

CULTURAL SPECIFIC ATTITUDES OF BATSWANA PEOPLE TOWARDS ADOPTION

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KEYWORDS: adoption parent, alternative care, attitudes, culture, Batswana, cultural specific

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The aim of this study was to describe the cultural attitude of Batswana people towards adoption. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design and is descriptive in nature. It followed a quantitative approach and reached 83 respondents representative of designated organisations rendering services to adoptive parents in Ikageng, Potchefstroom. A questionnaire containing closed-ended questions was used. Demographical information was included to test the construct validity on different variables, namely the birthparent, adoptive parent and the adopted child. The findings of the study indicated that the Batswana community have a positive attitude towards adoption.

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INTRODUCTION

Children in South Africa reside in a society in which their rights, impartiality and dignity are elevated to the highest regard by the Constitution. Article 28 of the South African Constitution (1996) unequivocally states that the protection of children against abuse, violence and exploitation is both a basic value and an obligation. The aim of child protection is therefore to ensure the care, wellbeing and safety of children by means of a holistic and integrated approach. In the face of the best efforts of the South African government and civil society, many children still remain vulnerable (Lombard, 2014:1). An option for the placement of children who are found to be in need of care and protection by law is adoption. Adoption is a traditional method of alternative care in the child protection field and has been regarded for many years as the most effective and stable means of providing care for orphaned, abandoned and vulnerable children (Department of Social Development, 2015:1). It is the permanent placement of children who are no longer in the care of their biological parent(s) or permanent guardian (DSD, 2015; Loening-Voysey & Wilson, 2001:34; Hill & Hill, 2005:1). Blackie (2014:2) is of the opinion that there are large numbers of children who have been abandoned and require care, but correspondingly there are low numbers of available caregivers and adoptive parents. This, together with conflicting culturally held views on adoption, is an indicator that there is a crucial need for an understanding of adoption in African society (Mokomane & Rochat, 2011:352-353). According to Pilane (2002:72), the Batswana people strongly believe in and support their own culture, norms and values. They believe that what distinguishes them from other cultures are their cultural practices, their respect for their ancestors, their style of marriage, child rearing, ways of greeting and respect for others. The purpose of this study was to determine culture-specific attitudes of Batswana people towards adoption.

CONTEXTUALISATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Children whom have been abandoned, orphaned and neglected find themselves in a strenuous and challenging situation (Akpalu, 2007:1070). Such situations are on the increase in South Africa (Rochat, Mokomane, & Mitchell, 2015:1). These children face a greater risk of being impoverished, discriminated against, having to face different types of abuse, the loss of property rights, being confronted with labour and/or sexual exploitation and neglect. These factors can threaten such children's potential to complete school and could further lead to the endorsement of practices that increase their vulnerability to social ills such as HIV/AIDS (Sigweni, 2008:32).

Blackie (2014:2) states that these children require care, but there are few available caregivers or adoptive parents. Adoption can be defined as the parental commitment to a child by someone who is

not the child's biological parent or guardian (Loening-Voysey & Wilson, 2001:34). Mokomane and Rochat, (2011:347), Gerrand and Nathane-Taulela (2015:1) as well as the Children's Act (38 of 2005) promote adoption as the best form of alternative care in cases where a child has been abandoned. Section 157(3) of the Children's Act states that, if it is in the best interest of a child, a very young child who has been orphaned or abandoned should be made available for adoption (Children's Act 38 of 2005:71). This section of the law is supported by Crossen-Tower (2004:335) and Mokomane and Rochat, (2011:347), who stated that adoption provides stability and permanence in a child's life better than other forms of alternative care such as institutional or foster care. Harber (1999:4) noted that in relation to the care of children, great emphasis is placed on communal care as opposed to institutional care for children who are deemed vulnerable. Instead of informal care arrangements, legal adoption was introduced and developed in South Africa mainly for the assistance and betterment of the Caucasian population, which in turn made adoption services practically inaccessible to the African population. As a result, the African community utilised culturally appropriate forms of family building and maintaining familial relationships.

According to the National Department of Social Development's statistics on adoption, 14 803 adoptions were registered in South Africa for the term 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2010, which is an indication that an estimated 2 400 adoptions took place per year (Van Wyk, 2011:1). Nieuwoudt (2014:14) added that this is a small number in comparison with other methods of alternative care, such as foster and residential care, as there are currently over 3 million orphaned and abandoned children in South Africa according to Statistics SA (as cited in SA NEWS, 2011:1). Examining statistics of the Registry of Adoptable Children and Parents (RACAP) (2013, as cited in Blackie, 2014:2), there are 297 unmatched parents. There are only 14 black adoptive parents with 398 black adoptable children, 190 white adoptive parents with 3 white children available for adoption, 43 Indian adoptive parents with no Indian children available and 9 children termed "mixed race" (Blackie, 2014:2). This status clearly indicates a disparity in the cultural demographics regarding adoption. Barbara and Heston (2006:5) reported that 61 to 68% of orphaned African children are cared for by their grandparent or great grandparents, and almost all others are in the care of another relative. Based on these findings, it does appear adoption has a culturally specific connotation, one that may not hold the same meaning in African cultural groups as in Caucasian cultures.

The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) (2012:1) states that in many African societies, the legalised disruption of blood ties is either unfamiliar or forbidden. This means that the placement of children with people other than their parents – albeit a friend, relative or orphanage – is not recognised as a final act that determines the child's future relationships. The author continues to say that in a large number of African communities, "full" formalised adoption continues to be a foreign concept and is therefore scarcely utilised. Mokomane and Rochat, (2011:352) confirm this argument by stating that, psychologically and spiritually, most black citizens in South Africa do not agree with the legal adoption process (as currently practised in South Africa) and are of the belief that this practice does not coincide with their cultural and ancestral belief system. One of the barriers to adoption can be linked to the belief in ancestors, which results in communities believing that it is difficult to raise a child whose ancestry is unknown (EveryChild, 2012:10). Pakati (as cited in Gerrand, 1997:11) explains that in traditional societies strangers were excluded because cultural norms and values placed a strong emphasis on the aspect of belonging in a family, and therefore family boundaries were rigidly defined. In addition, blood ties in this group were stressed and the entire community participated in and was responsible for socializing its children. The issue of childlessness was, in turn, culturally defined. Gerrand (1997:12) highlighted that as a result of this, a child of different blood entering into family other than their own was not an act that was provided for. This belief can be clearly explained by a comment by Mphala, the KZN Commissioner for Traditional Leadership Disputes and Crimes: "It would take years before there was a flexibility of mind about adoption among most South Africans. We would have to have a big indaba [meeting] before it could be accepted. Ancestral spirits look after their relatives and no-one else. In our religion, in our culture, this thing is ring-fenced". In Africa,

specifically also in South Africa, fertility and parenthood are held in high esteem and thus voluntary childlessness is not common (Ombelet, Cooke, Dyer, Serour & Devroey., as cited in Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015:57). This, in turn, places great pressure on black women to fulfil their clan requirements by proving their fertility and giving birth to a child of their own (Gerrand, 1997:12). Infertility thus results in negative social consequences such as stigmatisation and ostracism (Dyer, Abrahams, Hoffman & Van Der Spuy, 2002:1657).

Mokomane and Rochat, (2011:352-353) pointed out that many black South African civilians view the adoption of a child as hindering the child's relationship with their family of origin and clan roots (i.e. a closely-knit system of relatives). This has serious consequences for the adopted child's bio-psychosocial wellbeing. A widely used bio-psychosocial definition of health reads: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity" World Health Organization (WHO, 2006:1). A strength of this definition is that it presents a holistic view of the individual by acknowledging that good health is more than just good physical health. It also encompasses mental, emotional and social wellbeing. The bio-psychological perspective is conceptually attractive to social workers and other professional healthcare workers, because it resonates strongly with holistic perspectives such as "person-in-environment" and "psychosocial" approaches (Chui & Wilson, 2006:131).

The Batswana, along with many other African cultures, have experienced rapid Westernisation since the nineteenth century (Pilane, 2002:1). Traditionally, the adoption of children did not take into account the best interests of the child; the focus was more on the interests of the adoptive parent. Adoption was principally associated with the production of heirs to a family, which is an important factor in the Batswana family. Each family required an heir who would protect the name of the family, their property and heritage from extinction (Sigweni, 2008:15). Again, Christianity has spread rapidly and has had an influence on most people, including the Batswana community. Today the Batswana people are caught between their traditional culture and Western civilisation. Because of the pressure of Western civilization civilisation, many Batswana have abandoned their traditional practices, beliefs and attitudes so that they can fit into the new dispensation and be able to face the changes that have occurred so drastically in their country (Pilane, 2002:1; Sigweni, 2008:13), including the changes in African family structures (Bigombe & Khadiagala, 2003:1). The researcher was not able to find recent evidence of research done specifically focusing on Westernisation and its influence on the Batswana's beliefs and attitudes regarding adoption.

Yet the levels of children who have been abandoned are extremely high in contrast with low levels of adoption (Blackie, 2014:2). This, together with conflicting culturally held views on adoption, is an indicator that there is a crucial need for an understanding of adoption amongst the different cultures within black society. Mokomane and Rochat, (2011:352) further strengthened this argument by stating that most black citizens in South Africa do not agree with the legal adoption process (as currently practised in South Africa) and are of the belief that this practice does not coincide with their cultural and ancestral belief systems. An example of this is the reasoning that it is difficult to adopt a child whose origins they are not familiar with, and then change the child's name when the legal adoption process is finalised (Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015:58). Although much has been written on the views and perceptions of the African community in general by authors such as Gerrand (1997), Mokomane and Rochat, (2011) and Blackie (2014), the researcher found no evidence of research done amongst the Batswana community regarding adoption. The researcher therefore identified a need to determine the specific attitudes of the Batswana people towards adoption practices in an African community context. This study therefore aims to generate culture-specific and relevant knowledge to create an understanding of indigenous, cultural perspectives regarding the attitude of the Batswana people, and, in addition, to encourage social workers to deal with adoption-related matters in a culturally sensitive manner. The rationale is that if a better understanding of the culture-specific attitudes of Batswana people towards adoption is cultivated, agencies will be better equipped to explain adoption in a culturally appropriate manner, thus developing appropriate indigenised techniques.

The research question is therefore: What are the culture-specific attitudes of Batswana people towards adoption?

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to establish and describe the culturally specific attitudes of Batswana people towards adoption.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design within a quantitative paradigm. The reason for this is that the population was a geographical community with a specific cultural description/identity (Creswell & Clark 2011b:53; Grinnell (2011:231). The study focused on a cross-section of the population. Delpont and Fouché (2011b:434) were of the view that quantitative research is utilised to answer questions concerning relationships between two variables for the purpose of explaining or describing the phenomena that those observations reflect. The study is descriptive in nature as it described the culture-specific attitudes of Batswana people towards adoption. Fouché and Delpont (2011:63) added that by making use of this approach, the researcher objectively measures the variable(s) of interest and does not actively work with the respondents so that unbiased conclusions may be drawn. The researcher wanted to describe the findings relevant to this specific community as an example of a particular cultural group.

Participants

The participants were selected on the basis of their relevance to the subject under study (Babbie, 2007: 308; Greeff, 2011:366). Consistent with the aim of this study, only two population groups have been included, namely adults of the Batswana cultural group in Ikageng, Potchefstroom, who formally or informally care or have cared for children, and those members of the community who have an opinion about adoption.

Sampling strategies

This study utilised a two-fold strategy for sampling. As far as demarcating the population is concerned, a purposive strategy was followed in that the Ikageng community in Potchefstroom was selected as demarcated community. Purposive sampling consists of elements that include the most relevant characteristic, representation or common attributes of the population that serve the purpose of the study (Strydom, 2011b:232). The researcher purposively selected four welfare organisations, referred to in this article as organisations A, B, C and D, to be included in the study as all of them are involved with formal care arrangements and their client base includes, amongst others, the Batswana population. Secondly, the researcher made use of availability sampling as a non-probability sampling technique by including carers and/or members from the target community who responded to the general advertisement and were available at the time of the research study. A convenient sampling technique can be understood as a sampling technique in which respondents are selected based on convenience and/or they are easy to find (Bachman & Schutt, 2014:15).

Data-collection method

The researcher used a multi-item questionnaire with closed-ended questions, developed by Gerrand (1997:101-105), to measure the attitude of an African community towards adoption. Delpont and Roestenburg (2011:186) pointed out that the basic objective of a questionnaire is to elicit facts and opinions about a topic from a particular group of people. The questionnaire is not a standardised tool. However, it was constructed, validated and pilot tested by the author (Gerrand, 1997). In addition, the questionnaire was constructed in terms of a Likert scale and the respondents were required to indicate whether they agree, strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree or were neutral regarding the statement given. The researcher expanded the questionnaire to include specific demographic items allowing

respondents to indicate whether they are currently in a care arrangement and the nature of that care arrangement. This enabled the researcher, in addition to addressing the main questions, to determine if the respondents' specific care arrangement had an influence on their opinions about adoption.

Data collection

The study was conducted in Ikageng, Potchefstroom. Posters were distributed and placed at the different welfare organisations. No participant was forced to participate in the study; respondents' participation was voluntary at all times (Strydom, 2011a:116). Anybody responding to the advertisements who considered themselves 'carers' or 'having an opinion' about care arrangements such as adoption was included in the study. The fieldworkers (social workers from the different welfare organisations) explained the reason as well as the aims of the research and the potential risks and benefits of participation. Respondents were required to sign an informed consent form (Creswell, 2014:96). After obtaining informed consent from the participants, the questionnaire was administered individually either at their respective homes or in the privacy of the various organisations' offices. The field workers assisted those respondents who are illiterate with the interpretation and completion of the questionnaires. The areas where the questionnaires were distributed were the social workers' specific focus area, for example, organizations A - D that renders foster care services. After completion, respondents were requested to deposit the questionnaire in sealed boxes placed at the different welfare organisations' offices.

Data analysis

For the purpose of this study, the quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire that was analysed through IBM SPSS Statistics Version 23, Release 22.0 (SPSS) (Fielding & Gilbert, 2006:22-23) done by the North-West University's Statistical Services. This enabled the researcher to calculate Cronbach Alpha values and descriptive statistics to represent the data in figures and tables. Specifically, the analyses utilised descriptive statistics and mean score analysis at item-descriptive level. The statistician made use of the following tools: frequencies and descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha, Independent T-tests, analysis of variance test (Anovas), Mann-Whitney and Spearman's rho. Such analysis enabled the researcher to determine the distribution for variables, or the proportions of males and females on an item regarding adoption. Doubell (2014:16) noted that this will allow the researcher to understand and interpret the data and identify relevant trends in the data.

Ethical aspects

Ethics refers to a system of moral principles governing an individual or group's behaviour. The system is adopted by a group or individual, and accepted as the norm (Strydom, 2011a:115). Mabusela (2013:10) and Maleka (2010:6) added that ethical principles offer rules and behavioural expectations concerning the most appropriate conduct when working with respondents as data should not be collected at the expense of other human beings. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the NWU with the following ethics approval number: NWU-00028-16-A1; permission from the respective organisations was also obtained. The following key ethical principles were considered and maintained throughout the process of the study, namely written informed consent and the use of a consent form; confidentiality; autonomy; protection of vulnerable respondents. The storage of data collected was organised and managed in a way that prevented loss, and only authorised access was allowed.

Validity AND reliability

Validity "is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research" (Bryman, 2012:171). Simply put, it indicates whether a measurement tool measures what it is supposed to measure (Bryman, 2012:171). Questions to test validity include the following: "What does this instrument actually measure?" "How accurate and consistent is this measure?" (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:229). This study concentrated on face validity, which is interested in the way in which the measuring instrument appears to the participants (Bless *et al.*, 2013:234; Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:173). The researcher, the supervisor, the science committee, the statistical consultant as well as the ethics committee agreed that the questions asked in the questionnaire should fit the focus of the study.

On the other hand, reliability is interested with how consistent a measure is (Bless *et al.*, 2013:222) and whether the findings of a study can be duplicated (Bryman, 2012:46). For the purposes of this study the researcher examined the reliability of the instrument quantitatively by means of Cronbach's Alpha. As a further means of ensuring reliability, the researcher included the questionnaire in an appendix, so that it is available to other researchers who wish to repeat this study in future (Doubell, 2014:14).

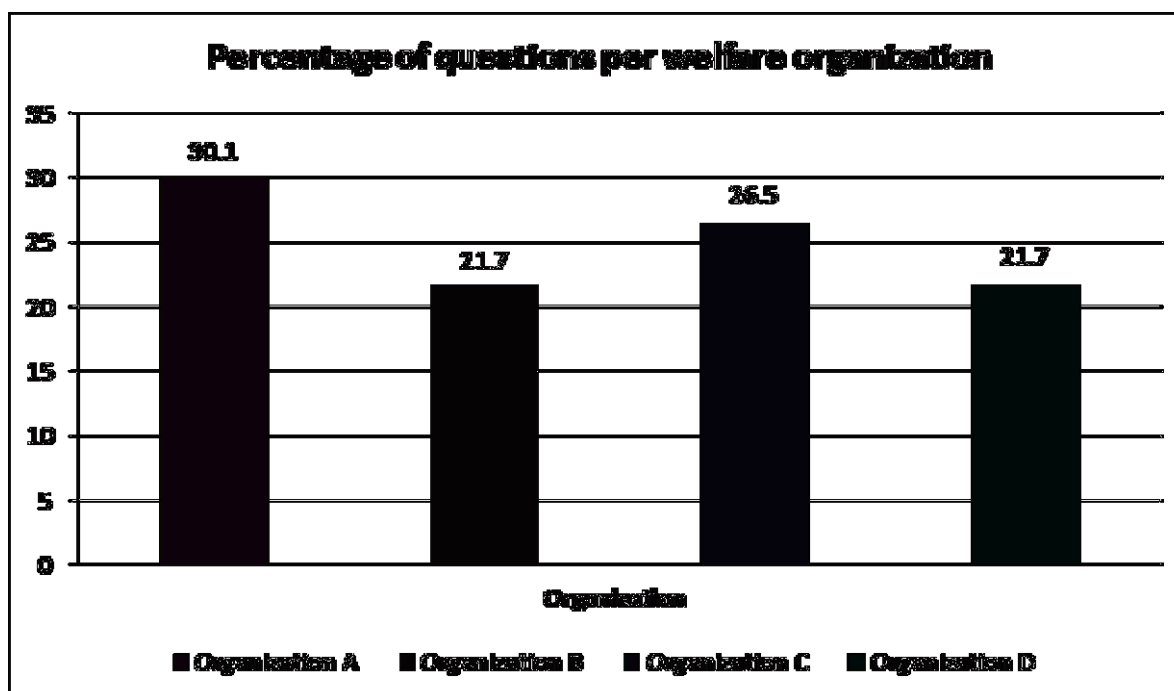
FINDINGS

A detailed discussion of the findings resulting from the questionnaire follows. Additional references are included where verification or controls of the quantitative findings are deemed necessary. The data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (2016). A convenience sample (n=83) was taken of the Batswana people residing in Ikageng, Potchefstroom, North-West Province in South Africa. Descriptive statistics in this study provide a summary of data, for example, the mean for the group as a whole (Pallant, 2013:6), thus the general opinions regarding different aspects of adoption of the group as a whole. Anovas were used to compare gender, age, employment status, educational levels and status as a carer on a single quantitative measure or score focusing on the opinions regarding adoption (Maree, Ebersohn & Vermaak 2008:56). Both focus on the general opinion regarding adoption, but the descriptive statistics focus on the group as a whole (all the respondents simultaneously), whereas the Anova was used to establish whether gender, age, employment status, educational levels and status as a carer has an effect on people's opinions and therefore provides the general opinion per group, for example, testing for differences in opinions between the groups. The effect sizes relating to the Anovas were used to determine the practical significance of the differences; however, they do not indicate what the differences are; therefore the comments explaining the differences in opinion were added too.

Profile of the welfare organisations

The following bar graph gives an overview of the total population referring to the four organisations that were requested to distribute the questionnaires. The graph furthermore gives an overview of the percentages of the respondents who took part in the study as per organisation.

FIGURE 1
GRAPHIC PRESENTATION
PROFILE OF THE WELFARE ORGANISATIONS



The questionnaires were distributed between organizations A - D in Potchefstroom. The mentioned organisations render child protection services to people of the Batswana culture in Ikageng, Potchefstroom as one of their focus areas and were thus requested to distribute the questionnaires. The table above indicates that 30.1% of the data collected comes from organization A, 26.5% was collected from organization C, and 21.7% from organizations D and B each. It seems that the majority of the respondents who took part in the study formed part of these organisations' client base, many of whom were exposed to alternative care.

Demographical information

The following demographical information was requested from the respondents: 1) culture denomination, 2) employment status, 3) educational qualification, 4) their position as a carer/non-carer and 5) gender. The researcher requested this information in order to get an understanding of the respondents' demographical profile. Only respondents who indicated that they are of the Batswana culture were included in this study.

The sample of the study consisted of 28% males and 72% females. The employment status of the respondents presented as follows: the majority of the respondents were employed full-time (38.0%), other respondents were employed part-time (36.7%), indicating that they were contracted employees. Unemployed respondents made up 25.3% of the total number of respondents who took part in the study. Information on the educational qualification of the respondents revealed that 21.7% completed their schooling career below Grade 9; 30.1% of the respondents indicated that they had completed their schooling career between Grade 10-12, and 47.0% of the respondents hold qualifications higher than Grade 12; these could include a training certificate, technikon diploma, technical diploma, university degree, postgraduate degree etc. In terms of age, the average age of the respondents is 41.16 (Std. deviation = 13.637) with the youngest person being 18 and the oldest person being 71. The respondents who took part in the study consisted of a younger generation who were 45 years and younger (68.4%) and an older generation (31.6%). The respondents who took part in the study as a result of exposure to some form of alternative care totalled 63.9%, whilst those who had an opinion regarding adoption consisted of 36.1% of the population.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

STATUS	N	PERCENTAGE
Gender		
Male	23	28%
Female	60	72%
Employment status		
Full-time	32	38.0%
Part-time	30	36%
Unemployed	21	25.3%
Educational qualification		
Below Grade 9	19	21.7%
Grade 10-12	25	30.1%
Post-school qualification	39	47.0%
Age		
Younger generation	57	68.4%
Older generation	26	31.6%
Carer		
Expressing opinion	30	36.1%
Alternative care	52	63.9%

Position as carer

The question on respondents' position as a carer was asked to determine whether the respondents had been exposed to a form of alternative care, and to distinguish between respondents who took part in the study because they held an opinion regarding adoption.

TABLE 2
POSITION AS CARER

Position as carer	Number	Percentage
Non-carer (with opinion)	30	36.1%
Past carer	12	15.7%
Informal carer	13	16.9%
Formal carer (i.e. foster care)	32	39.8%
Adoption	8	10.8%

It should be noted that the respondents did not choose only the most appropriate answer, but all options that applied. Therefore, the percentages in the above table will not add up to 100%, since they reflect the percentage of respondents choosing each option. In terms of the respondents' position as a carer: 36.1% indicated that they were not taking care of someone else's child nor had they done so in the past; therefore, their participation is based on their opinion regarding adoption. For the rest, 10.8% of the respondents have adopted the child that they are currently taking care of; 15.7% of the respondents indicated that they have taken care of someone else's child in the past but are currently not doing so; 16.9% of the respondents stated that they are currently taking care of someone else's child through an informal care arrangement (i.e. kinship care); and 39.8% of the respondents are currently taking care of someone else's child through a formal foster care arrangement.

Reliability and descriptive statistics

The birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee are key role players in the adoption process. These three members are vulnerable to the attitudes of the general community (Gerrand, 1997:25). The questionnaire was also divided into these three sections, namely the parent giving their child up for adoption (the birthparent), people who adopt a child (adopter), and a child who is being adopted (adoptee). Cronbach Alpha values and descriptive statistics of the three constructs resulting from the individual sections of the questionnaire are represented in Table 4.

TABLE 3
RELIABILITY AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Section	Cronbach Alpha	Mean	Std deviation
Birthparent	0.60	3.96	0.65
Adopter	0.61	4.12	0.58
Adoptee	0.57	1.80	0.69

The reported Cronbach Alphas were 0.566 and higher, thus the constructs could be deemed as moderately reliable. Field (2013: 708-709) confirm that an Alpha coefficient of between 0.5 and 0.7 shows moderate reliability.

Frequencies and descriptive statistics

In terms of understanding the respondents' attitude towards adoption, the researcher collected information regarding the birthparent, the adopter as well as the adoptee. Frequencies and descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to determine the distribution for variables. Doubell (2014:16) adds that this will allow the researcher to understand and interpret the data and identify relevant trends in the data.

The respondents' attitude towards the birthparents

The birthparent is a key role player in the adoption process. This section was given to determine the respondents' attitudes towards the birthparent and his/her role in the adoption process.

TABLE 4
ANALYSES OF THE RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE BIRTHPARENT

BIRTHPARENT							
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
1. A person should have the right to give their child up for adoption.	56.1%	30.5%	8.5%	2.4%	2.4%	1.65	0.921
2. A person's decision to give their child up for adoption should be respected.	53.1%	32.1%	6.2%	3.7%	4.9%	1.75	1.067
3. The community should reject a person who gives up their child for adoption.	4.9%	6.2%	8.6%	32.1%	48.1%	4.12	1.122
4. A person who gives their child up for adoption shows disrespect for his ancestors.	6.3%	22.5%	8.8%	35.0%	27.5%	3.55	1.282
5. Understanding should be shown to a person who gives their child up for adoption.	43.9%	35.4%	6.1%	9.8%	4.9%	1.96	1.159
6. A person should only give permission for their child to be adopted if blood ties exist between the person adopting the child and the child.	7.3%	19.5%	17.1%	30.5%	25.6%	3.48	1.269

The mean scores of items 1, 2 and 5 ranged between 1.65 and 1.96, indicating that the respondents agreed with the statements made. The mean scores of the negatively phrased items, i.e. items 3, 4 and 6, ranged between 3.48 and 4.12. This indicated that the respondents disagreed with these statements. Therefore, the finding is that the respondents generally feel positive regarding the birth parent. This is contrary to a study in the USA by Miall and March (2005: 538), who found that birthparents are often viewed as irresponsible and uncaring.

The respondents' attitude towards the adopter

The person who adopts a child plays a vital role in the adoption process. The goal of the statements given in this section was to determine the respondents' attitudes towards the person(s) who adopt a child.

TABLE 5
ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ADOPTER

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
B. ADOPTER							
7. People who adopt a child should be rejected by the community.	7.5%	7.5%	6.3%	3.0%	48.8%	4.05	1.242
8. People who adopt a child show disrespect for their ancestors.	5.1%	6.3%	15.2%	36.7%	36.7%	3.94	1.113
9. People who adopt a child should be accepted by the community.	65.8%	26.6%	2.5%	-	5.1%	1.52	0.959

10. Understanding should be shown to people who adopt a child.	55.6%	43.1%	-	1.4%	-	1.47	0.581
11. People should have the right to decide to adopt a child.	47.9%	43.8%	1.4%	2.7%	4.1%	1.71	0.950
12. People should only adopt a child if blood ties exist between them and the child they are adopting.	10.1%	15.2%	12.7%	39.2%	22.8%	3.49	1.280
13. Respect should be shown for people who adopt a child.	62.7%	32.2%	1.7%	3.4%	-	1.46	0.703
14. People who adopt a child who is unrelated to them show disrespect for their family.	10.8%	12.3%	12.3%	29.2	35.4%	3.66	1.361

The mean scores of items 9, 10, 11 and 13 ranged between 1.46 and 1.71, indicating that the respondents agreed with the statements made. The mean scores of the negatively phrased items, i.e. items 7,8,12 and 14 ranged between 3.49 and 4.05. This indicated that the respondents disagreed with these statements. Therefore the finding is that the respondents generally feel positive regarding the adopter. The findings is different from the findings by Mokomane and Rochat, (2011: 352), who argue that most black citizens in South Africa are not positive towards those who adopts children as they believe that this practice does not coincide with their cultural and ancestral belief systems. One of the barriers to adoption can be linked with a belief in ancestors, which results in communities believing that it is difficult to raise a child whose ancestry is unknown (EveryChild, 2012: 10).

Respondents' attitude towards the adoptee

The child who is being adopted (adoptee) is an important factor in the adoption process. The respondents' attitudes toward the adoptee may influence their behaviour towards the child. The statements given were used to determine the respondents' attitude towards the child who is being adopted.

TABLE 6
ANALYSES ON THE RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ADOPTEE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/disagree	Dis-agree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
C. ADOPTEE							
15. Kindness should be shown to a child who has been adopted.	75.6%	15.9%	2.4%	3.7%	2.4%	1.41	0.902
16. A child who has been adopted should be accepted by the community.	74.1%	21.0%	-	1.2%	3.7%	1.40	0.876
17. A child who has been adopted should have the same rights as other children.	72.8%	22.2%	1.2%	1.2%	2.5%	1.38	0.799
18. People should avoid adopting children because they grow up to be criminals.	7.4%	7.4%	12.3%	30.9%	42.0%	3.93	1.233
19. The ancestors of the family who has adopted a child will not accept an adopted child.	21.0%	12.3%	11.1%	25.9%	29.6%	3.31	1.530

The mean scores of items 15, 16 and 17 ranged between 1.38 and 1.41, indicating that the respondents agreed with the statements made. The mean scores of the negatively phrased items, i.e. items 18 and 19, ranged between 3.31 and 3.93. This indicated that the respondents disagreed with these statements. Therefore, the finding is that the respondents generally feel positive regarding the adoptee. This is opposite to the findings of a study in Botswana which indicated that the Batswana community are of the belief that adopting a child where no blood ties exist hinders the child's relationship with their family of origin and clan roots (i.e. closely knit relatives). This would increase the child's possibility of suffering from depression and sense of isolation, which are a consequence of separation from birth parents; in addition, it weakens a child's sense of identity and self-esteem, which stems from knowing his/her familial and communal culture (Malinga & Ntshwareng, 2011: 1).

Inferential statistics

The next section of the findings focuses on whether there was a difference in opinion between the groups indicated by the following biographical information of the respondents: gender, educational qualification, family composition or their position as a carer. Independent T-tests, Mann-Whitney tests and Anovas were used to test these differences. In addition, the effect sizes were used to explain the data from the respondents. A statistical hypothesis test (T-test) was conducted in order to test this difference. A T-test can be understood as a test that is used when there are two experimental connections and different participants allocated to each condition (Field, 2013:364). An Anova test was conducted in order to test for differences in opinion with regards to the different biographical groups based on a comparison of the ratio of systematic variance to unsystematic variance (Field, 2013:430). A Mann-Whitney test works by observing the differences in the ranked positions of scores in different groups (Field, 2013:224). The effect size is said to be a measure of practical significance (Ellis & Steyn, 2003:51). The same authors further state that the practical significance of results is important for two reasons: when the results of population data are reported as well as to comment on the practical significance of a statistically significant result (Ellis & Steyn, 2003:53).

Gender

An independent T-Test was done in order to determine whether there is a difference in attitude towards adoption between the two groups (male and female). This test was important, because it allowed the researcher to interpret whether a difference existed between the respondents' gender and their attitude towards adoption.

TABLE 7
INDEPENDENT T-TEST WITH REGARDS TO THE RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDE
TOWARDS GENDER

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value*	Effect size
A_Birthparent					
Male	23	4.10	0.62	0.22	0.29
Female	58	3.90	0.66		
B_Adopter					
Male	23	4.02	0.66	0.37	0.22
Female	56	4.17	0.55		
C_Adoptee					
Male	23	1.71	0.77	0.57	0.14
Female	58	1.81	0.65		

* p-values are reported for completeness sake, but won't be interpreted, since a convenience sample instead of a random sample was used.

The effect sizes (0.14 – 0.29) indicated practical non-significant differences in attitude between the two gender groups towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. This means that the respondents strongly disagreed with the negatively phrased statements; therefore the finding is that both males and females have a positive attitude towards adoption. Gerrand (1997: 81) also found that there is a very small positive correlation between gender and attitude. According to the researcher, this correlation is not significant.

Age

The researcher inquired about the respondents' age in order to determine whether their age had an influence on their attitude towards adoption. An independent T-test was done in order to test whether there is a difference between the younger and older generation towards adoption.

TABLE 8
INDEPENDENT T-TEST WITH REGARDS TO THE RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS AGE

AGE		N	Mean	Std. deviation	P-Value	Effect size
A_BIRTHPARENT						
Younger generation	<46	54	4.10	0.61	0.006	0.69
Older generation	46+	24	3.63	0.68		
B_Adopter						
Younger generation	<46	53	4.27	0.49	0.007	0.66
Older generation	46+	24	3.86	0.62		
C_Adoptee						
Younger generation	<46	54	1.58	0.57	>0.01	0.97
Older generation	46+	24	2.16	0.60		

* p-values are reported for completeness sake, but won't be interpreted, since a convenience sample instead of a random sample was used

The effect sizes (0.66-0.97) indicated practically visible to practically significant differences between the opinions of the younger and the older generation. The younger respondents tended to strongly disagree with negative statements and strongly agree with positive statements regarding the members of the adoption triad (i.e. the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee), whereas the older generation leaned a bit more towards neither agree/disagree. The finding is that the younger generation tends to have a more positive attitude towards adoption compared to that of the older generation. This is in agreement with the findings by Bigombe & Khadiagala, 2003:1 and Sigwenie (2008), who stated that due to the pressure of civilisation, the younger generation of Batswana's have abandoned their traditional practices, beliefs and attitudes, and therefore changed their attitude towards adoption to fit the new dispensation and be able to face the drastic changes that have taken place in the country as well as the changes in African family structures.

TABLE 9
ANOVA TESTING FOR DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDES WITH REGARDS TO EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Status	No	Mean	Std deviation	p-value Anova*	p-value Welch	Effect size	
						1 with	2 with
A_Birthparent				0.092	0.127		
Below Grade 9	18	3.67	0.70				
Grade 10-12	25	4.09	0.61			0.60	
Post-school	38	4.01	0.63			0.48	0.14
B_Adopter				0.029	0.016		
Below Grade 9	17	3.94	0.38				
Grade 10-12	24	4.37	0.56			0.78	
Post-school	38	4.04	0.63			0.16	0.53
C_Adoptee				0.067	0.086		
Below Grade 9	18	1.78	0.53				
Grade 10-12	25	1.57	0.67			0.31	
Post-school	38	1.98	0.74			0.27	0.56

* p-values are reported for completeness sake, but won't be interpreted, since a convenience sample instead of a random sample was used.

Educational qualification

An Anova test was used to determine whether there is a difference in respondents' attitude towards adoption when considering educational qualification.

In terms of a birthparent, two medium or practically visible differences in effect size (0.60 – 0.48) were reported. These differences were between the group who stopped their school career below Grade 9 and both the other two groups, respectively. The below Grade 9 group disagreed (leaning a bit towards neutral) with the negatively phrased questions, therefore indicating that they have a positive attitude towards a birthparent giving their child up for adoption. The groups with Grade 12 and post-school qualifications both disagreed with the negatively phrased questions, therefore indicating that they have a slightly more positive attitude towards birthparents who give their child up for adoption.

The group of respondents with an educational qualification below Grade 9 disagreed with the negatively phrased questions, indicating that they have a positive attitude towards the adopter. There is a large difference (effect size = 0.78) between this group's attitude and the attitude of the group with a Grade 12 qualification. The Grade 12 group disagreed, tending towards strongly disagreed. There is also a practical visible difference (effect size = 0.53) between the attitudes of the Grade 12 and the post-school qualification groups. Again, the Grade 12 group disagreed, tending towards strongly disagreed. The post-school qualification group disagreed with the negatively phrased statements, indicating that they have a positive attitude towards the adopter.

In terms of the attitude towards the child who is being adopted, there was a practically visible difference (effect size= 0.56) in responses to the questions by the Grade 12 and the post-school qualification groups. Both groups agreed with the statements. However, the finding is that the Grade 12 group leaned a bit towards strongly agree and therefore are a bit more positive towards the adoptee. Kingsbury (2008); also found that people who tend to adopt are wealthier and more educated. In the case of American adoptions, more than 95% of adoptive families have a high school education, and more than 90% have a bachelor's degree.

Family composition

An Anova test was used to determine whether there is a difference in respondents' attitude towards adoption when considering family composition.

TABLE 10
ANOVA TESTING FOR DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDES WITH REGARDS TO
FAMILY COMPOSITION

Status	Number	Mean	Std deviation	p-value Anova*	p-value Welch*	Effect size	
						Single with	Married with
A_Birthparent Single	35	3.9781	0.69249	0.984	0.984	0.04	0.00
Married	21	3.9524	0.70935				
Other	24	3.9500	0.58285				
Total	80	4.2289	0.65792				
B_Adopter	33	4.2289	0.52526	0.348	0.372	0.23	0.14
Single	21	4.0990	0.56005				
Married	24	4.0030	0.67276				
Total	78	4.1244	0.58376				
C_Adoptee Single	35	1.6857	0.58869	0.354	0.382	0.11	0.24
Married	21	1.7643	0.73742				
Other	24	1.9472	0.76417				
Total	80	1.7848	0.68506				

* p-values are reported for completeness sake, but won't be interpreted, since a convenience sample instead of a random sample was used

The table above indicates the responses of different family compositions towards adoption. This analysis focuses on single, married and other (in a relationship, divorced and widowed). No practically visible or practically significant difference were reported (effect sizes ≤ 0.34). This means that there were no visible differences between the groups that were in a relationship, married, divorced or widowed. The finding is that the respondents in these groups have a positive attitude towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee, and that their relationship status had little to no influence on their attitude towards adoption. Van Laningham (2012: 21) supports the findings in a statement that resource-related variables such as marital status were not found to significantly predict consideration of adoption or adoption-seeking behaviours.

The next section of the study aimed to determine whether the respondents' position as carers has an influence on their attitude towards adoption. T-tests and Mann-Whitney tests were used to test the difference between the respondents' position (in a caring position or holding an opinion regarding adoption) and their attitude towards adoption. T-tests as well as Mann-Whitney tests were conducted with smaller groups, whereas only T-tests were conducted with groups large enough to get the effect size.

The attitude of the carer towards adoption

The next section of the findings focuses on whether there was a difference in opinion regarding the respondents' position as a carer, for example, a non-carer, past carer, informal carer or adoptive parent and their attitude towards adoption. Independent T-tests (Field, 2013: 364) and Mann-Whitney tests (Field, 2013: 224) were used to test these differences. In addition, the effect sizes were used to explain the data from the respondents. Each of these constructs will be discussed in more detail.

The position of the “non-carer” (holding an opinion)

An independent T-test was conducted in order to assess respondents who are not caring and have not previously cared for someone else's child's attitude towards adoption.

TABLE 11
INDEPENDENT T-TEST OF THE NON-CARER (HOLDING AN OPINION)
TOWARDS ADOPTION

NON-CARER (WITH OPINION)	N	Mean	Std deviation	P-value	Effect size
Birthparent					
Yes	29	4.04	0.74	0.14	0.17
No	53	3.92	0.60	0.08	
Adopter					
Yes	29	4.19	0.53	0.10	0.19
No	51	4.07	0.61	0.086	
Adoptee					
Yes	29	1.64	0.55	0.10	0.34
No	53	1.89	0.74	0.10	

* p-values are reported for completeness sake, but won't be interpreted, since a convenience sample instead of a random sample was used

The table above indicates that the respondents who are currently not taking care of someone else's child and have not done so in the past (but hold an opinion) had practically non-significant differences (effect size ≤ 0.34). This means that there were small differences in their opinions regarding the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. This group of respondents strongly agreed, leaning to agree, with the positive statements regarding the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. In addition, they strongly disagreed with the negatively phrased questions regarding the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. The finding is that respondents' who are not caring and have not previously cared for someone else's child's have an overall positive attitude towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee.

The position of the past carer

A Mann-Whitney test was used in addition to an independent T-test to test whether the respondents' role as someone who has been exposed to alternative care has had an influence on their attitude towards adoption.

TABLE 12
INDEPENDENT T-TEST AND MANN-WHITNEY TEST OF PAST CARERS
TOWARDS ADOPTION

PAST CARER	N	Mean	Std deviation	T-test		Mann-Whitney test	
				p-value	Effect size	P-value	Effect size
Birthparent							
Yes	13	4.38	0.50				
No	69	3.88	0.65	0.005	0.78	0.010	0.29
Adopter							
Yes	12	4.35	0.50				
No	68	4.07	0.55	0.98	0.48	0.116	0.18
Adoptee							
Yes	13	1.65	0.55				
No	69	1.83	0.71	0.308	0.26	0.409	0.09

There is a practically significant difference between the respondents who cared for someone else's child in the past and the other respondents' opinions regarding the birth parent (effect size = 0.78). There was a practically visible difference between the two groups' opinions regarding the adopter (effect size = 0.48). The Mann-Whitney tests supported these findings. This means that the group of respondents who have an opinion regarding adoption differed in their attitude towards the birthparent in comparison to those who have cared for someone else's child in the past. The finding is that both groups of respondents had a positive attitude towards the birthparent; however, past carers were more positive than the other respondents. Furthermore, there was a small difference in the attitudes of past carers towards the adopter and the adoptee, albeit they were compared to those who have an opinion regarding adoption.

The position of the informal carer

An independent T-test and Mann-Whitney test were used to test whether the respondents' exposure to informal care has had an influence on their attitude towards adoption.

TABLE 13
INDEPENDENT T-TEST AND MANN-WHITNEY TEST OF INFORMAL CARERS
TOWARDS ADOPTION

INFORMAL CARER	N	Mean	Std deviation	T-test		Mann-Whitney test	
				P-value	Effect size	P-value	Effect size
Birthparent							
Yes	14	4.10	0.76	0.20			
No	68	3.93	0.63	0.08	0.23	0.429	0.09
Adopter							
Yes	14	4.49	0.40	0.11			
No	66	4.04	0.58	0.07	0.78	0.002	0.29
Adoptee							
Yes	14	1.32	0.37	0.10			
No	68	1.90	0.70	0.08	0.84	0.000	0.35

Practically significant differences effect size (0.78 - 0.84) were indicated between the respondents who are currently taking care of somebody's child through an informal arrangement and the other respondents' opinions regarding the adopter and the adoptee, respectively. The finding is that those respondents who have been exposed to informal care were more positive than the other members of the adoption triad (the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee) .

The position of the formal carer

Formal care in this case referred to foster care and kinship care. A T-test was utilised to assess whether being part of a formal arrangement affects respondents' opinions regarding adoption.

TABLE 14
INDEPENDENT T-TEST OF FORMAL CARERS TOWARDS ADOPTION

FORMAL CARER	N	Mean	Std deviation	P-value	Effect size
Birthparent					
Yes	33	3.89	0.70		
No	49	4.01	0.62	0.420	0.420
Adopter					
Yes	32	3.99	0.69		
No	48	4.20	0.48	0.133	0.133
Adoptee					
Yes	33	2.09	0.80		
No	49	1.61	0.53	0.004	0.004

The effect sizes assessing the difference in opinions of the group taking formal care of somebody's child and the other respondents all indicated practically non-significant differences (effect size \leq 0.42). The finding is that there is a small difference in formal carer's attitude towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. The findings indicate that this group of formal carers has a positive attitude towards all three members of the adoption triad.

The position of the adoptive parent

This group of respondents had already been exposed to adoption. The researcher did not exclude this group of respondents, as it was important to describe their attitude towards this form of alternative care. An independent T-test and a Mann-Whitney test were conducted in order to assess whether the respondents' own experience in the adoption system, as an adoptive parent, has had an influence on their attitude towards adoption.

TABLE 15
INDEPENDENT T-TEST AND MANN-WHITNEY TEST OF THE ADOPTIVE PARENT TOWARDS ADOPTION

ADOPTIVE PARENT	N	Mean	Std deviation	T-test		Mann-Whitney test	
				P-value	Effect size	P-value	Effect size
Birthparent							
Yes	9	3.80	0.79				
No	73	3.98	0.63	0.511	0.24	0.283	0.12
Adopter							
Yes	9	4.24	0.49				
No	71	4.10	0.59	0.438	0.24	0.703	0.04
Adoptee							
Yes	9	1.56	0.38				
No	73	1.82	0.71	0.092	0.38	0.415	0.09

There were small differences (effect size < 0.4) in the attitude of respondents who are currently caring for an adopted child compared to the other respondents regarding the birthparent and the adopter and adoptee. This was confirmed by the Mann-Whitney tests performed. The finding is that group of respondents who had been personally exposed to adoption as an adoptive parent had a positive attitude towards the members of the adoption triad. The findings correspond with the findings by Gerrand (1997:79), who focused on the attitude of the African community in Soweto towards adoption. The researcher also found no indication of significant differences in attitude from one member of the adoption triad to another.

DISCUSSION

The orientation and the problem statement were discussed in the first phase of this study, along with the research methodology, limitations and ethical aspects of conducting the study.

The researcher wanted to understand the culture-specific attitudes of Batswana people towards adoption. This was done by focusing on three groups in the adoption triad, namely the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. In addition, the research tested the respondents' demographic information against each constraint in order to assess whether it had an influence on their attitude towards adoption.

The research results of this study produced a number of findings. The demographical information allowed the researcher to acquire a clear indication of the respondents who participated in the study. In addition, the demographic information allowed the researcher to exclude the respondents who did not fit the focus of the study. The researcher then determined the attitude that the respondents had towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. The respondents who took part in the study had a positive attitude towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee.

Independent T-tests, Anova and Mann-Whitney tests were performed in order to establish whether there was a difference in the respondents' demographic information and their attitude towards adoption. For example, the researcher tested whether the respondents' gender, age, educational qualification and family composition has had an influence on their attitude towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. The results of these tests also indicated that the respondents have a positive attitude towards adoption regardless of their age, gender, educational qualification, family composition.

The independent T-tests, Anova and Mann-Whitney tests performed determined whether the respondents' exposure to alternative care has had an influence on their attitude towards adoption. The researcher divided the "position of carer" into four categories, namely someone who is currently taking care of someone else's child, someone who has taken care of a child, someone who is taking care of someone else's child formally/informally, and someone who is taking care of an adopted child. These variables were tested against the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. The results of these findings indicated that regardless of the respondent's position as a carer, they had a positive attitude towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee.

The respondents of the Ikageng community who took part in the study had a positive attitude towards all three members of the adoption triad, and there was no visible indication of a difference in attitude towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. The respondents' demographical information as well as their position as a carer had little to no influence on their attitude towards adoption, which remained positive.

The findings reported in this study are similar to those of recent studies that were conducted on adoption in African families. Authors such as Chanyandura and Rungani (2017) and Runjani (2017) mention that adoption is no longer treated as taboo in many black families and that traditional rituals are performed, in some cases, to fully integrate the adopted children into the family.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Child neglect and abandonment may be caused by a number of social ills in South Africa. This results in children in dire need of care and protection. The focus of alternative care should not be placed

exclusively on short-term care but it should afford destitute children the stable and permanent care that adoption can provide. In this article the researcher presented, analysed and interpreted research findings based on the responses given by 83 respondents from the Ikageng community in the North-West province. The questionnaire was divided into three sections focusing on understanding the attitude of the respondents towards the person who gives their child up for adoption (birthparent), the person(s) who adopt a child (adopter), and the child who is adopted (adoptee). The purpose was to determine the culture-specific attitude of members of this particular cultural group towards adoption and whether their demographic profile (i.e. their gender, age, educational qualification, family composition and position as carer) has had an effect on their attitude towards adoption. The result of the data analysis indicated that respondents had a positive attitude towards the birthparent, the adopter and the adoptee. The findings of this study demonstrated that this particular cultural group is more receptive towards adoption. This could be as a result of Westernisation, acculturation and/or their exposure or experience in the alternative care field. Studies conducted by Mokomane and Rochat, (2011), Blackie (2014) and Gerrand (1997) support the findings but highlighted the reluctance of people in African communities to make use of adoption as a form of alternative care. Furthermore, the literature on adoption in the African community does not distinguish between the different cultural groups within it. Therefore, studies may indicate the general opinion/attitude of a particular cultural group found within the specific area of study. In-depth knowledge and understanding with regard to adoption could lead to the development of an effective culturally relevant adoption model in the future.

Limitations

- Ikageng is a fairly big township in the North-West Province in South Africa. A small sample was drawn from four institutions using convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method. As a result, generalisation of the findings to the rest of the community is not possible.
- The majority of the respondents who took part in the study were in a position of formal or informal care arrangement; therefore, the results may be positively skewed to respondents in a position of caring.

Recommendations for service providers

Service providers, rendering services in adoption, should consider the following points.

- Community education can play an important role in gaining public support and increasing the knowledge and understanding of the necessity for adequate resources, finances, maintenance of adoption programmes that are of a good quality and effective legislation (Weyers, 2011:251). Welfare agencies need to respond accordingly to the following: the community's attitude towards adoption and criticism of the adoption agencies' procedures and policies so that any misconceptions about the agency practice can be clarified and/or corrected.
- More awareness needs to be created in welfare organisations and departments regarding their role and influence on knowledge of adoption and ethical adoption procedures.

Recommendations for future research

Future research could be considered on the following aspects.

- This study could be replicated qualitatively, using focus groups, in other communities where the Batswana culture is prominent to test whether findings are accurate.
- Future studies could also focus on different cultures (e.g. Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, etc.) and observe whether attitudes towards adoption differ according to the respective cultures.

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