roth et al., 2012). The actors in the activity system anticipate that the transformation they help bring forth will continue over a period of time.

### **2.2.5 RATIONALE FOR USING THE THEORY IN THE STUDY**

The Cultural Historical Activity Theory is somewhat a novelty in the social work discipline. The researcher chose this framework as it provides heuristic models for social research (Chilvers, 2011), owing to its adaptable use across various research disciplines. In view of the premise that transformation is at the centre of activity, the CHAT provides a platform to discuss transformation in as far as it relates to individuals' subjective perspectives (Grimalt-Alvaro & Ametller, 2021). As discussed earlier, the researcher chose to use the CHAT as it provides a framework which facilitates the analysis of multitudes of relations within an activity system at a particular time and as it evolves over time (Foot, 2014). This framework also makes it possible for the researcher to analyse relationships or interactions between contributors and their family members.

The rationale for documenting these relations is to identify their dynamics, a task which requires qualitative methods of inquiry. Central to the analysis of those interactions are the personal/communicative aspects of those relationships and the cultural, historical, political, and economic dimensions. The analysis of provision of support as an activity has to be done by factoring in the relationships that the contributors have with the other members within the activity system. It is also important to consider the way in which culture and history have and continue to affect the activity system. Researchers using the CHAT must keep in mind the historical trajectories when



analysing activity systems in order to consider the particular contexts within which the activity system operates (Foot, 2014).

Having this knowledge gives a researcher an understanding of the extent to which people's actions are influenced by the past as well as societal norms and values. This also helps in identifying the preconditions and precipitating causes of the main actions in the activity system which have shaped the system to date and may be catalysts of future development (Foot, 2014). The theory trains the researcher/analyst who uses it to imagine a broader population of people who might be affected by the phenomenon under study (Fiedler & Kaner, 2009) in order to critically analyse and identify opportunities for transformation (Miles, 2020). It is also to be noted that the activity system interacts with and is influenced by political and economic environments. It is within these contexts that an activity system is analysable because the activity system is dynamic and not static (Foot, 2014).

The CHAT is relevant in this study which is located in the social work discipline because it is a practice-based and practice-oriented theoretical framework which focuses on collective actions by actors in a system as well as socioeconomic relations within and between institutional context over time (Foot, 2014). The CHAT is favourable for its focus which is in contrast with that of traditional social science, which typically features the point-in-time actions and attributes of actors/individuals without making reference to culture, history, economics, or politics (Foot, 2014). It also affords researchers a holistic framework and explanation for all the meaningful things people do (Roth et al., 2012) The interpretive lens of the theory helps the analyst or researcher connect the human practices (provision of support) and the context within which the theory is applied. This indeed is crucial in understanding and explaining social phenomena from actual human practices rather than from abstract ideas or normative standards as they occur in multilevel sociocultural, political-economic, and institutional contexts.

Another usefulness of the CHAT is that one can focus on just some and not all of its concepts when analysing a phenomenon. The analyst is at liberty to choose a member or multiple members of the activity system through whose eyes and interpretations the activity is constructed (Engeström et al., 1999). In the current study the selected members of the activity system are employed graduates who provide economic

support to their extended family members. They were chosen to share their perceptions and interpretations of the activity of support provision in Black South African families. Because the CHAT has a transformative goal, it is useful in developing new ideas about how to improve future practices in that it offers a constructive way to assess economic, cultural, political, and institutional interventions in societies.

Activity should not to be analysed as a single independent unit, but rather as a complex system of interconnected activity (Chilvers, 2011), in which the collective is involved. The processes of activity are positively and negatively affected by contextual conditions facing each individual who is involved in the activity and by individual facts and forces (Stetsenko & Arieviditch, 2004). The contextual conditions referred to here are as a result of living in a given historical era and environment, while the individual forces include factors such as gender and personality (Stetsenko, & Arieviditch, 2004). Simply put, there are two types of influential factors which determine an activity: contextual and individual. In accordance with the CHAT, motives are positioned outside the individual because collaborative processes are of primal importance in an activity system.

### **2.2.6 HOW CHANGE/TRANSFORMATION CAN OCCUR IN THE ACTIVITY SYSTEM**

It has been established that the goal of the Cultural Historical Activity Theory is to bring about transformation (Chilvers, 2011). In true Marxist style, it is expected that transformation in CHAT comes after disturbances in the system. In CHAT, these confrontational situations are a manifest of contradictions. The contradictions arise as a result of conflicts between and within elements of the activity system (Grimalt-Alvaro & Ametller, 2021). These contradictions however do not denote points of failure or deficits in the system, nor are they obstacles to overcome in order to achieve goals (Foot, 2014). The contradictions are important in bringing about the “object’ or “needs state” or change in the activity system by propelling actors in the activity system to satisfy those identified needs (Fiedler & Kaner, 2009). Such contradictions are historical and manifest themselves as primary, secondary, as well as tertiary contradictions. As stated by Sannino and Engeström (2018), the primary contradiction is capitalism, which is resident in commodities; secondary contradictions arise between constitutive components of an activity system; while tertiary contradictions

appear after the activity system has been reshaped and the new pattern collide with the remnants of the old activity system, therefore adapting resistance and forcing the new model of the activity system to be modified. Miles (2020) mentions the fourth form of contradictions known as quaternary contradictions which are tensions occurring between neighbouring activity systems.

The identification and analysis of these contradictions occurring in an activity system is important in achieving the transformation needed (Chilvers, 2011) for the benefit of all actors in the system. Introduction of a new tool in the system, introduction of new rules, or changes in the community expectations can cause a contradiction such as the introduction of in-laws i.e. spouses of contributors or loss of an income. The analysis of the activity system allows for the identification and labelling of such contradictions.

The ways in which subjects can experience contradictions are outlined by Engeström and Sannino, (2011) cited in Miles (2020) as follows:

- Dilemmas- when incompatible evaluations between people or an individual's discourse are expressed or exchanged. These evaluations are typically reproduced rather than resolved.

Having to choose between fulfilling one's own needs and those of family members is one such dilemma.

- Conflicts- in CHAT, conflicts manifest themselves as resistance, disagreement, criticism, or arguments. Resolving conflicts usually means having to compromise or submitting to authority.

In the family, disagreements or criticisms may be resolved by the benefactor by having to give into the demands of their beneficiaries for fear of being shunned by them.

- Critical conflicts -unlike conflicts, the subject cannot resolve them alone. Critical conflicts involve feelings of guilt and inner doubt which are morally and emotionally charged. Resolving critical conflicts involves emancipation and liberation. For the benefactor to resolve such conflicts, they will need to be stern and put themselves first, which is contrary to what they have been taught throughout their lives and this will also go against the community expectation.

This drastic decision will however release the contributor from the burden of economic support.

- Double binds – this is when subjects face difficult and equally unacceptable alternatives. In this situation, there seems to be no way out. Resolution of double binds needs practical transformation. For contributors, this situation is when they have stretched themselves too thin in attempting to address their own and their beneficiaries' needs. Their beneficiaries' survival is dependent on them, and if they decide to withdraw their support, the family will be in peril, notwithstanding the fact that the contributor is not coping with the added responsibilities. The transformation or change should then come from the beneficiaries, economic context, and political context for the overhaul of the practice of economic support provision.

The contradictions encountered in an activity system are as dynamic as the activity system itself. As such, subjects attempt to overcome contradictions as they occur. This attempt to overcome contradictions results in the adoption of new tools, new rules and so on, as the activity system evolves. In essence, as Miles (2020) puts it, all activity systems are born of historical systems, they are a culturally more advanced version of the previous system.

Taking into account ways in which subjects experience conflict in an activity system, Miles (2020) proposes that subjects can attempt to resolve them by following these stages:

- Questioning accepted practice and wisdom- this is the stage at which people reject current accepted practices.
- Analysing the situation- at this stage, people investigate the structure and history of the current situation.
- Modelling- this is when people propose a new model and suggest possible solutions.
- Examining the new model- the people involved start working on the new model. They do this through either discussion or in practice. This is done in order to understand the new model better.

- Implementing the model- this is the application stage of the model, where it is practically applied. It thus becomes more defined as it progresses.
- Reflection and evaluation- at this stage, the people involved take stock of the model. The new practice is evaluated, critiqued and further modifications are identified.
- Consolidation- this is when there is an attempt to embed the new practice in stable form.

## **2.3 FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY**

The researcher chose to use Bowen's Family Systems Theory as a complementary framework to the Cultural Historical Activity Theory. The CHAT holds that people do not function individually nor independently of others, but they mediate and are mediated by the social relationships they have with others. It is for this reason that the researcher chose the second theory.

### **2.3.1 Background of the theory**

The family Systems Theory's roots can be traced to the work of Murray Bowen who is the pioneer of family psychotherapy. Murray's work was focused on relationships between schizophrenia patients with their families (Haefner, 2014). The Family Systems theory is derived from the General System Theory which has over the years been modified to focus on two concepts which are autonomy and adaptation (Priest, 2021). The use of this theory as Haefner (2014) puts it, helps provide researchers with an organised analysis of relationships between family members while taking into consideration that families are affected by societal issues, race, gender, and income.

The primary focus of the family Systems Theory is the exchanges of behaviour that occurs in a moment of interaction between family members. Interaction between members of the family determines and maintains both the nonproblematic and problematic behaviour (Johnson & Ray, 2016), due to the fact that a family is in itself a self-regulating system. A family is considered to be a system because just like a human body, each part needs to function well for the body to be healthy (Dallos & Draper, 2015). Family members therefore have to act together to keep the family functional, while acknowledging that the actions of each member affect other members

of the family. Mitic et al., (2021) add that the family is perceived as the “basic building block of any society” because its primary function is socialisation of its members.

### **2.3.2 TENETS OF THE THEORY**

A family is an autonomous and adaptable system which has rules that maintain the family system, it also responds to the stress from inside and outside of the family systems by making changes to the set rules (Priest, 2021). The Family Systems Theory as used in this study is crucial in examining how family interactions, rules and boundaries assist families to respond to and adapt to stresses occurring from outside the family system. Central to the autonomy of the family system are individuality and togetherness (Titelman, 2014), denoting that although members of the family are seen as a unit, there still exists a sense of individuality for the members. It can be deduced that despite being bound by family rules, the benefactor is an individual who has separate needs from those of the family as a whole.

#### **2.3.2.1 Basic hypotheses of the Family Systems Theory**

According to Bergman and White (2011), the basics of the Bowen Family Systems Theory resulted in the following hypothesis or conclusions:

- *The behaviour of an individual is related to the context in which the individual is functioning.*

This means that the action of providing support is determined by the contributor’s immediate environments which need to be analysed and understood in order to understand the motive behind the provision of support.

- *An individual’s emotional functioning is developed in their family of origin, and it is within this unit that a system of emotionally interdependent relationships is formed.*

Benefactors' emotions are not mutually exclusive from those of members of their family of origin and as such there exists a reciprocal emotional relationship between themselves and those family members.

- *Parents bring with them into their families of procreation emotional behaviours which they have learned or inherited from multigenerational emotional processes which in turn determine the emotional behaviour of the new generation.*

As contributors learn emotions from their parents, it is not only their parents' emotional responses they are learning but years of emotional processes from their parents' forefathers. This could also mean that one's emotional responses are predetermined.

- *Emotional processes are important because they determine functioning in all relationships among people, including relationships in nuclear and multigenerational family systems, relationships outside of the family system such as friendships and workplace networks.*

The above assertion cements the notion that all forms of interpersonal relationships which providers of economic support have, are influenced by the emotional processes that occur in their families of origin. Dallos and Draper (2015) however caution that families do not only experience positive emotions, but family members also experience jealousy, anger, hatred, and violence in addition to positive emotions such as love, trust, desire, and encouragement. This is an indication that family is not only about safety and comfort.

- *When analysing any type of relationship, it is imperative to take into consideration the physical and external environments/contexts which individuals in that relationship deem to be a threat to their relationship.*

It is for this reason that the researcher saw it fit to include the analysis of the political, cultural, and social environments and the role these play in the relationships between contributors and their significant others.

### **2.3.2.2 Eight interrelated concepts of the Family Systems Theory**

In addition to the foregoing hypotheses, the proponent of the Family Systems Theory, Murray Bowen developed eight interrelated concepts (Bergman & White, 2011) which help explain human behaviour and functioning. These concepts are outlined below:

- *Differentiation of self*

The differentiation concept is about how to strike a balance between the force for togetherness and the force for individuality (Titelman, 2014). These concepts of individuality and togetherness are important elements in family autonomy in that the differentiation process helps describe the difference between autonomy and adaptation (Priest, 2021). When there are strong forces for togetherness, an individual is likely to sacrifice self in favour of others' needs.

This concept of differentiation of self can be used to explain the extent to which one provides economic support to their extended family members. It is by this concept that one decides whether they value togetherness or individuality. Potential contributors who opted not to provide economic support may perceive individuality to be more valuable than togetherness, whereas the opposite is true for those who continue to provide economic support to their extended family members.

- *Nuclear family emotional system*

The nuclear family emotional system relates to an individual's problems which resulted from the struggles which their family of origin is going through. These are patterns that are shown by family members by virtue of being part of their family's emotional fusion, which includes how they attempt to deal with contradictions that occur in the family (Titelman, 2014). This also extends to how people express themselves in other interpersonal relationships external to the nuclear family. This also means parents' problems have an impact on their children. To have healthy relationships outside of the nuclear family, individuals need to work on having healthy relationships within the nuclear family. A family is a mutual causative system because family members' actions are seen as a response and a response is seen as an action. What happens in the benefactors' families therefore, to a certain extent can affect their relationships with people outside their immediate families.

- *Family projection process*

This is the extent to which the parental systems project their problems unto the children who in turn end up displaying problematic behaviour, meaning that the parents' problems are passed to their child. This is how emotional problems such as anxiety are passed from generation to generation (Mitic et al., 2021). This is the same way in



which socio-economic aspects such as social class, religion, political beliefs, and poverty are passed down from parents to children. These inherited characteristics are determinants of the children's current status and behaviour.

- *Multigenerational transmission process*

The family systems theory posits that the overall level of functioning between generations is similar due to the passing down of family traditions from generation to generation (Haefner, 2014). Family tradition includes how a family addresses emotional issues and how they treat each other. This is because the family performs a primary function of socialisation of its members.

If it has been family tradition that members take care of each other's social, emotional, and economic needs, the children will grow up knowing that they are expected to look out for each other. As such, when providing economic support, the contributor is simply continuing with a family practice which has been followed by generations before him/her.

- *Triangles and interlocking triangles*

Triangulation in the Family Systems Theory occurs when tension between two people is passed onto a third person (Haefner, 2014). In family social work, it is imperative to understand how a person's state of relationship with their parents, grandparents, aunts, siblings, and others, because those relationships determine how the person relates with their spouse and other people outside of the family.

The spouse of the contributor is inevitably pulled into these interlocking triangles. If the spouse is not willing to accept that the contributor provides support for their family, that may be a cause for tension in the marriage. It is the nature of these triangles which makes siblings to feel entitled to have an opinion on how their adult siblings' marriage unfolds and to his or her belongings despite the fact that they are married. This may cause tension in the in-law relationship which then creates problems between the husband and wife.

- *Sibling position*

Birth order is another determinant of behaviour, as it is a predictor of roles that children will take on according to family expectations. First born siblings tend to be responsible

for taking care of their younger siblings. It then becomes natural that first born adult children will most likely become the providers of economic support to their family members because that is how they have been socialised (Pardede & Mulder, 2021). For older siblings with nonworking parents, it is not easy to move out of their parental homes as they feel responsible for taking care of the parents, siblings and improving the home.

- *Emotional cut-off*

An emotional cutoff happens when one or more members of a family take an extreme decision to emotionally distance themselves from the rest of the family (Titelman, 2014). Emotional processes occurring in the family shape and are influenced by interactions between family members through interlocking triangles. Emotional cut-off is the tendency to emotionally and/or geographically distance oneself from difficult circumstances (Moral et al., 2021) resulting in estrangements between family members. Emotional cut-offs therefore have intergenerational consequences because the children of the person who initiates the cut off are highly likely to remain estranged from their parents' family of origin, and they are also likely to view emotional cut-offs as a solution to conflicts.

Emotional cutoffs happen when an individual has violated the family rules or is against the beliefs of the family. For instance, if the contributor feels like the family is or wants to control how he spends his income, or that the family does not utilise the resources constructively, he/she may cut the family off. This is surely not the best way to resolve conflict with family members as it is not a resolution, but a temporary fix in an attempt to achieve independence. The ultimate emotional cut-off is premature death.

- *Emotional process in society*

Emotional process in society is the notion that what happens in society affects the family (Mitic et al., 2021). Societal factors which have an effect on the family include economic, political, environmental, technological aspects amongst others. Examples

of this aspects are economic recession, poverty, scarcity of natural resources, unemployment, epidemics, unstable government, overpopulation etc all of which contribute to a regression in society.

The family of the contributor is affected by the mentioned aspects and the analysis of such is central to understanding the act of economic support provision.

### **2.3.3 RATIONALE FOR UTILISING THE THEORY**

Priest (2021) posits that family systems is the foundation on which family practice is based. As such, the researcher saw it fit to include the Family Systems Theory because the study is centred around family relations. Studies about family relations and processes that bind families together are crucial in social work as one's family is a central point of assessment in social work practice. This theory provides a framework by which the individual is viewed as part of the family. It is a framework that views the roles of family members, their communication patterns, and how they address issues within the family (Haefner, 2014). Priest (2021) adds that the Family Systems Theory is a theory that predicts and provides an explanation of how interactions in a family occur, and how those interactions differ from those happening outside of it.

The Systems Theory uses a multigenerational approach to development by incorporating both family life cycle perspectives and psychodynamic perspectives (Johnson & Ray, 2016). With the family life's cycle perspective, emphasis is on how the family responds to the changes brought about by its developmental stages or transitions. The psychodynamic perspective, on the other hand, focuses on the relations that are developed and modified as the family move through its developmental transitions (Smith-Acuña, 2011). The two foregoing assertions therefore explain the importance of considering the transitions that a family goes through and how its members respond to the changes when family studies are conducted. This is attributed to the fact that the family is affected by connected emotional characteristics of the nuclear and extended families. The family as a unit of analysis refers to at least three generations or more (Titelman, 2014). In support of this Collins et al., (2011), state that a family as a system is composed of subsystems

such as the parental subsystem and the sibling subsystem. That context is ideal for the purpose of this study which focuses on familial intergenerational support.

There are various forms of families such as nuclear, skip-generation, single parent, multigenerational type of families (Booyesen et al., 2021). The structure or composition of the family can impact on the well-being of its members, therefore for families to be able to perform their roles, they need to function well. In the context of this study, the emotional fields occurring in the benefactor's family of origin has an impact on their nuclear family. In essence, the benefactor is connected to his family of origin's emotional field and they in turn influence this emotional field. Their family's emotional field has an influence on his nuclear family's emotional field. Dallos and Draper (2015) emphasise that family members' behaviour is not solely shaped by interactions that occur within the family, but it is also shaped by the beliefs or discourses common to the culture within which the family exists. These external factors also play a role in determining whether or not a family maintains its homeostasis.

#### **2.3.4 DETERMINANTS OF DISEQUILIBRIUM IN THE FAMILY SYSTEM**

Families are designed to perform certain functions which keep the family operational as a system. These functions include the economic, reproductive, and socialisation functions. Every family aspires to have their physical and spiritual needs met because all families want to be prosperous (Johnson & Ray, 2016). Once a family fails to perform one or more of these functions, contradictions occur. Anxiety is likely to result from such a circumstance (real and imminent threat). Bregman and White (2011) report that a real and imminent threat is a disturbing eventuality which has a high likelihood of materialising, whereas imaginary threats are enduring though they may not materialise. A response to the former category of threats is acute anxiety while a response to the latter is known as chronic anxiety (Bregman & White, 2011). Real and imminent threats have an impact on the welfare of the whole family.

Zunaidi and Maghfiroh (2021) indicate that welfare in the family manifests itself as the fulfillment of food, shelter, and clothing needs. The fulfillment of family needs is achieved through role expectation and role performance. Role expectation in families is related to the implicit and explicit rules of who does what in the family in relation to behaviour and division of labour (Haefner, 2014). Mitic et al., (2021) state that the role played by families is fundamental in such a way that no one individual nor institution

could solely perform this function- the function of childrearing while simultaneously ensuring that psychological and physical development takes place through socialisation.

For this study's context, anxiety could emanate from the family's inability to meet its economic needs or the possibility of the family not being able to meet such needs. Using the family rules, the family would devise measures which will be used to address the imminent threat. If for instance the parent system in the family becomes economically incapacitated, the responsibilities would fall on the sibling system to ensure that the needs of the family are addressed. True to the assertion by Zunaidi and Maghfiroh (2021), changes that take place in the economic structure and mindset to fulfil the needs of the family also result in the change of roles of family members. The disequilibrium then occurs when family members attempt to respond to the threat as the anxiety can be transmitted from the parental system to the sibling system (Bregman & White, 2011). The anxiety could also be felt by the adult children who would be assigned or take over the responsibility of ensuring that the family needs are met. In order for the family to return to a state of homeostasis, Dallos and Draper (2015) recommend that the family should then organise itself in a rule-bound, predictable, and stable fashion.

## **2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided a description and explanation of the act of economic support provision through two theoretical frameworks, the Cultural Historical Activity Theory and the Family Systems Theory. Through the description of their tenets, the two theories were used to explain the motivation for the provision of economic support by benefactors. In addition, this chapter puts emphasis on the importance of analysing the context within which economic support provision occurs as that has an influence on the lives of contributors and beneficiaries alike. The two theories showed that one's behaviour is heavily influenced by the culture within which his family of origin exists. It is pertinent for family social workers to take this into consideration especially when working with Black families. The family is also impacted upon by external forces such as social, political, economic, and environmental factors.

## **CHAPTER THREE: UBUNTU'S INFLUENCE ON THE PROVISION OF INTERGENERATIONAL SUPPORT**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the connection between the Ubuntu concept and support provided and received amongst members of extended families in African societies. This description is provided on the premise that Black South Africans still, to a certain degree follow the prescripts of communal living which is predominant in black African cultures.

### **3.2 UNDERSTANDING UBUNTU AND AFRICAN WAY OF LIFE**

Ubuntu philosophy is understood and accepted as a way of life for African people. As put by Aulakh (2020) the concept of Ubuntu originated in South Africa in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, it is a Nguni word which refers to humanity, and it is based on the notion that there exists a universal bond between humans. This bond can best be conveyed by the Nguni saying: “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ (Mboti, 2015) which is directly translated to ‘a person is a person through other people’. This concept is often perceived as an alternative to the individualistic and utilitarian notions of the Western world.

In many African communities, the practice of Ubuntu is not only limited to the members of the nuclear family, but it is extended to kinship network (Chowdhury et al.,2021). For Africans, living in harmony is easily achieved because of kin communal residence. Ubuntu is a social philosophy which is based on the principles of care and community (group solidarity), respect and responsiveness (respect and dignity), harmony and hospitality (Bolden, 2014; Nolte & Downing, 2019). These attributes are important elements in the lives of people who ascribe to the Ubuntu philosophy.

### **3.2.1 Elements of Ubuntu**

#### *3.2.1.1 Compassion*

Individuals who practice Ubuntu have genuine feelings of concern for others and do not feel threatened by the success of others (Chowdhury et al.,2021). The pain experienced by one is felt by others and people actively seek to alleviate that discomfort. This way of life means that people owe their well-being to the compassion of others. Being human involves debt and being indebted to one another (Nyamnjoh, 2020). Being dependent on each other allows people to understand that life is about being indebted to each other in that one person's good deeds should be reciprocated by the other in some point. Nyamnjoh (2020) indicates that the debt need not necessarily be monetary in value but can be debt of gratitude to show that the giver's efforts are appreciated by the receiver. As such a person who shares their resources with others is praised for their selflessness and exhibition of compassion. It is this affirmation by fellow human beings which validates the giver's existence and in return, they keep on giving. These offerings are considered to be goodwill gifts which are resultants of moral ethics encultured in the givers (Mboti, 2015). The enculturation of these moral ethics happens during the socialisation of children in African societies. Compassion is not only shown to friends and families, but all of humanity.

In accordance with the work by Kuhamba (2019), Ubuntu refers to humanity and humanness and it is understood to mean such in many languages in South Africa. Ubuntu advocates for the respect for others and recognition of other people despite their cultural, religious, ideological inclinations (Kuhamba, 2019). Recognition and respect for others' way of life is an anchor for compassion in the lives of indigenous people, which is an important element in social harmony. Ubuntu can also be conceived to be the foundation for communal love (van Stam, 2016). Humanity is at the heart of African people's identity and belonging (Umezurike, 2019). Ngomane (2020) indeed encourages people to accept each other without judgement and to acknowledge that people's past help shape their lives. This past no matter how painful or unpleasant, should be accepted and embraced as a way of working through it (Ngomane, 2020) with the help of others who are compassionate towards the situation. The compassion is instrumental in ensuring that people survive their hardships.

### 3.2.1.2 Shared beliefs

Ubuntu is somehow intrinsically linked to spirituality in a sense that people who share their resources with others believe their actions are what their forebearers expect of them, and they in turn will bless them (Nyamnjoh, 2020). Van Breda (2019) explains that in African spirituality, it is believed that the departed or the dead continue to be part of their surviving family members' lives and have an influence on those alive, thereby resulting in the surviving family members having to live up to their ancestors' expectations.

Inclusivity is important in African culture and therefore, a crucial part of indigenous people's lives, hence collective success is emphasised such that one cannot proclaim success unless they can show that they have included others in their road to success (Nyamnjoh, 2020). This is because personal success is celebrated when it is shared with others. The author substantiates this by indicating that one gives to the other as an extension of oneself, such that they believe that when one gives abundantly, they in turn will be enriched abundantly. This belief may, to an extent, be influenced by the giver's religious beliefs. In Christianity for instance, there are certain scriptures which encourage people to give to the less fortunate with the promise of healthy or handsome returns for their gifts in the form of salvation. Spiritual teachings play an important role in reinforcing the practice of sharing. Below are some bible excerpts to support this assertion:

- *Matthew 5: 42 – ‘Give to the one who asks you and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you’;*
- *Proverbs 28: 27 – “Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses.”*
- *Acts 20:34-35 – “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

The act of giving or sharing may be linked to a sense of being appreciated for the giver. Graeber (2001) as cited by Nyamnjoh (2020) however, argues that for a gift to be sentimental or meaningful, it has to be a physical or material item as opposed to giving someone money because merely giving money is deemed to be impersonal. This



means that direct transfer of cash may not be as appreciated by beneficiaries as opposed to something the benefactor may buy for them. This may explain why some benefactors are frustrated by the lack of appreciation of their efforts by their beneficiaries as stated by Fongwa (2019). For African people, sharing and receiving is central to the survival of all parties involved. The giver's survival comes in the form of blessings which they get from giving. For the receiver, the help received, material or otherwise, is beneficial for their survival.

Ubuntu is when a person is able to see themselves in other people (Ngomane, 2020). With Ubuntu, there is no need for an individual to face their struggle alone and people, therefore, look to each other for support (Ngomane, 2020) in order to overcome life's challenges because people need one another to progress. Indeed, this support comes in various forms, one could need just someone to share their problems, while another person could just be need of moral support, mere company of people. In this study, the support needed to progress is that of an economic nature where the beneficiaries are assisted by their benefactors to address challenges they are facing.

For Africans, the provision of support is done based on the belief that givers have a responsibility, not only towards their family members but also towards their ancestors from whom they receive blessings. This is because Africans generally believe that their ancestors are mediators between themselves and God hence, they will live their lives in a way they hope will be pleasing to their ancestors. Ubuntu thus regards a person in relation to others, not only the live ones, but including ancestors and descendants which are yet to be born, in a way that the past, present, and future are harmonised (van Stam, 2016). Africans attribute whatever they receive to the favour of ancestors and those ancestors are praised by their descendants for bringing them good fortune. Giving veneration or libations to ancestors is a way of showing gratitude to the ancestors (Mucina, 2013). This way, ancestors continue to bless givers who in turn keep sharing their resources with others. Offering help to those in need is a way of fostering mutual aid among members of the family, group, or community.

### *3.2.1.3 Group solidarity (interdependence)*

The notion of Ubuntu relates to the assurance that one's achievements belong not to the individual but to the greater community, where above all else, humanity comes first (Chowdhury et al., 2021). Indeed, the principle of collaboration is reinforced in the

community by encouraging individuals to put measures in place to enhance the community. The community supports the goals of each member and provides an environment which is conducive for the achievement of those goals. This according to Chowdhury et al (2021) is not to say community members understand everything, but they are a collection assembled to perform a specific function. The providers of economic support received support from their families while they were pursuing their studies, hence their success is celebrated by the whole family who feel like that success is theirs as well. In this case the specific function which the family or community set to achieve (obtaining a tertiary qualification) has been attained. The attainment of a qualification and subsequent employment means the family will receive financial assistance by the benefactor. This exemplifies the interdependence of the relationship between the family or community and the person providing economic assistance.

Ubuntu is an African philosophy concept which emphasises the values of relationships (Kuhamba, 2019). Bolden (2014) affirms that Ubuntu is a relational philosophy, which denotes that an individual's sense of being cannot be separated from the social environment in which they exist and interact with. Additionally, Gumbo (2014) points out that people feel the essence of Ubuntu when they gather, share a meal, share and show solidarity and empathy towards one another. These actions require selflessness which is a crucial attribute for building social cohesion (Odiaka & Oriogu, 2017). Being selfless and sharing a sense of solidarity are key for harmonious living and mutual aid. Ubuntu therefore provides prescripts of how an individual should behave when engaging with other people (van Stam, 2015) because as clearly put by Ngomane (2020), people are and have been social beings who seek out bonds with other humans. The interdependent relationships between people who ascribe to Ubuntu are based on respect and each party to these relationships is treated with dignity.

#### *3.2.1.4 Respect and dignity*

Respect is the most crucial underlying principle of Ubuntu (Ngomane, 2020). Within a social environment where Ubuntu is practiced, every person is treated with dignity and respect irrespective of their social status (income or gender) (Chowdhury et al 2021). Each person is recognised as a natural being which is fundamental to the functioning of the community. Ubuntu as a philosophy strives to incorporate into the lives of African people, the ethos of respect and care for others during difficult times (Bolden,

2014). This helps explain the need to help each other in the family through support provision.

In Ubuntu the most basic element of being human is showing respect towards fellow humans and it is believed that whoever shows respect to their elders will have status, value, identity, and security conferred upon them by those elders (Verhoef & Ramolai, 2019). Ngomane (2020) has however observed that people mostly respect and value those with a higher socioeconomic standing. In a family where some members are unable to provide economic support, favouritism can be shown towards the one who is able to provide the economic support and compromising the dignity of the one who is unable to do so. This can result in family conflicts which can manifest across the generations of the family.

### *3.2.1.5 Collectivism and egalitarianism*

The orientation of Ubuntu is that of collectivism- emphasising the value of cooperation, collaboration, and community (Bolden, 2014). In the same breath, Gumbo (2014) affirms that the values that define Ubuntu include communitarianism, kinship, group solidarity, conformity, togetherness, brotherhood, sharing, redistribution, and collective unity. This assertion confirms that the essence of being human is seen through the community which cherishes and lives the Ubuntu ideals (Gumbo, 2014). As opposed to the Western perspective, the person is therefore viewed or perceived as part of a family or a collective and not an isolated entity. Gumbo (2014) further notes that it is this togetherness which is central to the ties people have with extended family members- which is prevalent amongst indigenous communities. This is also how Africans show that their approach to life is communalistic instead of individualistic- allowing their relationships to be intertwined such that in marriage, one is not only married to their spouse, but marry into the whole family.

The provision of support by one spouse to their extended family members therefore affects and is affected by the marital relationship a benefactor has with their spouse. The expectations and responsibilities of such support are therefore inherited by the spouse who marries the benefactor because their resources as a couple will have to be shared with members of the benefactor's family. This solidifies the interdependence element of the Ubuntu philosophy. Subscribers to the Ubuntu philosophy find that its principles are entrenched into all aspects of their lives.

Some people even state that not sharing what they have with other people can make their hearts ache (Gumbo, 2014) which means sharing becomes an innate responsibility to them and that being individualistic is unAfrican. To corroborate this assertion Odiaka and Oriogu (2017) note that for Africans, Ubuntu means people are people because of other people. Someone who is said to exhibit Ubuntu carries themselves with humility, they are generous, hospitable, warm, and willing to share. They are also willing to be vulnerable while expressing their humanity through the relationship they have with other people (Odiaka & Oriogu, 2017).

As observed from these writings, people with Ubuntu generally care about others and are willing to share what they have with those who do not have. The same can be said with economic support provision wherein contributors share what they have with people within their immediate circle. They do this because this is what was encultured in them as they grew up. As such sharing becomes more about other people than it is about the person who is giving. Giving brings joy to the giver as they believe they are making someone's life better as expected by the family or community.

In Ubuntu, the community is responsible for prescribing ethical norms which individuals should abide by (Verhoef & Ramolai, 2019). The individual's behaviour is as a result, shaped by these ethical norms. It is the role of the community to reward good behaviour and sanction those who do not conform to the community's ethical norms (Verhoef & Ramolai, 2019). In African societies, these ethical norms are also encultured through idioms which are purposed to maintain social order and to ensure that individuals behave accordingly. For instance, in Sepedi, the idiom "*go fa ke go fega, o tla re go kwa tlala wa fegolla*" encourages people to be givers and sharers which should in turn be reciprocated by the receiver. When loosely translated, the idiom says "to give is to deposit/ invest or put aside, so that when you get hungry, you can withdraw your deposit." Amongst the Vatsonga people, there is a saying that goes: "*Xandla famba, xandla vuya*" which is translated to "let the hand go and let the hand come back", also encourages people to help each other with the hope that when the person who helped initially needs assistance, they too would be helped.

Additionally, Verhoef and Ramolai, (2019) posit that the community serves to cater for the needs of its members such as care, love, sense of belonging, security, food, identity, educational, and financial needs. The community in this context can also refer

to an individual's extended family. Because the community provides for the needs of its members, it holds some power over the individuals in the community. The individual will try by all means to adhere to the ethical norms so to be accepted by the community. Those who deviate from the norms are shunned and may even be cast out of the community because one's sense of value is earned through their moral conduct (Verhoef & Ramolai, 2019). This can force some individuals to conform to ethical norms which they do not necessarily agree with, while having a feeling that the community is authoritative. The community just wants to ensure that there is mutual aid amongst its members.

In essence, being in need is seen as an opportunity for people to engage in a reciprocal endeavour of displaying hospitality towards the other (van Stam, 2016). Although seeking assistance is emphasised in Ubuntu, Ngomane (2020) notes that asking for help does not come naturally for everyone because it may be embarrassing, or others may see it as a sign of weakness or even the inability to cope with challenges. Therefore, this requires people to be able to recognise the needs of others and offer assistance without being asked. Again, this is one of the motives benefactors provide economic support because they have recognised a need in their family and out of their own volition decide to step up and assist where they can. Providing help is a way of instilling hope and assuring family members that things will improve (Ngomane, 2020). Providing assistance to those in need is an indication of the moral values that the giver possesses.

### **3.3 UBUNTU AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORALITY**

Ubuntu morality is anchored in the community, the family and in the individual. The family as a primary socialisation agent of its members, is central to the development of morality (Letseka, 2013). Ubuntu is also about teaching solidarity amongst members while focusing on the individual members of the collective (Chowdhury et al., 2021). The community recognises that members of the collective are individuals whose personal needs are valid, although those needs are deemed to be secondary to those of the collective. People who practice Ubuntu do not seek praise nor glory (van Stam, 2016). This is attributable to the fact that the development of morality is not an event but a process which takes place over time (Molefe & Magam, 2019). Personhood is made up of an individual's performance over time, not necessarily their performance at one point in time. The development of morality is an important attribute of

selflessness which is associated with the principle of sharing. Naturally, there must be prior conditions which must hold for Ubuntu to be possible (Molefe & Magam, 2019) and the development of morality and selflessness are some of those conditions.

Ubuntu is not only a measure of morality in interpersonal relationships, but also important in other spheres of life such as education, politics, business, and law (van Stam, 2016). Molefe and Magam (2019) contend that conditions are not always favourable for the development of morality. One example of such a condition is what Black people experienced during apartheid in South Africa. This is because during apartheid, Black people were stripped of their dignity as people, that act in itself was against the principles of Ubuntu. Molefe and Magam, (2019) however state that the development of morality occurs in whatever conditions a person finds themselves in, arguing that the development of morality cannot be made to be dependent on certain favourable social conditions. This means that individuals ought not to wait for favourable social conditions to discharge their moral duties. In the context of this study, this means that support should be provided albeit the harsh conditions that the country is currently grappling with. This however does not mean other factors which have a bearing on the behaviour of people must be ignored.

Koenane and Olatunji (2017) report that people, irrespective of their race or ethnicity, are judged by their deeds. These authors are of the view that Ubuntu is a way of life for the Bantu people of Africa in their different cultures and it is also an ethic of becoming. It is an ethic of becoming because Ubuntu conduct is a process by which morality is continually developed which denotes a continuous struggle by people to achieve Ubuntu or morality as a way of life. African people who ascribe to the values of Ubuntu will therefore continuously strive to live in accordance with its prescripts.

### **3.4 SIMILAR CONCEPTS OF UBUNTU IN AFRICA**

Ubuntu is an African concept which means humaneness, and it is a generational way of living for the African people (Van Breda, 2019). Although it is mentioned that Ubuntu as a concept originated in southern Africa, this is now a philosophy which is shared across the African continent, used to encourage Africans to re-engage with African values, it is also a philosophy of how people should relate to one another (Bolden, 2014).

In Southern Africa, Ubuntu is the standard by which moral excellence is measured (van Stam, 2016). It is a concept which is understood by most Bantu languages speakers in Africa. For instance, the word Ubuntu is derived from the words munhu (among the Vatsonga and Shona people in South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively), motho, (among the Batswana in Botswana/South Africa; Basotho in Lesotho; Bapedi in South Africa) umuntu (among the Zulu/Xhosa, Ndebele in South Africa, the Swati in eSwatini), and Umundu (among the Herero of Namibia) (van Stam, 2016). The following extract shows the various terms used in different African countries to refer to Ubuntu:

*“The term ubuntu is expressed differently in several African communities and languages but all referring to the same thing. In Angola, it is known as gimuntu, Botswana (muthu), Burkina Faso (maaya), Burundi (ubuntu), Cameroon (bato), Congo (bantu), Congo Democratic Republic (bomoto/bantu), Cote d’Ivoire (maaya), Equatorial Guinea (maaya), Guinea (maaya), Gambia (maaya), Ghana (biako ye), Kenya (utu/munto/mondo), Liberia (maaya), Malawi (umunthu), Mali (maaya/hadama de ya), Mozambique (vumuntu), Namibia (omundu), Nigeria (mutunchi/iwa/agwa), Rwanda (bantu), Sierra Leone (maaya), South Africa (ubuntu/botho), Tanzania (utu/obuntu/bumuntu), Uganda (obuntu), Zambia (umunthu/ubuntu) and Zimbabwe (hunhu/unhu/botho/ubuntu). It is also found in other Bantu countries not mentioned here.” (Mabvurira, 2020:73).*

In Africa, communal love is an integral aspect of culture and way of life. Van Stam (2016) indicates that there is an observable link between love and Ubuntu, which explains the challenge in clearly describing what Ubuntu is, much as it is difficult to explain what love is. Although Ubuntu is conceived or understood in various ways, Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013) assert that it is perceived as the authentic African ethical concept. Letseka (2013) also notes that Africa is to a large extent still a communal society wherein people’s perceptions are shaped by this communalism. In most African countries, an individual’s personality or the sense of personhood is composed of the culturally constructed concept of people and the rules, roles and regulations which govern the community (Letseka, 2013). This is mainly because an African community is ontological in nature and the interactions and relationships between individuals in their communities are the basis of Ubuntu (Verhoef & Ramolai,

2019). There are some notable ways in which communal love is demonstrated amongst some African tribes.

There is a known adage amongst Africans that say 'it takes a village to raise a child' which is practiced by many African traditional communities. This entails treating any child as one's own and having the authority to reward their good behaviour or punish them for bad behaviour (van Stam, 2016). Communal love is also demonstrated among community members through practices such as *nhimbe* in Zimbabwe or *letsema* in South Africa *umuganda* in Rwanda, *harambe* in Kenya, and *ujamaa* in Tanzania (Mafa et al. 2021). These practices help solidify the sense of togetherness by bringing community members together to undertake a certain beneficial task. Nkhukhu-orlando et al (2021) indicate that the feeling of solidarity is inherent in the traditional African societies. This sense of togetherness is also displayed in traditional African people's proverbs such as *motho ke motho ka batho* (I am because you are) which is an indication that African societies value a sense of togetherness. This is what helps individuals to establish and maintain close-knit mutual-aid relationships, and to ensure that these relationships thrive under any circumstance.

Africans have to negotiate their social existence with factors which have an influence on their lives and relationships such as the market influences, urban and rural life as well as continental realities (Nyamnjoh, 2020). These factors determine the acquisition of resources which gives share with other community members. Based on the principles of Ubuntu, Koenane and Olatunji (2017) recommend that there should be efforts to create a better life for South African people. African people are generally faced with economic challenges which are worsened by corruption. Their lives are affected by continuous increase in repo rates, unemployment rates and high costs of living. All of these factors affect benefactors in a negative way and take away the hope that someday their beneficiaries would find employment and relieve them from the economic support provision responsibilities. The colonial and post-colonial factors are important requisites to consider when analysing the philosophy of Ubuntu in South Africa (Molefe & Magam, 2019) because these are the very conditions which have had a great influence in the country's current political and economic conditions. Ubuntu or personhood must be evaluated within such conditions.



## **3.5 UBUNTU LIMITATIONS AND CRITIQUE**

### **3.5.1 Ubuntu is no longer relevant**

Ubuntu has recently received negative attention or reviews by some authors. They argue that if indeed Ubuntu was a moral and humanness philosophy, people would not be experiencing the myriad of social problems they currently have to contend with. It is observed that it would seem Ubuntu has been replaced by individualism and privatisation given that the poor majority have been excluded from accessing resources and they live in squalor conditions (De Beer, 2015). It seems to be difficult to put the concept of Ubuntu into practice, even in societies which proclaim to embrace it. This is supported by observable acts of injustice that are rampant in black societies such as gender-based violence, crime, corruption, and uneven distribution of resources, all of which are contradictory to the principles of Ubuntu. Moreover, Ubuntu seems to be embraced and practiced in poorer societies which experience great social, political, economic, and environmental challenges (Bolden, 2014).

Some authors report to have observed some degree of erosion of the Ubuntu values and principles. Ubuntu is perceived to be backward and redundant with little to offer and no place in the modern world (Nkhukhu-Orlando et al. 2021). Another challenge faced by Ubuntu is that societies and their cultures alike are not static. They are dynamic and keep changing to adapt to the new environments. Nkhukhu-Orlando et al. (2021) observed that in the current industrialised society, people are inclined to be individualistic and no longer follow the principles of Ubuntu which influenced people to define their interests according to societal norms. These authors reiterate that industrialisation brought fragmentation into the society by introducing division of labour, social classes which pose a threat to collectivism. This is what contributed to the stripping off of the moral fiber. Gumbo (2014) reports concerns about how the African way of governance has changed from being at the helm of traditional leaders to adopting the westernised state-based government system which seems to undermine the values of Ubuntu, and that adoption has brought with it some elements of criminality, greed, and corruption amongst the leaders. Mwipikeni (2018) posits that South Africa's current political dispensation supports a capitalist state which is counter-Ubuntu. The country's economy is such that the poor people are exploited, while companies bag profits while at the same time neglecting their entrepreneurial social responsibilities. De Beer (2015) argues that the moral fiber of society has been

compromised because the extended family no longer performs its traditional role of taking care of its members.

The economic environment is not conducive for poor people to share the little that they have because even the working poor are burdened by the ever-increasing repo rates and cost of living. This is while some politicians continue to enrich themselves in the pretense of seeking better life for everyone while in reality, it is only a select few who can say they see the benefits of living in a democratic state. While the country is in a downward spiral headed for economic doom, it is clear that the majority Black poor will be the hardest hit. When resources are not adequate for people to share, Ubuntu would not be easy to adhere to. Mwipikeni (2018) is of the strong view that Black people are economically oppressed which could signify the weakening if not the end of Ubuntu. They posit that the modern South African society is one that is “underpinned by individualism entangled with social injustice and economic marginalisation”. The individualism which is pervasive in the society is rooted in colonial domination and racial segregation. Poverty is worsened by the lack of economic emancipation among Black African people. The prescript of Ubuntu is that when one is in need, they should receive assistance from their group, which in essence means that assistance is expected. This scenario may create an entitlement attitude on the side of the person seeking help and a sense of obligation on the person providing the assistance.

De Beer (2015) is of the view that Ubuntu has been ignored/displaced in the formulation of practices and policies which govern society, thereby exposing the marginalised to harsh realities of life such as poverty and homelessness. One can argue that it is the very impoverished conditions which predetermine whether or not a family will need economic support. Gumbo (2014) suggests that traditional leaders are custodians of the Ubuntu values and as such there should be a partnership between the two types of governance to help uphold the ideals of Ubuntu. Doing so will help remind Africans of their Africanness and promote a sense of community amongst the society.

Another backlash faced by Ubuntu is that the values and principles of Ubuntu are perceived to be the antecedents of collectivism while not providing the political environment which makes it easy for those values to prevail (Molefe & Magam, 2019).

True to this assertion, in an economic turmoil South Africa is experiencing, it is not easy for an individual to have to cater for their own needs and those of others who seek help from them. Nyamnjoh (2020) reports that even though contributors go out of their way to share their earnings with extended family members, there is no guarantee that their efforts will be appreciated, which also means contributors are not always enthusiastic about sharing their wealth as it may be popularly believed. Molefe and Magam (2019) emphasise that for an individual to achieve a sound character as a goal of morality, structural conditions should be favourable for the attainment of such a goal. This is to say that one cannot speak of morality attainment in unfavourable political, economic, and technological conditions. The environment should thus be favourable to allow people to be thoughtful and empathetic towards others.

### **3.5.2 Ubuntu is a hindrance to individual success**

The Ubuntu philosophy puts emphasis on the importance of interdependence and a sense of community. It is, however, difficult to establish how far this interdependence extends and where individual autonomy begins (Bolden, 2014). This is largely attributed to the fact that the concept of Ubuntu was developed when people still lived in tribal groups to ensure the needs of each member of the tribe were met and to make division of labour easy. This way, the success of Ubuntu was ensured.

The question remains whether the principles of Ubuntu are still relevant and to what extent are they practiced in this increasingly urbanised and globalised society (Bolden, 2014). In so far as Ubuntu advances inclusivity, collectivism and solidarity, to a certain extent, it would seem to be a hindrance to personal success which according to Nyamnjoh (2020) leads to discord in social relationships. The oversharing of personal resources is a determinant of the inability to attain personal goals. When people are expected to share more resources than they intended to, they may become resentful towards the recipients. This indeed has a potential to produce disharmony in the family of the benefactor and threatens the autonomy of the giver.

### **3.5.3 Ubuntu is detrimental to personal freedom**

In Ubuntu, the community has authority to sanction its members such that if an individual does not agree with the community norms, they may have to face certain consequences like being cast out of the community (Verhoef & Ramolai, 2019). This type of norm enforcement is detrimental to the relationship between the individual and

the community. It also denies the individual an autonomy to act according to their own values and worldview (Verhoef & Ramolai, 2019). In the same breath, Ubuntu recognises that individual freedom is reflected in understanding that a person is a moral agent who is responsible for their own actions, which implies that individuals have freedom to make their own choices. Mboti (2015) however, questions whether African people are independent because they choose to or because they are destined to be. The latter notion raises a point of whether one wishes to or not, African people are bound or expected to be mutually dependent on other people. This therefore also means by virtue of being born African, benefactors are obligated to help their kin, whether they choose to or not. In contrast with the former notion that people choose to be independent, one has autonomy to decide whether they wish to assist their kin or not.

A different view is presented by Verhoef and Ramolai (2019) who note that the concept of freedom has a central place in Ubuntu. These authors acknowledge that although freedom is important in Ubuntu, there is no clarity on how much freedom an individual has in their relationship with the community to allow them to act freely. The authors do caution however that an individual's freedom of action may sometimes be the cause of tension between the person and the community. This denotes that the community ultimately limits the individual's freedom. The individual does not have total autonomy, and for Mboti (2015), any action which does not promote informed choice is wrong.

An individual's action must not be separated from the context, which is something that is missing in the interpretation of Ubuntu (Mboti, 2015). In essence this means that the provision of support must be analysed within the context which it occurs. Factors which influence this action should be considered in order to understand this phenomenon. It should not be just viewed as something a benefactor is expected to do since they operate in an environment where there is mutual dependence or interdependence amongst people. In the South African context, Ubuntu cannot be discussed without taking into consideration the historical obstacles which may hinder the exercise of ubuntu principles (Molefe & Magam, 2019). What Mboti (2015) has also illuminated is that the action of support provision should not be obligatory but rather voluntary.

In the context of this study, a potential benefactor may decide that they do not wish to provide economic support to their kin but may end up doing it for fear of being shunned by the community because the community has certain expectations on this potential benefactor. The individual then ends up giving in to expectations even though they personally did not want to perform such an action.

#### **3.5.4 It is difficult to define what Ubuntu is**

The most prominent challenge with Ubuntu is that its philosophical tenets are described in the form of narratives which makes it difficult to theorise it and to clearly define it (van Stam, 2016). It is this reason that informs the lack of a definite and comprehensive definition of the concept. Additionally, De Beer (2015) argues that knowledge that is culturally construed is not easily transferable to other places and times. Notwithstanding the belief that Ubuntu defines what good and bad behaviour is, it should be noted that it is not clear what the boundaries of its application are (van Stam, 2016). This means it is up to the discretion of observers or the community whether one has done enough good deeds to satisfy the expectations of the community. The same applies when an individual has done wrong, it is the community which decides the severity of the offence and it is the community that hands down the punishment which they deem to befit the indiscretion. It can therefore be deduced that this lack of clear boundaries leaves an individual at the mercy of the community. Nolte and Downing (2019) also state that the definition or conceptualisation of Ubuntu is vague and has different meanings which make some people to question its relevance in today's society. This then raises the question of whether or not African people are inherently good or not.

Albeit the notion that Ubuntu produces harmony and reduces discord, Mboti (2015) is of a strong view that this interpretation of the Ubuntu philosophy is still doubtful. The author continues to dispute the assertions that Africans are ethically and morally dependent on each other, and that they are harmonic collectivists and sharers. Mboti (2015) indicates that this is because the conceptualisation of Ubuntu is inadequate and inconsistent, therefore its definitions have remained unclear or fuzzy, which has then led to the widely accepted misconception that African ethics have no conception of individual freedom and that the conception of freedom is an imported European concept.

Ubuntu seems to only focus on the good side while ignoring that the good is influenced by the bad (Mboti, 2015). The focus on the good side ignores the fact that the good cannot exist without the bad. Ubuntu exists because people find themselves in unfavourable conditions which emanate from the social, political, technological, spiritual, economic environments. Moreover, life is a balance between the good and the bad, and between harmony and discord. As such life can never be fully harmonious or completely discorded

### **3.6 SOME RESPONSES TO UBUNTU CRITIQUES**

Despite the shortcomings mentioned in the foregoing section, Nkhunkhu-Orlando et al. (2021) believe that the communalist worldview remains central in African societies. The principles of Ubuntu such as respect, solidarity, compassion, and sharing can help in addressing negative issues such as intolerance, competition, and arrogance which are prevailing in today's society (Nkhunkhu-Orlando et al. 2021)

Koenane and Olatunji (2017) contend that Ubuntu is neither dead nor dying and anyone with an opposing view is mistaken. They liken principles of Ubuntu to those of Christianity and argue that if the principles of Ubuntu were to be deemed outdated and irrelevant, then Christian ethos should suffer the same fate. These authors believe that Ubuntu has been resilient in the face of criticism which has attempted to destroy it and Ubuntu is here to stay. Nyamjoh (2020) is of the view that albeit Ubuntu is constantly challenged by opportunism, it brings about hope and redemption while offering a perspective for inclusive emancipatory social change. This means that when people act humanely towards each other and work together for the betterment of the lives of the collective, they can overcome challenges that burden them such as unemployment and poverty. The belief that Ubuntu is anti-progressive is flawed because individualism, greed, and selfishness will not help one get ahead in life (Ngomane, 2020). People can help others and still achieve their personal goals without compromising interpersonal relationships.

Ubuntu is not only recognised as a relational philosophy, but it is also a valuable perspective in research. According to Bolden (2014), Ubuntu is a helpful concept in research as it can be used to describe value systems which operate in southern Africa and help contextualise research and practice in this part of the world. Hence the researcher deemed it important to have Ubuntu included in this study to help describe

the concept of intergenerational support provision in black families as this activity is rooted in the value system of the said people. Bolden (2014) asserts that using Ubuntu in research warrants that the researcher takes an interpretative stance or perspective as opposed to the widely used positivist paradigm in social research. The current study is of an interpretative nature hence the use of the Ubuntu concept in the analysis of the intergenerational support provision is crucial.

Another important reason for using Ubuntu in research is that it highlights the relationship between a person and the collective and it does not give more attention to one variable than the other. This means that in research the focus is on how the individual interacts with the collective. Bolden (2014) also stresses that it is then crucial to incorporate indigenous knowledge and spirituality where the relationship between the individual and the collective is under study.

### **3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed the concept of Ubuntu as an African relational philosophy which focuses on the relationship and interdependence between an individual and the collective. The chapter also illustrated the link between the elements or principles of Ubuntu and the provision of intergenerational support in Black African families. The limitations and challenges associated with the utilisation and application of Ubuntu were also described.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF INTERGENERATIONAL SUPPORT**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

### **4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Micro-level determinants of intergenerational provision of support comprise factors such as the characteristics, and resources needs of beneficiaries and benefactors. These characteristics include gender, income, parenthood, marital status, health status, personal motives, as well as relationship to beneficiaries. The provision of support has both benefits and disadvantages. However, the disadvantages are felt more by the givers of support than the receivers. The discomfort which givers feel as a result of having to share resources with family members can lead to withdrawal from the family and thus affecting family solidarity.



**CHAPTER FIVE:**  
**STATE AND SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS IN IMPROVING THE**  
**LIVELIHOODS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POOR POPULATION**

**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

**5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an overview of some of the strategies employed by the state as well as the social work profession in improving the livelihoods of disadvantaged groups in the country. Literature consulted shows that although the government has attempted to alleviate poverty through the implementation of various policies, the majority of black people are still grappling with the effects of unemployment and inequality. Social work intervention strategies could be enhanced to ensure that they have an observable impact on the lives of the disadvantaged groups.

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is reserved for the discussion of the research methods which were used in the study. The aim and objectives of the study are outlined first. Then the research approach and research design used in the study are described. The population from which the sample was drawn is also described followed by the sampling techniques used. The processes of data collection and data analysis are also explained in this chapter. This chapter also describes how the study adhered to the ethical requirements of social research.

#### **6.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the socio-economic merits and limitations of intergenerational economic support in Black families.

## **6.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, a description of the research methodology used in the study was provided. The research approach and design used were described and the rationale for their selection was provided. The importance of using interviews as the relevant data collection method was explained. The process followed when analysing data was also explained. Additionally, the chapter outlined how quality criteria aspects were adhered to. The chapter showed how ethical elements which are crucial when conducting research were adhered to.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN:**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter of the thesis is dedicated to sharing what was discovered from the interactions held with participants. Additionally, the researcher interprets these findings using the lenses of the CHAT and the Family Systems Theory. The discussion section of the chapter allows the researcher to analyse the findings in line with existing relevant literature.

#### **7.3 DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

The data collected from the study participants is presented thematically. The data analysis process yielded six themes which will be individually presented. The themes generated are:

- Determinants of intergenerational family economic support
- Utilisation of economic resources in the family

- Benefactors' experiences with regards to providing economic support to family members
- The impact of economic intergenerational support on family dynamics
- Benefactors' strategies of coping
- Benefactors' projected status of intergenerational economic support provision in black families

#### **7.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The current study was conducted with ten Black employed South African university graduates who provide economic support to extended family members of different generations. The study sought to explore and describe the benefits and pitfalls of this kind of support. The data collected from the individual interviews with the participants yielded six themes which are discussed in this section of the chapter.

##### **❖ Circumstances leading to the practice of economic support provision**

The interviews with the participants revealed that there are various circumstances which led them to begin providing economic support to their extended family members. These circumstances were identified as past political and social factors; irresponsible parenting; death; unfavourable labour market conditions; and cultural expectations and norms. Participants indicated that coming from poor households put their families at a disadvantage of being unable to address their needs. This situation meant that that the participants provide economic support to their families.

The findings of the study also showed that participants were left to take care of children whose parents were unable to undertake their parental responsibilities. These parents were either absent in their children's lives or they simply neglected their children and parental responsibilities. These children were nieces and nephews of the people who were providing economic support and they became beneficiaries of the support because they shared residence with the benefactors and/or the main beneficiary of the economic support. Another factor of economic support provision is the death of parents which left the surviving spouse and children with no means of support. The oldest surviving children were then expected to take over the responsibility of taking care of the family once they began working. Alertini, (2016) as well as Silverstein et al. (2020) pointed out that those who are more educated and have higher incomes are

burdened with the responsibility of caring for the younger and the older family members.

Lack of job opportunities for family members was cited as another factor which influenced the participants' provision of economic support towards extended family members. The majority of the participants indicated that they were the only person in their family who has a formal job. Being the one with a better job and salary in the family meant that the family expected the participants to be the ones to take care of the family's financial needs. These expectations stemmed from the belief or norm that Black people should share their success with others.

The unfavourable economic situation that Black families find themselves languishing in is according to Msibi (2019), attributed to the country's political past which systematically restricted Black people from participating in the meaningful education, economic and social spheres of the economy. This meant that Black people were unable to amass generational wealth for their dependents. Those dependents and descendants are participants of this study who are now responsible for the welfare of the family.

#### ❖ **The family's usage of economic resources**

The benefactors shared that they would initially take it upon themselves to take care of the family needs as other family members' income was too little for them to do anything significant with it. The majority of the benefactors mentioned that their family members were beneficiaries of the various state grants- mostly the child support grant and the old age pension grant. Mothers of participants were mentioned as being the main beneficiaries to whom economic support was directed. This is also affirmed by Akinrolie et al. (2020), who stated that adult African children feel the need to reciprocate the past support they received from their older parents. This feeling of indebtedness to their parents prompts adult children to provide upward intergenerational support. Additionally, having mothers as main beneficiaries of support is done because as the matriarch of the family, a mother is tasked with the primary responsibility of family care.

Family care is inclusive of the overall well-being of the family, which encompasses basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. These needs are addressed with the family's economic resources which participants contribute a bulk of. Other needs

addressed with the family's resources include payment of funeral insurance, school fees, water. Msibi (2019) outlines that the financial assistance received by family members is used for buying groceries, paying school fees, or paying a bond. This is an indication that the support provided by benefactors is essential in keeping the families functional because meeting the needs of the family is one determinant of whether or not a family becomes functional.

It is important to know how the responsibility of helping keep the family functional affects the benefactors as individuals and as members of their families.

#### **❖ Views and experiences of participants regarding the provision of intergenerational economic support**

The study findings depict common views that participants feel burdened about sharing their economic resources with extended family members. There were however a few participants who indicated that they do not view this practice as a bad thing. The latter group mentioned that they do not mind sharing their resources with family despite the negative impacts associated with the assistance. On the other hand, those who see this practice as a bad thing believe that this practice works against their personal goals and given a choice, they would opt not to do it. This finding is in line with what Fongwa (2019) found that contributors have mixed feelings about this practice where others view it as being helpful to the family whereas other contributors perceive it to be an impediment to their personal success. This would mean the latter group do not contribute because they want to, but because they are expected to, if they had it any other way, they would not provide economic support to their extended family members as no one wishes to remain stagnant even when they are employed or have an income.

The study participants expressed a feeling of worry about the inability to meet some of their personal needs due to their sharing of economic resources with family members. Benefactors lamented that they have had to put their dreams of pursuing their studies further, owning a house or buying a car on hold. Other things which participants have had to do in moderation include going out, buying clothes, and spoiling their partners. To be able to make ends meet and continue with the provision of support, participants indicated that they have had to borrow money to close the gap. Benefactors also mentioned that having debts meant that they hardly have enough

money to address their personal needs. Silverstein et al. (2020) assert that individuals who take financial care of multiple generations in a family face the reality of being in distress due to resource depletion owing to the needs and/or demands of the beneficiaries. Sharing resources with family members indeed comes with personal sacrifices.

The participants' romantic relationships were some of the aspects of their lives which were impacted upon the benefactors' provision of support to family members. Benefactors found themselves in frequent quarrels with their partners over the economic support provision. Some of the benefactors' partners were reported to complain about how the participants neglected their relationship in favour of their families. The benefactors reported to use more resources on their family and were left with little to sustain their romantic relationships. One participant directly linked his divorce to the practice of economic support where his wife decided to leave him because he could not build a house for him and his nuclear family. Some benefactors even resorted to not having a stable partner to avoid having disagreements about the economic support provision. A female participant mentioned that they have had to put their wedding on hold for fear of imminent dispute with her future husband about the practice of economic support provision. Having disagreements in romantic relationships mean that benefactors are unable to satisfy their love needs which are essential to live a satisfying life because human beings are social beings who need love and affection. Romantic relationships were not the only aspects of the benefactors' lives which were negatively affected. Some participants indicated that their jobs were also affected.

When benefactors run out of commute money, and they do not wish to borrow more from colleagues and friends, participants said that they resort to putting in leave. On account that not having enough resources has a bearing on the person's emotional process, it was expected that benefactors would report experiencing anger which they sometimes projected on their colleagues. One of the participants even indicated that they drink alcohol during office hours in order to deal with negative emotions such as feelings of despair and anger. These findings show that the practice of economics support provision can negatively affect the work, which is the same thing which makes the provision of support possible. If benefactors were to lose their jobs, family members would be left destitute.

The findings indicated that benefactors who had children of their own have had to reduce the resources meant for their children to enable them to accommodate the needs of the rest of the family. Examples of such cutbacks include buying non-branded clothing, reducing maintenance money, and changing schools. Due to the demands of the beneficiaries, the benefactor may struggle to fulfil their own personal financial obligations such as saving for the future, thereby exposing their own children to the deprivation trap or the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The quality of life of the benefactors' children is somehow compromised and can make children believe that their parents are unable to fulfil their parental responsibilities. Children have certain expectations of their parents, and when parents fail to fulfil them they may be seen as failures. Essentially, the provision of economic support puts the parent-child relationship in a compromised position.

The findings presented above point to the uncomfortable realities of the practice of intergenerational family economic support provision. These realities have shown, through the study findings that they are a source of distress in the lives of the participants. These findings resonate with what Alertini (2016) noted that people who simultaneously provide support to older and younger generations of family members, are at a heightened risk of being overburdened by their support obligations, which can easily lead to the deterioration of their physical and psychological health status. This does not, however, mean that there are no positives related to the provision of economic support. Furthermore, the overemphasis on egalitarian lives leaves the contributors in a state of dissonance or incongruence as they attempt to balance between their own needs and those of their beneficiaries.

The study participants shared that if it were not for their assistance, their families' lives would not have improved in the way that they have. An indication was made by the participants that through their economic support provision, their families were able to have better housing, they could afford to have food on the table, and attend better schools. This is what brings comfort to the benefactors and motivate them to continue with the practice of economic support provision despite the negatives associated with it. To corroborate this assertion, Odiaka and Oriogu (2017) note that for Africans, Ubuntu means people are people because of other people therefore someone who is said to exhibit Ubuntu carries themselves with humility, they are generous, hospitable,



warm, and willing to share. One major driver of the provision of support is to break the deprivation trap which many black families have had to grapple with for generations.

Additionally, participants continued providing economic support to family members because it was culturally expected of them to do so. They felt like withdrawing their support would be shunned upon by family members and would go against their beliefs. Participants believe that helping one's own people in their time of need is an honourable thing to do. They also believe that beneficiaries of support will also be in a state where they too are able to assist others in need. Benefactors view this as an egalitarian practice which is passed down from generation to generation. Additionally, intra-family support or intergenerational family support is based on social norms and moral obligations (Preoteasa et al., 2017). Silverstein et al. (2020) however explains that it is the social support (time transfers and emotional support) which is egalitarian while the financial support is competitive because its provision competes with the personal needs of the provider.

#### ❖ **The impact of economic intergenerational support on family dynamics**

For most participants, the provision of economic support was not a matter which was discussed, rather they (benefactors) took it upon themselves to assume this responsibility as they believed it was what their family members expected of them. It was somehow of an unspoken rule that benefactors had to follow. In some instances, the main beneficiary of support determined how support is to be provided. In such cases, benefactors do not have full autonomy on how their resources will be shared with the family. Button (2016) cautions that added strain on interpersonal relationships between parents and their adult children could come from an intergenerational conflict that come about when benefactors are told by their parents not to spend money on themselves before fulfilling the needs of the family. Some families show appreciation of the assistance by how they treat the benefactors.

Parents, who are main beneficiaries of intergenerational economic support make it glaringly clear that the benefactors are the apples of their eyes. This is shown in the way in which they treat their children based on whether they are providers or not. There seems to be a hierarchy of importance amongst siblings, with benefactors topping the hierarchy and being given royal-like treatment as opposed to their siblings who are expected to tend to the breadwinner. This differential treatment amongst

siblings is a cause for concern as it has potential to cause deep rooted tension which can last long after the parents have passed away, therefore jeopardising family ties which are deemed to be important in black people's lives. In Ubuntu the most basic element of being human is showing respect towards fellow humans and it is believed that whoever shows respect to their elders will have status, value, identity, and security conferred upon them by those elders (Verhoef & Ramolai, 2019). Ngomane (2020), has however observed that people mostly respect and value those with a higher socioeconomic standing. In a family where some members are unable to provide economic support, favouritism can be shown towards the one who is able to provide the economic support and thereby compromising the dignity of the one who is unable to do so. This can result in family conflicts which can manifest across the generations of the family.

Other family dynamics brought about by the provision of economic support is that benefactors felt like they were at times being manipulated into providing support. Participants mentioned that the manipulation came disguised as praises that the benefactors would receive blessings if they continue to provide support. This does not in any way deter benefactors from providing support. This behaviour by contributors can be explained by an assertion by Gumbo (2014), who indicated that some people have reported that not sharing what they have with other people can make their hearts ache, which means sharing becomes an innate responsibility to them as they believe being individualistic is un-African. Furthermore, for Africans, the provision of support is done based on the belief that givers have a responsibility, not only towards their family members but also towards their ancestors from which they receive blessings. This is because Africans generally believe that their ancestors are mediators between themselves and God hence, they will live their lives in a way they hope will be pleasing to their ancestors. Ubuntu thus regards a person in relation to others, not only the live ones, but including ancestors and descendants which are yet to be born, in a way that the past, present, and future are harmonised (van Stam, 2016). Africans attribute whatever good thing they receive to the favour of ancestors and those ancestors are praised by their descendants for bringing them good fortune. This way, ancestors continue to bless benefactors who in turn keep sharing their resources with others.

Some benefactors voiced dissatisfaction about their beneficiaries' behaviour. The resentment stems from a lack of responsibility on the part of the beneficiaries with

regards to birth control and child maintenance. In accordance with the Family Systems Theory, individuals' problems and behaviours affect the entire family system (Priest, 2021). Resolving negative feelings towards each other is important if families are to maintain healthy relationships. Leaving these unresolved can easily lead to a dysfunctional family unit as contributors may resort to maladaptive behaviours as a way of dealing with the unresolved negative feelings towards family members. A family is supposed to be a place where one feels safe and happy and should not be a cause for one's bitterness. Much of the negative emotions experienced stem from the fact that the benefactors do not communicate their struggles with the beneficiaries. The more the benefactors assist, the more benefactors expect and believe that the contributor will help with their every request. These expectations can make contributors feel like they are obligated to fulfil them and would do anything to help their families despite finding it difficult to do so.

#### ❖ **Ways of coping with the responsibility of economic support provision**

Benefactors who spend most of their income on family members which leaves them with barely anything to sustain themselves are found to be reliant on their romantic partners to help in meeting their personal needs. This kind of dependency can cause tension in the relationship as the other partner might not be able to assist each month which can then lead to frustrations which may manifest themselves as Intimate Partner Violence, thereby resulting in unhealthy relationships. Some of the participants indicated that they find solace in alcohol, while others have resigned to doing nothing about the negative emotions they experience.

Study participants indicated that their willingness to help family members pushed them to do everything they could to take care of their beneficiaries' needs. Doing so left participants having to borrow money in order to make ends meet. Mikioni (2019) reports that in some cases, as much as half or more of one's salary is used to address their family's needs. This is despite them having a qualification and well-paying employment. The family's needs are reported to be leading to indebtedness (Msibi, 2019) which makes it difficult to experience financial relief. Being in debt affects the benefactors' savings and therefore has an undesirable impact on their financial prospects.

### ❖ **Trajectory of economic support according to current benefactors**

For the people who took part in the study, the future did not seem to hold better prospects as they projected an everlasting cycle of intergenerational economic support. This practice is projected to continue for generations to come unless one of the generations breaks the cycle. The same sentiments are shared by Peterson and Green (2009), who stated that people inherit the social status of families into which they are born. Children born into families which depend on the contribution of a benefactor are therefore likely to grow up to be contributors as adults. Families have to engage in behavioural activities which will lessen the likelihood of the continuation of the intergenerational economic family support provision to break this cycle which others perceive as a burden.

Government has initiated various programmes which are aimed at assisting young entrepreneurs to help ease the burden on black families. Matlala and Shambare (2017), however, contend that youth from poor backgrounds are not interested in starting their own businesses which is crucial in fighting intergenerational poverty, but are rather focused on finding a job that will provide them a reliable stream of income in order to support their families as opposed to having to contend with the financial uncertainties that come with owning a business. Finding employment is difficult in South Africa where the labour market is unable to cater for the demands of its citizens.

A benefactor can be trapped in their family's cycle of poverty because if one does not save for a comfortable retirement at an earlier stage or as a young professional, they will have to depend financially on their children, thus to a certain degree, disabling those children to save for the future. Although possible, it is difficult to break free from the deprivation trap and be able to save for one's personal needs such as starting a family, or buying a house or a car, due to the amount of money that goes towards helping the family.

### **7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has presented the major findings of the study according to the themes which emerged during the data analysis. Data was gathered by way of individual interviews with Black employed university graduates who were providers of economic support to their extended family members. Six themes were generated from the data analysis process. The interpretation of the themes was done mainly guided by the two

theories which were used in the study, being the Cultural Historical Activity Theory as well as the Family Systems Theory.

Various socio-economic and political factors were identified as being determinants of economic support in intergenerational families. The economic resources which benefactors share with their families is used to address shelter, clothing, education, nutrition needs, and other secondary needs. The practice of economic support is viewed by the majority of benefactors as an inconvenience to their personal success and has somehow negatively affected their interpersonal relationships. The responsibility of ensuring that the needs of the family are met produces psychological distress as benefactors have to also fulfil their personal needs. This situation drives benefactors to adopt maladaptive behaviours such as constantly borrowing money, excessive use of alcohol, and ignoring their psychological health. There seems to be negative prospects regarding the practice of intergenerational support in Black families. The next chapter is dedicated to the presentation of summary of the study findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, and recommendations based on the findings.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT:**

### **SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter summarises the main findings of the study. It also brings forth the conclusions and recommendations based on the major findings of the study. A brief description of the theories used in the study is also provided in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter restates the aim and objectives of the study as well as the problem statement which provided argument for the rationale of conducting this study.

#### **8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section of the chapter presents recommendations based on the major findings of the study.

##### **❖ Recommendations based on determinants of intergenerational family economic support**

- Prior to having children, prospective parents should discuss how the children would be catered for financially and otherwise. Therefore, people are discouraged from having children when they do not have the economic resources to take care of those children. Conversations must be had with teenagers and young adults who are not financially independent about family planning. One of the functions of the family is to control procreation, therefore families need to perform this function fully as it would help regulate the number of beneficiaries brought into the family.
- Absent and irresponsible parents must be held accountable for their actions. They should be made aware of the responsibilities they have towards their children and be held accountable for failing to carry out those responsibilities. Parents ought to forge a healthy co-parenting relationship for the sake of their children who need care. Mothers of children whose fathers are absent should be educated about the recourse available to them and the children concerned. The relationship between parents and their children is not just based on the economic needs of the children, but involves care as stipulated in the Children's Act.

- Family members must not interfere in estate matters when the deceased has left children behind. Family members must work on amassing their own properties and desist from fighting over deceased people's properties and let the deceased's beneficiaries get what is rightfully theirs.
- Parents need to have measures put in place to ensure that their children will be taken care of after their passing. These measures could be in the form of drafting a will, opening a trust account, taking out life insurance, and seeking financial advice to protect their children in the event of their passing.
- The formal labour market is unable to meet the demand of the citizens in terms of work opportunities. Individual family members can engage in informal trading to be able to earn some income which will supplement what the benefactor contributes towards the upkeep of the family. Government can do more in terms of job creation by curbing stumbling blocks to development such as corruption. More effective public programmes to improve the livelihood of Black people should be implemented. Companies can open more training, recruitment, and appointment opportunities for graduates to allow them to enter the labour market. Having more employed family members will help ease the responsibilities of the benefactor.
- Ubuntu, particularly giving and sharing should be considered in context, meaning it should not be a prescript of how one has to live their life. Contributors need to make an informed choice of whether it is a good decision for them to share and how much to share with their beneficiaries.

❖ **Recommendations based on the utilisation of economic resources in the family**

- There has to be an open and honest conversation about all sources of income for family members in order to ensure that economic resources are used to the benefit of the family. Each family member who has an income- formal or otherwise has to contribute a portion of their earnings towards the upkeep of the family. As with the benefactor, the needs of the family should be prioritised by other members of the family.
- Other beneficiaries in the family need to be self-reliant given that for most participants, their mothers are the people to whom assistance is directed. This

could denote that the assistance could be available for as long as the mothers are alive and could be withdrawn on the event of their passing. Therefore, other adult beneficiaries ought to ensure that they become independent before such an eventuality.

- As people who take care of the family, women are mostly the hardest hit by unfavourable socio-economic conditions such as poverty. This could explain why most benefactors have identified their mothers as people who are most deserving to be the main beneficiaries. It is therefore also recommended that effective poverty reduction strategies should be aimed at these population of women.
- Although the findings show that the economic resources in the family are used to address basic needs of the family, findings also indicate that some beneficiaries exploit the assistance they receive by funding their lifestyles. There needs to be a discussion on how family economic resources are to be utilised by beneficiaries. In instances where possible, the benefactor should procure those necessities on behalf of the beneficiaries to avoid misuse of resources. Non-essential utilities should not be funded by the family's economic resources. Beneficiaries should up come with ways of being independent and not overly rely on the benefactor for the attainment of their basic needs. This will be crucial for their survival in an instance where assistance is withdrawn, the benefactor loses their job, or they pass away.

❖ **Recommendations based on benefactors' experiences with regards to providing economic support to family members**

- Benefactors' goodwill should not be exploited. Their efforts in assisting the family should be appreciated by ensuring that the family's resources are effectively utilised. The provision of support should be done out of the benefactors' volition as the study also revealed that some family members compel benefactors to assist in addressing the family needs.
- Providers of support should learn to prioritise their personal needs without feeling guilty. They should be assured that their needs are also valid and attempt to strike a balance between assisting extended family members and attending to their personal needs. These needs should also be communicated



with family members so that they become aware that the assistance they get from the benefactor is not limitless and the provider has a personal life which they need to cater for.

- Benefactors should seek professional help for the negative emotions they experience in relation to their provision of economic support to their intergenerational family members. This is because the effects of these emotions tend to spill over to other interactions which benefactors have with other people such as romantic partners, siblings, parents, colleagues, and even clients.
- Providers of economic support need professional help in order to be assertive and inform their family members about what they can help them with and what they would not be able to assist with. This will help them avoid going into debt as they attempt to help family members.
- It is important for benefactors to keep healthy romantic relationships. As such it is recommended that they be honest with their partners about the assistance they provide to their families. This would allow partners to make an informed choice about the future of the relationship because money is one of the main things which break couples apart.
- As much as benefactors are motivated to help their extended family members, they should not do so at the expense of their own children's needs. They should understand that they have responsibilities towards their own children which should supersede those of any other person. Family members should refrain from wanting benefactors to treat their children as though they were born of the benefactors. They should understand that the benefactors cannot provide for these children equally.
- The study showed that the economic support received from contributors provides beneficiaries with relief from imminent despair. The continuation of this practice is therefore recommended on condition that it does not take away from the benefactors' personal responsibilities. There should be a balance between being individualistic and being egalitarian. Both are important in modern society where people have to contend with a variety of socio-economic challenges.
- Study participants indicated that their continued provision of support cannot be attributed to one particular thing, but the support is provided simply because it

is the right thing to do and it is expected that they do it and it is also a form of social investment because it is expected of beneficiaries to provide help when the benefactors need it. These sentiments mean that there should be an understanding of mutual aid between contributors and beneficiaries. The practice of economic support provision should not be a one-sided affair which only works to the advantage of the beneficiaries.

❖ **Recommendations based on the impact of economic intergenerational support on family dynamics**

- Benefactors had to begin with the provision of support immediately after getting jobs. This is an indication that their families were experiencing some form of deprivation. It is therefore recommended that such families be assisted so that there is more than one source of reliable income which will bring some relief to the benefactors.
- The providers of economic support are treated favourably by their families, more specifically their main beneficiaries. It is recommended that the appreciation shown by the main beneficiaries to the benefactors should not be such a way that it makes other family members feel undervalued.
- Study participants indicated that they felt like their beneficiaries were emotionally manipulative towards them. Beneficiaries should understand that they can show appreciation for and complement their benefactors without involving deities. The personalised appreciation would actually be more positively received by the benefactors without feeling like they are being manipulated.
- Being providers of economic support has allowed benefactors to enjoy benefits of other forms of support provided by family members. Beneficiaries therefore need to be appreciated by all family members for the various roles they perform in the home through the division of labour. Beneficiaries should understand that it does not only take money for a family to function but be aware that other tasks such as doing house chores and childrearing are essential for the upkeep of the family. All parties involved should therefore do their part to ensure that the family remains functional.

- The benefactors indicated that they feel some negative emotions towards their parents and other beneficiaries of their economic support. It is important that these emotions and their triggers be discussed with individual benefactors and with their families. This process will require that a professional such as a social worker be involved. This is because if families were to discuss this amongst themselves, tensions may rise and the process could fail. Having a professional would allow family members to openly talk about their feelings in a safe environment and enable them to maintain healthy relationships.
- The study indicated that beneficiaries have a sense of entitlement over the economic support they receive. Beneficiaries should be aware that the assistance they receive is not a right but a privilege which comes with being related to the benefactor. The limits of such assistance should be discussed so that beneficiaries do not feel entitled to receive support.

#### ❖ **Recommendations based on benefactors' strategies of coping**

The strategies mentioned by participants as their coping mechanisms are what can be termed maladaptive behaviour. These strategies are not beneficial to the participants. For the participants to function better, their beneficiaries should be made aware of the sacrifices which the benefactors have to make to be able to support them. Having these honest and open conversations facilitated by a professional will help the beneficiaries understand the practice of economic support provision from the contributor's viewpoint.

#### ❖ **Recommendations based on benefactors' projected status of intergenerational economic support provision in black families**

- There are people in the family who could assist in addressing the family needs. To help ease the burden of support, benefactors should refrain from playing the hero of the family by carrying the responsibilities of the family alone. Other potential benefactors should be engaged so that the responsibility is shared equitably depending on an individual's resources and needs. This process should be facilitated by a professional.
- There was no definite period by which benefactors believe they will be able to withdraw their support. They are hopeful however, that their beneficiaries will be independent thereby relieving them of the responsibility. The beneficiaries

should therefore be empowered to tap into their strengths which will enable them to be self-reliant.

- There are differing views about whether benefactors' children can be future providers of support. Measures should be put in place to ensure that younger generations in the family do not become future beneficiaries of intergenerational economic support. This can be achieved when parents themselves are educated about family planning and financial planning.

## **8.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The current chapter provided the summary of the findings according to the main themes of the study. From the study findings, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made. The next chapter is dedicated to presenting a proposed intervention strategy that can help ease the burden of support on the benefactors and help improve relationships in the lives of the providers of economic support.

## **CHAPTER NINE:**

### **PROPOSED PROGRAMME: FAMILY-CENTRED PROGRAMME FOR INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY ECONOMIC SUPPORT PROVISION**

#### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter proposes a Family-Centred Programme for intergenerational family economic support provision that seeks to ease the burden of responsibility on the providers of economic support in Black families. The study findings revealed that benefactors find the responsibility of economic support provision to be burdensome. Provision of economic support is also associated with intrapersonal and interpersonal problems. The goal of family social work is to help families stay together and to improve the interaction patterns between family members. The essence of family social work is to focus on the exchanges of behaviour which occur in a moment of

interaction between family members. It is this interaction between family members which causes and maintains both problematic and non-problematic behaviour (Johnson & Ray, 2016). The family therefore has a responsibility to keep their own family functional by focusing on fixing behaviour which is a source of negative behaviour or feelings for other family members. The study has shown that the provision of intergenerational economic support is linked to challenges which have negative effects in the lives of the benefactors. It is therefore important that the family, as a unit, restores the family homeostasis. Social workers then have to formulate strategies which help keep families functional.

## **9. 2 RATIONALE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAMME**

The most common and convenient form of family amongst black South African is the intergenerational household. This arrangement provides a safety net for family members who are without careers or income prospects (Makiwane et al., 2012). The multigenerational household guarantees mutual support and the wellbeing of their members throughout their lives (Bigombe & Khagiagala, 2004). This kind of setup however according to Peterson et al. (2009) promotes idleness since all members are assured of the basic necessities of life, even without taking interest in productive activities because members of these families have a cultural or moral obligations to support their families even if they choose to move out of their families of origin.

A family is a system which requires that all its parts play their assigned roles for it to be functional. When poor parents fail to fulfil their instrumental roles of providing for their family's basic needs, the entire family is negatively affected. In an intergenerational family such a responsibility falls on the shoulders of the next generation. Peterson and Green (2009), point out that behaviour problems and depression are associated with failure to perform one's role in a family. This denotes that poverty has psychological implications on families that experience it and as such social workers need to intervene in order to enhance these individuals' social functioning.

Young professionals are expected to put their families first, irrespective of their place of residence because they are seen as agents of change to their family situation. The family expectations include remitting money home for food, medicine, school fees for siblings, house improvements, family ceremonial gatherings and anything else to the

benefit of the family (Matlala & Shambare, 2017). The authors state that the young professionals who provide financial resources to the family are often young professionals who are college or university graduates. The social work profession is committed to alleviating human suffering in all its forms. As such this study explored the socio-economical burdens and benefits associated with intergenerational economic support and the programme is proposed to mitigate discomforts brought by this phenomenon.

### **9.3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME**

The Cultural Historical Activity Theory prescribes that a new model of doing an activity be formulated if the current one is not favourable to all actors in the activity system. Taking into account ways in which subjects experience conflict in an activity system, Miles (2020) proposes that subjects can attempt to resolve them by following these stages:

- Questioning accepted practice and wisdom- this is the stage at which people reject current accepted practices.
- Analysing the situation- at this stage, people investigate the structure and history of the current situation.
- Modelling- this is when people propose a new model and suggest possible solutions.
- Examining the new model- the people involved start working on the new model. They do this through either discussion or in practice. This is done in order to understand the new model better.
- Implementing the model- this is the application stage of the model, where it is practically applied. It thus becomes more defined as it progresses.
- Reflection and evaluation- at this stage, the people involved take stock of the model. The new practice is evaluated, critiqued and further modifications are identified.
- Consolidation- there is an attempt to embed the new practice in stable form.

The current study however proposes that a programme which focuses on how intergenerational family economic support is dealt with in the family be developed instead of a model. The development of this new programme will adopt of the elements

proposed for the development of a model as proposed by Miles (2020). Adapting the proposed model above, the family-centred programme for intergenerational family economic support provision will focus on the following stages and related programme topics:

- Topic 1: Functions of a family. This topic is aligned with the first and second stages where family members will be discussing the practice of intergenerational family economic support provision. This is also when the family will be analysing the current circumstances which led them to be contributors and beneficiaries of intergenerational family economic support.
- Topic 2: Importance of maintaining healthy family relationships. This topic is aligned with the second stage where family members will be discussing their current interpersonal relationships with each other and working towards fixing broken relationships.
- Topic 3: Family planning. Topics 3-8 are aligned with stages of modelling and re-examining the model where family members and the practitioner will explore ways of addressing current and foreseeable family challenges. This will also include the assignment of tasks or homework which family members will need to execute to improve their situation. The execution of tasks assigned is aligned with the implementation stage. The implementation stage will be monitored throughout the programme by the practitioner.
- Topic 4: Identification of current and future family needs. Topics 3-8 are aligned with stages of modelling and re-examining the model where family members and the practitioner will explore ways of addressing current and foreseeable family challenges. This will also include the assignment of tasks or homework which family members will need to execute to improve their situation. The execution of tasks assigned is aligned with the implementation stage. The implementation stage will be monitored throughout the programme by the practitioner.
- Topic 5: Setting rules/boundaries. Topics 3-8 are aligned with stages of modelling and re-examining the model where family members and the practitioner will explore ways of addressing current and foreseeable family challenges. This will also include the assignment of tasks or homework which family members will need to execute to improve their situation. The execution

of tasks assigned is aligned with the implementation stage. The implementation stage will be monitored throughout the programme by the practitioner.

- Topic 6: Discussing expectations and responsibilities. Topics 3-8 are aligned with stages of modelling and re-examining the model where family members and the practitioner will explore ways of addressing current and foreseeable family challenges. This will also include the assignment of tasks or homework which family members will need to execute to improve their situation. The execution of tasks assigned is aligned with the implementation stage. The implementation stage will be monitored throughout the programme by the practitioner.
- Topic 7: Financial planning. Topics 3-8 are aligned with stages of modelling and re-examining the model where family members and the practitioner will explore ways of addressing current and foreseeable family challenges. This will also include the assignment of tasks or homework which family members will need to execute to improve their situation. The execution of tasks assigned is aligned with the implementation stage. The implementation stage will be monitored throughout the programme by the practitioner.
- Topic 8: Family empowerment. Topics 3-8 are aligned with stages of modelling and re-examining the model where family members and the practitioner will explore ways of addressing current and foreseeable family challenges. This will also include the assignment of tasks or homework which family members will need to execute to improve their situation. The execution of tasks assigned is aligned with the implementation stage. The implementation stage will be monitored throughout the programme by the practitioner.
- Review of the programme. Following the execution of the tasks identified as the programme was implemented, its progress needs to be ascertained. This will be done through a review which will involve the practitioner and family members who were involved in the programme. This is aligned with the reflection and evaluation stage, where all parties involved will take stock of the programme.



The new practice is evaluated, critiqued and further modifications are implemented where necessary. The modifications are aligned with the consolidation stage where identified changes are incorporated in the programme to enhance it.

#### 9.4 PROPOSED PROGRAMME TOPICS AND RATIONALE FOR TOPICS CHOSEN

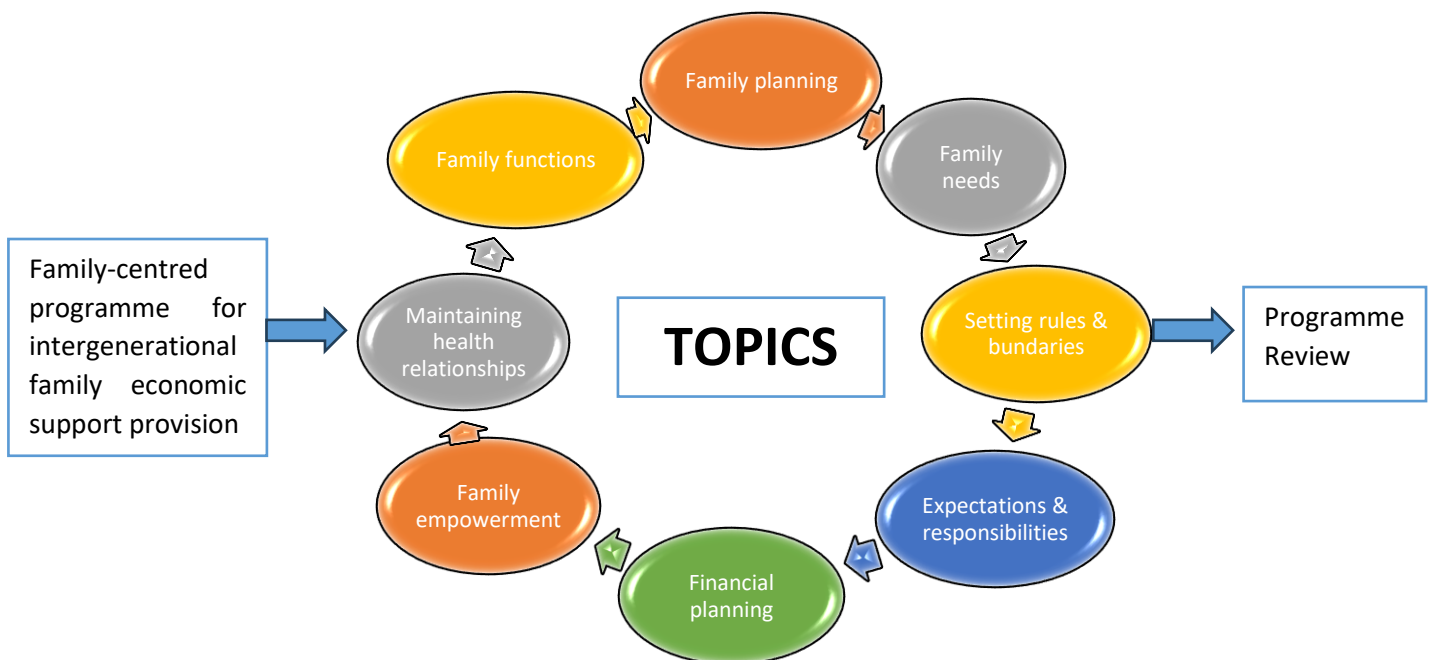


Figure 9.1

Source: Author

### ❖ **Functions of a family**

Families are designed to perform certain functions which keep the family operational as a system. These functions include the economic, reproductive, and socialisation functions. Every family aspires to have their physical and spiritual needs met because all families want to be prosperous (Johnson & Ray, 2016). Once a family fails to perform one or more of these functions, contradictions occur. It is therefore important that members of individual families discuss the functions that they envision their families performing and where they lack in terms of current functions being performed.

Additionally, Verhoef and Ramolai (2019) posit that the community serves to cater for the needs of its members such as care, love, sense of belonging, security, food, identity, educational, financial needs. The community in this context can also refer to an individual's extended family. Because the community provides for the needs of its members, it holds some power over the individuals in the community. The individual will try by all means to adhere to the ethical norms so to be accepted by the community. Those who deviate from the norms are shunned and may even be cast out of the

community because one's sense of value is earned through their moral conduct (Verhoef & Ramolai, 2019). This can force some individuals to conform to ethical norms which they do not necessarily agree with, while having a feeling that the community is authoritative. In the context of the study, family members may find themselves having to perform certain duties just to please the family. Hence it is important to have a discussion about the functions of the family. The community just wants to ensure that there is mutual aid amongst its members.

#### ❖ **Importance of maintaining healthy family relationships**

The practitioner who will be working with the family should, through assessment, identify tensions which already exist between family members and act accordingly, even opt for separate sessions outside of the family sessions. The family's emotional processes and how they affect individual members and the family as a whole are to be identified and discussed. This session can be broken down into associated breakaway sessions depending on how long this topic takes to discuss and resolve.

Family relationships are maintained when there exists a healthy exchange of emotional processes between family members. Bergman and White (2011) hypothesize that emotional processes are important because they determine functioning in all relationships among people, including relationships in nuclear and multigenerational family systems, relationships outside of the family system such as friendships and workplace networks. Furthermore, a family is considered to be a system because just like a human body, each part needs to function well for the body to be healthy (Dallos & Draper, 2015). Family members therefore have to act together to keep the family functional, while acknowledging that the actions of each member affect other members of the family.

Maintaining family equilibrium is essential because disequilibrium can lead to anxiety and family conflicts. In many African communities, the practice of Ubuntu is not only limited to the members of the nuclear family, but it is extended to kinship network (Chowdhury et al., 2021). For Africans, living in harmony is easily achieved because of kin communal residence.

#### ❖ **Family planning**

During this session, the social worker and family members need to discuss the bearing of children. This session can include minors, depending on their cognitive and social development. The birth of children needs to be regulated especially by those members who do not have adequate resources to take care of children and might need assistance by family members. The rationale is that family members who assist in the upbringing of children should at least have a say about childbirth in the family. The family should decide what should happen in the eventuality that one of them has a baby. The needs of the new parent must be identified and people who will provide the assistance should be identified such as who will assist the new parent with economic needs and who will assist with child rearing.

The fulfilment of family needs is achieved through role expectation and role performance. Role expectation in families is related to the implicit and explicit rules of who does what in the family in relation to behaviour and division of labour (Haefner, 2014). Mitic et al., (2021) state that the role played by families is fundamental in such a way that no one individual nor institution could solely perform this function- the function of childrearing while simultaneously ensuring that psychological and physical development takes place through socialisation. This means that child rearing is essentially the responsibility of the family as a whole.

#### ❖ **Identification of current and future family needs**

How to meet family needs (division of labour in the family). Family needs include the family's major current and foreseeable economic needs such as housing, education, and funerals. The latter need is an issue which causes a lot of tension in Black families when not properly planned for, especially when it is the parents who are deceased. Their adult children may have disagreements on how much money towards the burial should be contributed and by whom.

#### ❖ **Setting rules/boundaries**

An important aspect of any social group, including the family, is having rules which govern its members. The role each member has to play for the upkeep of the family needs to be discussed. Having boundaries is important in maintaining the homeostasis

of the family unit and strengthening family relationships. This session should include the discussion of the limits of economic support provision.

According to Priest (2021), a family is an autonomous and adaptable system which has rules that maintain the family system, and it also responds to the stress from inside and outside of the family systems by making changes to the set rules. This means the activities which the family engages in should be regulated by rules. In order for the family to return to a state of homeostasis, after a disturbance, Dallos and Draper (2015) recommend that the family should then organise itself in a rule-bound, predictable, and stable fashion.

#### ❖ **Discussing expectations and responsibilities**

Each of the adult members of the family will represent themselves and any of their minor children who are able to carry out some house chores. During this session the practitioner will guide the family in discussing the needs of the family. Both the economic and no-economic needs are identified. Following the identification of all the family needs, members then discuss and decide how and by whom those needs are to be addressed.

Central to the autonomy of the family system are individuality and togetherness (Titelman, 2014), denoting that although members of the family are seen as a unit, there still exists a sense of individuality for the members. It can be deduced that despite being bound by family rules, the benefactor is an individual who has separate needs from those of the family as a whole. This means that while discussing expectations and responsibilities, it should be borne in mind that individuals also have a life outside of the family. As such, their personal needs are valid and should be taken into consideration.

It is also expected that every person would carry out their responsibilities as set out by all actors. The involvement of all actors leads to division of labour within the activity system, wherein no person should benefit without making an effort towards the goal. In the context of the study, it should not be the sole responsibility of the benefactors to ensure that the family's needs are met. Family members who do not have economic means should indeed engage in other home building activities such as house chores and/ or child rearing to their physical capabilities. The social motive is based on the expectations of the community which the benefactor is part.

### ❖ **Family financial planning**

This session involves being transparent about the income received by all family members. The income sources also need to be revealed. All concerned members with the help of the professional, need to agree on how much they will contribute towards the upkeep of the family. All the contributors then need to make a commitment to continue with the economic support provision. The needs to be addressed by the family's economic resources will be outlined as well.

Ubuntu is when a person is able to see themselves in other people (Ngomane, 2020). With Ubuntu there is no need for an individual to face their struggle alone, therefore, people look to each other for support (Ngomane, 2020) to overcome life's challenges because people need one another to progress. Family members have to share the responsibility of family care and this responsibility should be shared equitably based on individual resources and capacity.

### ❖ **Family empowerment**

This topic is dedicated to identifying strengths and capitalising on them in addressing the family needs. This will help family members who are not in formal employment to explore ways in which they can improve their lives and find ways to be self-reliant. It is also important for the professional and the family to tap into environmental strengths or resources which will help facilitate this process.

Nyamjoh (2020) is of the view that albeit Ubuntu is constantly challenged by opportunism, it brings about hope and redemption while offering a perspective for inclusive emancipatory social change. This means that when people act humanely towards each other and work together for the betterment of the lives of the collective (family), they can overcome challenges that burden them such as unemployment and poverty.

interpersonal relationships. The benefactors do not cope well with these challenges. As such, there is a need for professional intervention which will help enhance the well-being of the providers of support and improve the overall functioning of the families concerned. The proposed topics of the programme can be discussed in the order which the social worker deems to be suitable for the family concerned.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Informed consent form**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

University of Limpopo

Department of Social Work

**Title of research project:** An analysis of the intergenerational family economic support expectations and responsibilities amongst Black South African employed graduates: Implications for social work practice.

**Researcher:** Ms Prudence Mafa

I, Prudence Mafa am a Doctoral candidate in Social Work at the University of Limpopo. I therefore request your voluntary participation or contribution in this study. This study is supervised by an experienced researcher, Prof JC Makhubele who has been appointed to oversee the activities carried out during this study. Your contribution as a participant is to answer questions regarding your provision of economic support to your family members. Your responses will contribute to the construction of body of knowledge about the topic. The risk for participating in this study is that while

responding to questions, you may experience negative emotions when you think about your experiences in relation to economic support provision. If you experience this during the study, you are requested to inform the researcher, or you may opt to not answer the questions. Professional services will be made available to help you deal with the emotional harm if you may wish to do so.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and there will be compensation for taking part in the study. You can therefore withdraw your participation from the study at any stage without consequences. Be informed that the researcher will be recording your responses and you hereby agree to have your participation recorded. However, every attempt will be made by the researcher to keep all information collected in this study strictly confidential and if this study results in any publication, you will not be identified by name or any identifying information.

By signing below, you are indicating that you have read and understood the consent form and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Participant's signature : ..... Date.....

Researcher's signature: ..... Date.....

**Appendix B: Interview schedule**  
**Demographics**

Gender

Age

Occupation

Sum of years in all occupations

Relationship status:

Biological/legally adopted children

No of beneficiaries

Relation with beneficiaries

Ages of beneficiaries

Occupations of beneficiaries

Gross income per annum

Type of settlement of beneficiaries (rural/urban, peri-urban)

Level of education

Net monthly salary

Supplementary income

Monthly spend/Percentage of salary that goes to family support

Schedule/interval of support provided

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

- **To establish determinants of economic intergenerational support provision**
  - How was the provision of support initiated?
  - After your employment, how long did you begin to provide this support?
  - How was the amount of money that you contribute determined?
  - For how long do you think you will continue to provide this support?
  
- **To determine how economic support is utilised in the family**
  - Who is the main beneficiary of your support (person who receives the money)?
  - What family needs are addressed with the money?
  - What are other sources of income for your beneficiaries?
  
- **To appraise benefactors' experiences with regards to providing economic support to family members**
  - What are your views about the provision of intergenerational economic support?
  - How has your provision of support affected your own financial needs?
  - What are the challenges of providing this kind of support?
  - What are the advantages of providing this kind of support?
  - How has your provision of support affected your relationship with your partner and/or children?
  - What motivates you to continue providing this support?

- What personal needs/desires have you put on hold for you to be able to continue providing this support?

- **To assess the impact of economic intergenerational support on family dynamics**

- Are you a sole or co-benefactor?
- How has your provision of support affected how your family treats you?
- How does your family share non-economical responsibilities (such as house chores, caring for children)?

- **To formulate strategies to ease the economic support provision and help eliminate the intergenerational cycles of poverty.**

- How and by whom do you think you should be assisted for you to cope?
- How do you currently cope with all the responsibilities you have towards yourself and everyone that is dependent on you?
- What can your beneficiaries do to help address the needs of the family?
- How do you think your own children can be exempted from this practice?
- What do you think the role of government should be in helping benefactors lighten their economic responsibilities?

**Appendix C: Ethical clearance letter**





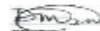
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**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE  
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 31 October 2023  
**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/280/2022: PG – **Renewed**  
**PROJECT:**

**Title:** An analysis of the intergenerational family economic support expectations and responsibilities amongst Black South African employed graduates: Implications for social work practice.  
**Researcher:** P Mafa  
**Supervisor:** Prof JC Makhubele  
**Co-Supervisor/s:** N/A  
**School:** Social Sciences  
**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work



**PROF D MAPOSA**  
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The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

**Note:**

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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**10 January 2024**

Dear Sir/Madam

**SUBJECT: EDITING OF DOCTORAL THESIS**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled 'An analysis of the intergenerational family economic support expectations and responsibilities amongst Black South African employed graduates: Implications for social work practice' by Prudence Mafa has been copy-edited, and that unless further tampered with, I am content with the quality of the thesis in terms of its adherence to editorial principles of consistency, cohesion, clarity of thought and precision.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kubayjoe", is written over a faint, light-colored circular stamp or watermark.

**Mafumisi Group**

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