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## Parenting Style Influence on Future Criminal Behaviors Among Adopted Children in Mozambique

Neidi de Carvalho  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Neidi de Carvalho

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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## Review Committee

Dr. Scott Gfeller, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty  
Dr. Jana Price-Sharps, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty  
Dr. Lori LaCivita, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Parenting Style Influence on Future Criminal Behaviors Among Adopted Children in  
Mozambique

By

Neidi de Carvalho

MA, University of Liverpool, 2014

BA, University of Pretoria, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

November 2022

## Abstract

Adoption is the process by which an adult legally becomes the parent of a child. This results in the child having the protection of a family and the same rights as a biological child. In Mozambique, there is a lack of research concerning the parenting practices of adoptive parents. This study was conducted to identify the parenting styles of Mozambican adoptive parents to determine if these parenting practices affect the well-being of the adopted child. In this qualitative study, data were collected through virtual interviews with four adoptive parents. Interviews were transcribed manually, and participants confirmed the accuracy of the information provided. Participant responses reflected that parents preferred an authoritative parenting style to ensure positive well-being and treat adopted children in the same manner as they treat biological children. Participant responses also reflected a lack of support from society and social services in Mozambique. This study showed a need for more research on adoption in Mozambique. Social services need to be provided with adequate tools to support adoptive parents during and after the adoption process. The findings in this study have potential implications for positive social change by providing enlightenment regarding the need to improve the knowledge base on adoption in Mozambique to ensure that all Mozambican children grow in a healthy environment.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

The number of children involved in criminal activities in the foster care system is significant. Children within the foster care system do not have the same opportunities to learn appropriate societal norms as children growing up within their natural families (Anthony et al., 2019). Raising children in a family environment teaches society's acceptable standards (Flores et al., 2018). According to Franz et al. (2019), there is a relationship between children from the foster system and the juvenile justice system.

This study's focus was on whether parenting style influences adopted children to participate in criminal behavior. In this study, I looked at the perceptions of adoptive parents regarding the relationship between their parenting styles and their children's involvement in criminal activity. The findings of this study may prove helpful in developing specific training for adoptive parents on suitable parenting styles to prevent criminal activity. Skar et al. (2015) found that the long-term impact of parenting programs has shown that the children of parents who have benefitted from these programs have displayed fewer child difficulties. Parents who lack adequate knowledge of appropriate early child development may provide inappropriate discipline to their children, thus negatively affecting the children's behavior into adulthood (September et al., 2015).

The likelihood of adopted children becoming involved in criminal activities as influenced by the adoptive parents' parenting style is under researched (Varner et al., 2018). In addition, most research regarding parenting style influence and psychological

developmental needs of children has been carried out in Western countries, with a lack of research being conducted in developing countries (Roman et al., 2015). Adequate communication between orphanages, social welfare services, and children's courts ensures that all necessary information about children and proposed adoptive parents is verified and shared (Cau, 2018).

In Chapter 1, I describe the problem to be addressed, its purpose, and the methodology used to carry out the research. The chosen theoretical framework is presented to describe the adequacy of the study. The assumptions and limitations of the analysis are detailed to explain the appropriateness of the research's replicability. The study's significance is described in detail, as it provides evidence of the study's needs.

### **Background**

The available research regarding parental attachment levels of adopted children has focused primarily on children's emotional well-being (Santos-Nunes et al., 2017). There is a lack of literature on the impact of parenting styles and how those styles may influence criminal behavior in children who have been adopted. Various factors influence the positive or negative relationship between adopted children and adoptive parents (Santos-Nunes et al., 2017). An example of a parenting style that positively increases attachment levels is authoritative (Liu & Hazler, 2017).

Parents with supportive and authoritative relationships with their children provide appropriate guidance and love. A component of appropriate early childhood development is a caregiver's capacity to provide a positive and enriching environment for the child (Liu & Hazler, 2017). Positive early childhood development provides a sound basis for

positive social and emotional development into adulthood (September et al., 2015).

Adoptive parents are likely to worry more about building positive relationships with their adopted children because the parents are aware of the negative experiences the adopted children may have already experienced (Barone et al., 2018). There is a lack of research, specifically in Mozambique, on whether a relationship exists between parenting styles and criminal behavior in adopted children. There is a further lack of research in Southern Africa and, consequently, Mozambique regarding child adoption, which is also a determinant of the focus of the current research (Omosun & Kofoworola, 2021). This lack of research extends to the availability of research regarding parenting practices in the context of southern Africa (Taliep et al., 2018). Taliep et al. (2018) also found that the specific context of disadvantaged communities in South Africa influences the parenting style employed.

Adopted children from foster care have experienced multiple traumatic events (Hartinger-Saunders et al., 2019) and require appropriate follow-up once adopted. Adoptive parents may have limited trauma-focused preventive measure information (Hartinger-Saunders et al., 2019) that would allow them to identify trauma-related behavior from their adopted children and address it appropriately. Understanding the influence of context assists in developing appropriate, relevant interventions (Taliep et al., 2018). This lack of understanding supports the need to further understand Mozambican-specific parenting practices to establish adequate interventions to support adoptive parents. The limitation in knowledge can be due to the limited availability and

experience of foster care professionals who can provide appropriate parenting tools to adoptive parents.

This research addresses the gap concerning adopted parents' perceptions of whether their parenting style may influence adopted children to engage in criminal activities, specifically in Mozambique. The findings of this study increase the knowledge base on the perceptions of parental styles and their effect on adopted children engaging in criminal activities. Skar et al. (2015) showed positive evidence concerning appropriate early childhood programs can decrease adverse outcomes later in life.

### **Problem Statement**

After finalizing the adoption process, adoptive parents develop a parenting style with their children. Parenting style is a vital socialization agent that can determine whether children become involved in criminal activities (Mishra & Biswal, 2020). Research has determined that positive relationships between parents and children are influenced by parenting style. Negative parenting styles can predict children's criminal involvement (Mishra & Biswal, 2020). Various researchers on parenting styles have determined that parenting styles influence children's happiness levels and success rates in the future (Lee et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2017). Ineffective parenting is associated with delinquency and antisocial behavior (Taliep et al., 2018).

Previous research on parenting practices and how they affect children's criminal activities were concentrated mainly on biological children and not on adopted children (Varner et al., 2018). The adjustment of post-institutionalized children and their socioemotional adjustment to the influence of parenting practices is evident in previous

research (Barone et al., 2018). An example of the adaptation of post-institutionalized children and their emotional adjustment to the adoptive family is that they are likely to display behavioral problems if they do not adjust well. A noted gap in the research concerns how adoptive parents perceive their parenting practices to influence their adopted children's involvement in criminal activities (Chang et al., 2017). The effect of parents' positive parenting practices is well-established concerning an adopted child's well-being (Cross & Hershkowitz, 2017).

In this research, I aimed to explore adoptive parents' perceptions of how they could prevent their adopted children from becoming involved in criminal activity. A qualitative methodology was employed to understand which parenting style adoptive parents perceive as best to ensure that adopted children do not become involved in criminal activities. I took information supplied by adoptive parents regarding their parenting style into account to determine whether they perceived their parenting style to influence their child to engage in criminal activities. I conducted the study in Mozambique, with Mozambican adoptive parents of Mozambican children.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In this study, I aimed to ascertain whether adopted parents perceive that certain parenting styles may increase the likelihood of adopted children engaging in criminal activities. The present research was conducted to address the gap in the literature regarding parents' perceptions of parenting style and how that can influence criminal behavior by adopted children in the future. Parenting style may negatively or positively affect adopted children's subsequent well-being (Pakmehr et al., 2018).



In this study, I focused on parents who adopt children in Mozambique and whether they perceive that their parenting style may influence their children to become involved in criminal behaviors. I sought to gain insight into whether the perception of one or another parenting style influences adopted children engaging in criminal activities. In this qualitative research, I employed explorative mechanisms to ascertain individuals' perceptions (Saldaña, 2016).

### **Research Question**

The research question for this study was: Which parenting style do adoptive parents perceive best to ensure that their adopted child does not enter the justice system?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research study's theoretical framework was self-determination theory (SDT), which focuses on human motivation and socialization (Deci & Ryan, 1987). SDT (van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2017) was the basis for determining how well adopted children adapt to their adoptive parents based on the parents' perceptions. Individuals' internal motivation to choose between positive and negative behaviors is guided by the individual's previous socialization process and personality (Flannery, 2017). A more detailed explanation of the theoretical framework is provided in Chapter 2.

Children's healthy psychological development is contingent upon a supportive social environment where children are encouraged to own their feelings and express them openly without fear of repercussion (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT supports the notion that children should feel comfortable with their emotions and express them in a supportive

manner (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Psychological well-being is determined by meeting the psychological needs of children (Flannery, 2017).

The concept of relatedness support was also considered, describing parental support as love, care, and a genuine desire to support the child (Cordeiro et al., 2018). Parents who are supportive and continuously engage with their children are likely to build rapport with them, which can result in children feeling safe and willing to approach them in the case of distress (Soenens et al., 2017). An adopted child's capacity to feel comfortable within the family allows the child to reach out to their parents when necessary and possibly before engaging in antisocial behaviors. SDT and relatedness support are relevant frameworks within the current research; they contribute to positive parenting styles.

### **Nature of the Study**

The chosen qualitative design allows for understanding adopted parents' perceptions regarding whether parenting style influences adoptive children's criminal involvement. Qualitative methodology is used to build knowledge regarding people's experiences within social processes (Levitt et al., 2017). The knowledge gained from the participants regarding their parenting style and their children's behavior profiles builds on the knowledge regarding children's possible engagement in criminal activity. The phenomenon of interest is the perception of parents' parenting styles and how they may influence children's involvement in criminal activities. Certain parenting styles influence children's behaviors, which may include criminal behaviors (Cordeiro et al., 2018). This

exploration aimed to determine which parenting style parents perceive will lead to preferred outcomes—in this case, leading away from criminal offending.

The sampling method I used was convenient (Sutton & Austin, 2015; Walden University, 2013) and specific to the target group of Mozambican adoptive parents willing to share their experiences. Data were gathered through one-on-one interviews with Mozambican adoptive parents. Children did not participate in the current research. Data analysis was conducted through narrative analysis, specifically phenomenological analysis. I analyzed the interviewees' responses to identify common themes and subthemes relating to parenting styles and adopted children's possible criminal involvement.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions are presented as a means of providing context and clarification:

*Adopted children:* A person under 18 years of age legally adopted by a person over 18 (Boletim da Republica, 2008). The child will have been adopted within a Mozambican-registered orphanage.

*Adoptive parent:* A person who legally adopts a child (Boletim da Republica, 2008); for the current study, a foster parent above 18 years of age legally adopted a child from an orphanage within Mozambique.

*Attachment:* An effective emotional tie between infant and caregiver (Scroufe, 1997).

*Emotional well-being:* Individuals' abilities to function appropriately in society and meet everyday life demands (Pace et al., 2017).

*Parenting style:* Four main parenting styles include authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful (Maccoby et al., 1983).

### **Assumptions**

I assumed certain aspects once the research process began, and the data collection was initiated. The primary assumption of the research was that the participants would answer the research question and the probing questions honestly. Honesty and openness are fundamental to properly validating research results and implementing appropriate policies according to the findings. An additional assumption was that the participants would represent Mozambique's adoptive parent population. Other assumptions included objectivity and not imposing personal biases and beliefs about people or possible outcomes. Objectivity on my part was necessary to ensure that the parenting practices accurately reflected their influence on the adopted children's future behaviors. Objectivity was also fundamental to ensure the replicability of the research. I can make final assumptions regarding the research results. Primarily, I assumed there was a perception from the adopted parents regarding parenting style and criminal engagement on the part of their children.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The study's scope was adoptive parents, regardless of nationality, and children adopted from organizations in Mozambique and within the Mozambican foster care system. The age of the adopted children was not an influencing factor in the selection of

participants. The scope was chosen based on the research gap regarding the perception of the influence of the parenting styles of Mozambican adoptive parents on the possible involvement of adopted children in criminal behavior. Parents of children adopted from other countries living in Mozambique may have the same perception of influence on the criminal behavior of children due to their parenting style. These parents were not considered in the present research due to the need to gather information on Mozambican-adopted children.

Delimitations included focusing on Mozambican-adopted children and asking questions about parenting styles, child's well-being, and the prevention of criminal involvement. Data transferability is limited, considering the specific target population and the research focus. Thus, the results can be generalized only to Mozambican adoptive families with the parenting style specified in the research.

### **Limitations**

The research results were affected by certain limitations encountered while conducting the research. There was a limited number of participants (four), which signifies that the transferability of the research results is limited. I only considered Mozambican-adopted children still living in Mozambique; thus, it is not generalizable to Mozambicans residing abroad.

Researcher bias was not a limitation, as I remained neutral during the interviews, transcription, and analysis of the information gathered. The questions were open-ended, and the participants were free to relate their experiences of parenting an adopted child. I

also performed member checking to ensure that participants' accounts were true to what they had reported during the interviews.

### **Significance**

Most developing countries have many children who need alternative care either due to being orphaned or abandoned, resulting in many children living in orphanages (Moran et al., 2018). The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption (1993) addressed the effects of possible financial gains on adoption practices. Within Africa's context, where Western parents adopt children, there is the possibility of financial gain (Mukasa & Cheney, 2017). Proper policies are needed to ensure that appropriate subsequent assessments are conducted with adopted children. The procedures ensure that adoptive parents' parenting style is adequate to ensure children's well-being and noninvolvement in criminal activities.

The present research addressed the gap regarding how adoptive parents' perceptions of their parenting style may influence adopted children's engagement in criminal activities in Mozambique. This research's uniqueness focuses on the parenting style of adoptive parents (Chang et al., 2017). Children up for adoption often have already suffered traumatic experiences (Varner et al., 2018), and the parenting they receive after adoption should not be another traumatic experience. The placement of children in adequate households can decrease the effects of previous traumatic experiences (Assor et al., 2018).

Eight percent of the incarcerated prison population in Mozambique comprises children. The Mozambican Penitentiary System has 15,663 inmates, of which 1,389 are

children under 21 years of age (Trindade et al., 2017). No data were found regarding the parental information of these children to determine whether they were adopted. However, the high percentage of the prison population being children contributes to the significance of the current study.

### **Summary**

Evidence on the effects of parenting style on children's well-being is well established (Assor et al., 2018). The lack of research lies in the specific scope of parenting style from adopted parents' viewpoint and the likelihood of adopted children to engage in criminal activities. A better understanding of this relationship can result in fewer adopted children becoming involved in criminal activities. Improved social welfare policies governing the screening of adoptive parents can have implications for positive social change.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study's purpose and relevance in Mozambique's social and geographical context. Understanding the different parenting styles and their influence on adopted children will improve the tools adopted by parents to provide proper parenting practices. The study's relevance is in conceptualizing new and revising old adoption policies in Mozambique. The elaboration of the research limitations focused on the limited target population. The delimitation of the study focused on adoptive parents in Mozambique. In conjunction with the limited target population, this delimitation results in the inability to generalize the study results.

In Chapter 2, I will review current relevant research and discuss SDT as a scaffold for this study. In the literature search strategy, I focused on peer-reviewed journal articles

published over the past 5 years. I will also present a synthesis of the perceived relationship between parenting styles and adopted children's well-being as a deterrent to possible future criminal activities. A comprehensive literature review of the critical variables is presented and aligned with the current research justification.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The literature on healthy child development in relation to appropriate adult development is well developed. The importance of attachment between parents and adopted children, including positive parenting styles in adoptive families, is well established (Santos-Nunes et al., 2017). Nonetheless, the existing literature does not comment on how individual parenting styles may influence adopted children's likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. Parenting styles tend to affect attachment level and, consequently, parent-child relationships. For policy measures to be developed by social services to improve outcomes among adopted children, it is essential to understand the importance of parenting styles in their future well-being (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017).

Chapter 2 focuses on the evidence found during the literature review process. A detailed analysis of the appropriateness of the theoretical framework is provided, followed by a discussion of the available research related to this study's variables. The identified research gap concerns whether different parenting styles may prevent adopted children from becoming involved in criminal activities.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In the literature review, I considered both primary and secondary sources concerning the subject matter published within the previous 5 years. The literature was gathered from internet search engines to ensure access and to cover geographical areas with a similar cultural context. The articles considered were peer-reviewed, and the search engines used were Walden University Library (PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES),

Google Scholar, Research Gate, and Lexis Web. The search terms and keywords used during the literature review were *children, emotional well-being, psychological well-being, parenting style, protection and childhood, adoption, early childhood experiences, and criminal involvement.*

I focused on gathering information about the Mozambican context within Google Scholar, as I found limited information in the Walden University Library. The lack of available research in Mozambique or southern Africa led me to expand the geographical scope of the literature review. Thus, the inclusion criteria considered similar cultural, economic, and religious contexts within Africa and extended to Portugal because it has the same language and a similar historical background. The literature review also included different social contexts to fortify the relevance of parenting styles and well-being. Exclusion criteria included articles about adoption protocols without parenting practices and those not focused on adopted children's emotional well-being or later involvement in criminal activity. Research articles excluded concentrated on older adopted children who fall out of the age criterion. These search engines did not provide specific information on the Mozambican adoption context.

The search terms used within the Walden University Library were *emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and early childhood experience.* This search provided results on the effects of different parenting styles from adoptive parents on adopted children. I also located articles on the southern African context.

## **Theoretical Foundation**

### **Self-Determination Theory**

The research study's theoretical framework was SDT, which focuses on human motivation and socialization (Deci & Ryan, 1987). The basics of the theory are based on the reasons for the initiation and regulation of human behavior. SDT considers human motivation concerning socialization processes, making it an appropriate framework. Teaching individuals not to engage in criminal activities, as they are against society's moral structures, is relevant to the current research. The theory derives from experiments by Ryan and Deci (2017), who examined the effect of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2017) found that intrinsic motivation supersedes extrinsic rewards.

The main theoretical proposition that makes SDT appropriate for this research is that human beings' social environments affect individual attitudes, values, motivations, and behaviors. SDT provides a proper focus on environmental and social explanations; however, individual-level factors are also considered (Boccio & Beaver, 2018). There is evidence that individual characteristics (genetic predispositions) influence how individuals internalize social influences. I did not consider the assertion of the importance of genetics in trait development.

One of the mini theories integrated within SDT is basic psychological needs theory (BPNT; Ryan & Deci, 2017). This sub theory focuses on an individual's psychological needs and how they relate to their well-being. The positive context in which growth occurs supports individual well-being in adulthood (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

BPNT explains the suppression of unfavorable living conditions if an individual's psychological needs are met (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

An individual's internal motivation to choose between positive and negative behaviors is guided by the individual's previous socialization process and personality (Flannery, 2017). Children's healthy psychological development is synonymous with a supportive social environment wherein children are encouraged to own their feelings and express them openly without fear of repercussion (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This theoretical framework supports the notion that children should feel comfortable with their emotions and that psychological well-being depends on meeting their emotional needs (Flannery, 2017).

SDT has helped develop social programs, especially violence-reduction and caring-enhancement programs (Assor et al., 2018). The onus of SDT is on personality functioning and social behaviors to ensure that they thrive appropriately. The influence of both an infant's complicated personality and inadequate parenting can lead to life-course offending (Flannery, 2017). SDT was an appropriate choice for the current study because it can be used to describe children's internal motivation to not engage in criminal activities.

### **Relatedness Support**

The concept of relatedness support describes parental support characterized by love, care, and a genuine desire to support the child (Cordeiro et al., 2018). The reinforcement of positive behaviors leads to internalizing positive responses, even if the children are in stressful settings (Assor et al., 2018). The imposition of socially

acceptable practices leads children to internalize socially acceptable practices autonomously. Parents who are supportive and continuously engage with their children are likely to build rapport, which will result in children feeling safe and willing to approach parents in the case of distress (Soenens et al., 2017). The capacity to feel comfortable within the family can allow children to reach out to their parents before engaging in antisocial behaviors.

Adopted children may not adapt well and may adopt defiant and socially inadequate behaviors if their parents implement autonomy-suppressive behaviors (Assor et al., 2017). Autonomy-suppressive behaviors may lead to inadequate defiant behaviors because a child's need to feel supported and capable of making their own positive decisions has not been encouraged. According to SDT, behavior that is not intrinsically motivated is not sustained. Inherently motivated behavior is essential when determining appropriate behaviors in highly stressful situations.

Parents must support the psychological processes of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to ensure that children develop well and do not engage in criminal activities. SDT implies an interplay between intrinsic motivations and outside forces (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Post-institutionalized children are likely to have difficulties in socioemotional adjustment (Barone et al., 2018). The challenge in socioemotional adjustment is the rationale for applying relatedness support within the theory. It is not clear in the literature whether these difficulties are compounded by the social exclusion that adopted children experience in being adopted.

## **Attachment Theory**

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) proposes that the level of attachment between an infant and caregiver influences the infant's future relationships. The early influence of appropriate attachment between parent and child remains valid later in a child's life (Raby & Dozier, 2019). The onus of attachment theory is that secure attachment increases an individual's chances of survival (Green, 2018). Adoptive families are at a higher risk of inappropriate attachment, which can lead to decreased family cohesion and satisfaction (Wydra & O'Brien, 2018).

Failure to develop secure attachment in childhood leads individuals to develop disorganized attachment relationships and to not self-regulate their peer interactions (Capaldo & Perella, 2018). Attachment disturbance is commonly associated with personality disturbances in children (Capaldo & Perella, 2018), which occurs when the parent and the child cannot interact in a socially positive manner. Emotional dysregulation signifies that an individual cannot regulate their emotions or identify others' feelings (Capaldo & Perella, 2018). Attachment influences a child's ability to control emotions. Emotion regulation allows a person to be empathetic to others and restrict their negative emotions, which is the basis of regulation theory (Schoore & Schoore, 2008).

Attachment depends on a caregiver's ability to respond to a child's physiological and psychological needs (Capaldo & Perella, 2018; Wydra & O'Brien, 2018). Age of adoption also influences attachment, as children adopted before they are 1 year old are more likely to develop a stronger attachment to adoptive parents (Waid & Alewine,

2018). The younger the child, the easier it is for them to become attached to the adoptive parent and for the adoptive parents to learn the child's characteristics.

The infant–caregiver interaction dictates attachment level and, consequently, the possibility or not of the adopted child developing reactive attachment disorder (RAD; Vasquez & Miller, 2018). Adopted children are prone to RAD (Vasquez & Miller, 2018), which is a lack of emotional attachment toward the primary caregiver due to the negligent care that children have received. One of the main behaviors displayed by children with RAD is aggression. Disregard for children's emotional needs, which is prominent in children with RAD, may be associated with the child's tendency to display aggressive behaviors.

Mentalization is a process that involves the analysis of psychological motivations in the interpretation of behaviors (Green, 2018). This process is developed through appropriate attachment between child and parent. The brain is a social organ that can adapt to such an extent as to surpass traumatic childhood experiences (Green, 2018). A lack of adequate parental resources can negatively affect children's social brains, influencing their long-term survival (Green, 2018). Securely attached people do not produce stress hormones when attachment figures are present. The absence of stress hormones decreases arousal levels and reduces antisocial behaviors (Green, 2018).

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables**

In this section of the literature review, I focused on parenting style and early life experiences of parents and how these factors influence their parenting practices, children's emotional well-being, and social service support in the adoption process. A

benefit of using the phenomenological approach to study which parenting styles prevent adopted children from engaging in criminal activities is to build on firsthand accounts from parents. In the literature review, I focused on research practices, including phenomenological or similar data collection and analysis approaches.

Previous research that describes parenting styles, such as Tapia et al. (2018), provides evidence of the adequacy of the authoritative parenting style. The authoritative parenting style provides adequate ground for an adopted child's positive well-being (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017; Chang et al., 2018). Emotional well-being and regulation directly affect the attachment between adoptive parents and adopted children (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017; Cau, 2018).

### **Mozambican Crime Trends**

Within the Mozambican Penal Code (Article 46), children below 16 years of age cannot be held in prison if found guilty of a crime. Trindade et al. (2017) found that most imprisoned children were, at one point, orphans living with their extended families. The children interviewed by Trindade et al. (2017) stated that they lacked social cohesion and parental supervision, spending most of their time alone.

Children in conflict with the law (children between 16 and 21 years of age) account for 1,157 per 100,000 children in Mozambique (Trindade et al., 2017). According to the Mozambican Penitentiary System, of the 15,663 inmates, 1,389 were children under 21 years of age (Trindade et al., 2017). Trindade et al. (2017) found that 10.1% of inmates in prisons visited were children below 18 years of age. Of these, 55% were children still awaiting trial. Most children's criminal convictions inflicted physical



abuse on another child and theft (Trindade et al., 2017). According to Trindade et al. (2017), in 2014, 157 cases were opened by the Minor Court for minors below 16 years of age within the Children Court of Mozambique. Of these 157 cases, only seven were closed; in 2015, 50 remained open, of which 37 were closed. There is knowledge that many criminal incidents occur; however, these do not reach the formal judicial system (Trindade et al., 2017).

### **Parenting Style**

There are four main parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Permissive parenting entails being supportive without setting concrete boundaries (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Tapia et al., 2018). The lack of limits leads to children not developing appropriate self-control and believing they should not abide by society's rules. Neglectful parenting signifies that parents do not provide adequate supervision to their children; thus, they do not receive the necessary guidance (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Tapia et al., 2018). The authoritative parenting style encompasses warmth and the necessity for authority (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parenting signifies that a child abides by prosocial behaviors through autonomous decision-making regarding moral issues. Authoritative parents also provide emotional support to their children. The authoritative parenting style offers the right balance between allowing children to be autonomous and supportive, thus teaching them self-control (Tapia et al., 2018). Authoritarian parenting involves demonstrating love as a bargaining tool in ensuring that children behave as they should (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Tapia et al., 2018). Authoritarian parents tend to demand that

children obey without explaining their reasoning, which leads to resistance on the children's part (Tapia et al., 2018). The current research considered only two parenting styles: authoritarian and authoritative.

Santos-Nunes et al. (2017) and Georgiou and Symeou (2018) joined the previously discussed four parenting styles into two dimensions of parenting styles in families, including adoptive families: control/demandingness and support/responsiveness. Demandingness is the component of setting rules and controlling the child's behavior, while responsiveness ensures emotional support, including a safe environment (Georgiou & Symeou, 2018; Tapia et al., 2018). Chang et al. (2017) found that adoptive parents do not have a dominant parenting style, as they tend to be more exploratory in their parenting styles to determine which best suits the adopted child.

The socialization strategy of the parents upon their adopted children depends on their socialization during childhood. A possible influence on adoptive parents' parenting styles is the stress of harmful social environments (Ayala et al., 2017). The research concluded that responsiveness is a parenting style that promotes positive affection between foster parents and adopted children (Ayala et al., 2017). Demandingness is the component of setting rules and controlling the child's behavior, while responsiveness ensures emotional support to the child, including a safe environment (Georgiou & Symeou, 2018). A consideration is that parenting style is a reciprocal process; the give-and-take process signifies that children who do not display behavioral problems will not elicit behavior-controlling (authoritarian parenting) mechanisms from their parents

(Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018). Identifying adequate parenting abilities in parents can adapt and be flexible to a specific child's characteristics (Palacios et al., 2019).

Parenting style influences a child's well-being, whether biological or adopted (Chang et al., 2017). The parent's psychological well-being influences their parenting practice (Cross & Hershkowitz, 2017). Parenting styles also involve the development of appropriate parenting skills. Parenting skills can lead to an understanding of how children develop, including which behaviors are acceptable at which stage and how to address unacceptable behaviors appropriately (Pakmehr et al., 2017).

Moran et al. (2018) and van der Kaap-Deeder et al. (2017) validated the increased influence that positive parenting has on a child's positive or negative well-being. The importance of positive parenting is valid whether the children are biological or adopted. Adopted children are likely to feel unequal to the rest of the family; thus, it is fundamental that they feel loved and outsiders. Moran et al. (2018) investigated the effects of early-life experiences on adult outcomes. An example is that higher parental support in early life leads to a higher level of well-being in adulthood. Moran et al. (2018) investigated two types of well-being: hedonic (experience of pleasure through the avoidance of pain) and eudaimonic (fulfilling one's potential and finding meaning in life). Both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being are essential in ensuring holistic well-being for children and adults.

Adequate parental support (psychological resources) protects youth from depression and engagement in antisocial activities (Simpson et al., 2018). Certain protective factors employed by parents can also reduce anxiety (Simpson et al., 2018).

Parental support should, however, not be confused with parental control. Excessive parental control leads to a child's lack of independence and increased anxiety levels (Simpson et al., 2018). Parents of anxious children may erroneously encourage their children to avoid stressful situations or support negative behaviors to decrease their anxiety levels (Simpson et al., 2018). Support for adverse reactions will increase the likelihood of negative behaviors in the future, including the possibility of behavior increases. Simpson et al. (2018) found that increased exposure to stressful situations is associated with less anxiety on the child's part.

Parenting stress may result in parental burnout (Mikolajczak et al., 2017). Within adoptive families, parenting stress may lead to the adoptive parents' ineffectiveness in addressing the adopted child's needs. Through support, parents can change their views of their children's behavior through more positive lenses (Stevens, 2018). Parents also need assistance to appropriately address their children's maladaptive behavior. This assistance can be through training and parental skills, increasing the parent's attachment security toward their children (Harris-Waller et al., 2018). Social service interventions that have improved parent-child relationships have considered the development of empathic, sensitive, and nurturing parental responses to children's needs (Kemmis-Riggs et al., 2017).

### **Early Life Experiences of Parents**

O'Neal et al. (2016) conducted a study addressing parents' early-life stressful experiences on their children's well-being through parenting. The study identified that parents' early-life stressors negatively influenced their parenting practices. O'Neal et al.

(2016) specifically analyzed the concept of the intergenerational transmission of risk. The study considers the daily stresses people likely experience to influence their daily lives, including getting married and having offspring. The persistence, transmission, and proximity principles determine whether life stressors were present during the parent's childhood and persisted into adulthood (O'Neal et al., 2016).

Evidence of the direct effect of parents' childhood experiences influences their parenting practices (O'Neal et al., 2016). The childhood experiences signify that parents who have an adverse childhood experience because of their parents' parenting style may replicate this when they become parents. Hadfield et al. (2017) addressed the influence of parents' traumatic childhood experiences on their future parenting capacity. Adults whom their parents and society supported while they were children adapted well and became well-adjusted adults and good parents. They pass the positive socioemotional experience of a supportive environment on to their children, having the benefits of first-hand experience.

### **Emotional Well-Being of Children**

Child well-being can be described as the capacity of children to acquire age-appropriate behavior concerning their environment and express themselves (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017). Well-being is a dynamic concept that can include subjective, social, and psychological dimensions (Ali, 2018). Children's well-being is specific to children within the social system (children up for adoption) and should focus on the social dimension. If their well-being is not ensured, a child's chances of developing into a maladaptive adult increase (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017). Child psychosocial well-being is the basis of the

current research. It is adequate, as it encompasses a child's well-being from a physical, emotional, and mental point of view. Ayala-Nunes et al. (2017) found that social services that provide positive family approaches ensured well-being and the adopted child's positive adjustment.

Cau (2018) analyzed the harmful effects of living in slums on the well-being of children. The negative effects of living in slums range from a lack of schooling to social and health disadvantages. An important aspect verified in the study was that the negative effects of living in slums decreased if the family structure was adequate and provided positive emotional support (Cau, 2018). Several children in alternative care in Mozambique come from the country's poorest areas, including slums (Cau, 2018). Most of these impoverished areas are slums within urban areas, signifying that these children were already at an emotional disadvantage.

### **Emotion Regulation of Children**

Disruptive emotion regulation also affects the likelihood of a child engaging in disruptive behavior (criminal involvement or substance use; Bookhout et al., 2018). Children susceptible to anger and unable to regulate their emotions are more likely to externalize aggressive behaviors (Bookhout et al., 2018). Children tend to adjust based on the caregiver's example as a co-regulator through their parenting style.

Adolescents tend to engage in two types of aggression: reactive and proactive. Reactive aggression responds to provocation, while proactive aggression achieves a goal (Bookhout et al., 2018). Disruptive emotion regulation is most associated with reactive aggression, as the child cannot regulate their emotion and thus becomes aggressive

toward the person provoking them. Children prone to reactive aggression may also be proactively aggressive if they find that their parents do not condemn this behavior.

Parent–child attachment influences the quality of emotion regulation in children.

### **Adopted Children Well-Being**

Adopted children have experienced various adverse experiences, transitioning from their biological family to orphanages and the adopted family (Steenbakkers et al., 2018). There is evidence that adopted children face myriad challenges when entering adulthood. The support of orphanage staff to the adoptee parents ensures that they can care for the adopted child’s socioemotional needs. Adopted children require a secure relationship with their adoptive parents to ensure healthy development (Opiola & Bratton, 2018). Various ethical concerns related to the adoption process include the loss of cultural identity and family origin, including previous parenting styles (Featherstone et al., 2018).

Emotion regulation refers to how individuals regulate their emotions and respond appropriately to the environment’s needs (Pace et al., 2017). There are two emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal (which allows for suppressing stressful situations, thus producing a positive interpretation) and expressive suppression (which inhibits emotion regulation, thus not reducing negative emotions). Cognitive reappraisal is the positive emotion regulation of the long-term benefits of being instilled before adolescence. Secure and loving parent–child relationships are fundamental in ensuring adopted children’s mental health and well-being (Kemmis-Riggs et al., 2017).

Adopted children from foster care tend to face higher maladjustment levels in adoptive families (Ní Chobhthaigh & Duffy, 2019). Most children enter foster care either due to abandonment or maltreatment. Adopted children have already experienced neglect; thus, establishing attachment is difficult (Harris-Waller et al., 2018). Adopted children most commonly develop insecure or disorganized attachments. Establishing appropriate attachments can lead to behavioral and psychological problems (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017). Adopted children are always at risk of placement disruption, and parents need to address these insecurities on the part of their children (Leathers et al., 2019). Children who feel insecure are at a higher risk of maladaptive behavior, as they will not feel safe forming a secure attachment to the adoptive parent.

Late adopters (those adopted in adolescence) are at a higher risk of attachment insecurity and a higher inability to regulate emotions (Barroso et al., 2017; Pace et al., 2017). Higher risk levels can be associated with longer negative experiences before adoption. There is evidence that the quality of parent–child attachment may assist in reverting to early adverse experiences (Pace et al., 2017). Proper parenting and attachment can thus revert late adopters' negative experiences, providing them with another chance in life.

Internationally adopted children show higher maladjustment levels than nationally adopted children (Askeland et al., 2018; Barroso et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2018). Possible reasoning for this is that the children had to adapt to multiple factors, such as new parents and a new sociocultural context. Askeland et al. (2018) found that adopted



children in a supportive and protective family environment displayed positive well-being and adjustment, even if they were internationally adopted (Harris-Waller et al., 2018).

### **Social Service Supportive Mechanisms**

Social processes are integral to children's development, including the family system (Waid & Alewine, 2018). Depriving appropriate social methods can positively influence maladaptive adjustment, thus increasing negative social, emotional, and cognitive behaviors (Waid & Alewine, 2018). Children adopted from welfare systems may have experienced pre-adoption adversity and may require follow-up to ensure appropriate integration into the new family.

Social services prioritize providing a safe environment for children when they are out of state or in parental custody (Rolock et al., 2019). Social services should target the parent-child relationship's appropriateness when determining the appropriately adopted parents for each adoptive child (Harris-Waller et al., 2018). Support provided by social services should start before the adoption process is final through a suitability assessment (Palacios et al., 2019). The study will address the different support social services can provide to adoptee parents throughout the adoption process. Suitability assessment is a fundamental step so that both prospective adoptee parents and adoptive children are aware of each other's characteristics.

Vulnerable children require a safe environment in which to prosper skillfully, which may entail a loving family permanently (Palacios et al., 2019; Rolock et al., 2018). Adoptive families must adapt to vulnerable anxious children's needs to ensure their well-being (Bookhout et al., 2018). Addressing adopted children's behavioral and emotional

needs is paramount for parents. Due to the adversities (pre-adoption maltreatment) children may have faced, there is the possibility that they may display certain disruptive behaviors that the parents are not adequately equipped to handle (Steenbakkers et al., 2018). Fundamentally, parents seek help, most commonly from social services (Palacios et al., 2019).

Parental support and encouragement to solve problems are the best predictors of less anxious youth and increased positive coping strategies (Simpson et al., 2018). Parents well prepared for incoming family members have higher parental satisfaction and have reported improved parent–child relationships (Drozd et al., 2018). A variety of services may be available; however, the work needs to start at home (Palacios et al., 2019), such as consistent discipline and positive reinforcement (Kemmis-Riggs et al., 2017).

Strength-based family interventions aim to promote children’s well-being and ensure positive adjustment within the family; thus, they are adequate tools for orphanage staff (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017). This approach’s rationale is that social workers focus on each family’s specific needs. Adoptive parents require specific preparedness and tools to address the emotional and psychological factors affecting adopted children (Harris-Waller et al., 2018; Ní Chobhthaigh & Duffy, 2019). Social services have the tools to pass on to adoptive parents to assist adopted children’s well-being.

Previous research validates the assumption that adopted children can overcome behavioral problems by having a positive relationship with their adoptive parents (Opiola & Bratton, 2018). Pre-adoption preparation is a fundamental process for prospective

adoptive parents to ensure that they can manage their children's possible behavioral problems (Drozd et al., 2018; Opiola & Bratton, 2018; Santos-Nunes et al., 2018). Pre-adoption preparation is also fundamental for managing adoptive parent's expectations regarding the adoption process (Santos-Nunes et al., 2018). Tregagle et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of preparation and support for adoptive parents due to the adverse childhood experiences that adopted children have already faced.

It is best to prepare for possible behavioral problems adopted children may display rather than seek therapeutic assistance once the children start to present behavioral problems (Waid & Alewine, 2018). Social workers can provide appropriate tools for parents to manage adopted children's behavior in a nurturing manner. For the adjustment of adoptee children to be moderated against risk factors, there should be system support, specifically from social services (del Pozo de Bolger et al., 2018). Assessing the adoptee child's previous situation is paramount, as it can assist adopted parents in determining a good parenting style.

Dyadic developmental psychotherapy is a treatment shown to be effective for families of adopted children with attachment problems due to previously experienced trauma (Becker-Weidmalu & Hughes, 2018; Harris-Waller et al., 2018). The therapy focuses on ensuring that the adopted child feels safe with the adoptive parents through secure attachment. Child-parent relationship therapy effectively improves the child-parent relationship (Opiola & Bratton, 2018). This therapy has been used with adoptive families to obtain favorable results. Positive results were particularly prevalent within

adoptive families, where the adopted child displayed behavioral problems (Opiola & Bratton, 2018).

A parent's reflective functioning (PRF) is how parents assess their relationship with their child in the context of their own experiences as a parent concerning their child's understanding of it (León et al., 2018). Parents who can employ PRF properly can better apply sensitive parent-child interaction (León et al., 2018). The onus of adequate PRF within adoptive families is mainly due to adoptive children's pre-conditions, which require the reflective capacity of the parents to properly understand and address the child's behavior (León et al., 2018).

The adoption process expectations of adoptive parents affect adopted children's adjustment (Santos-Nunes et al., 2018). The adoptive parents' unrealistic expectations are most likely to negatively affect the adjustment process (Santos-Nunes et al., 2018). This negative adjustment leads to adopted children displaying behavioral problems (Santos-Nunes et al., 2018). The adoptive parents' low-quality relationships may change negatively due to meeting negative expectations (Santos-Nunes et al., 2018).

### **Criminal Involvement**

The influencers of criminal involvement are many and varied. In the current research, the influencers analyzed were socially influenced. Ayala-Nunes et al. (2017) showed that parents involved in and supportive of their children may help overcome the adverse effects of their social environment. Behaviors displayed by parents are a significant influencer of childhood delinquency (Stevens, 2018). The optimistic view of

adopted children regarding their parents' parenting styles is fundamental in ensuring that they do not feel the need to engage in criminal activities (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017).

Georgiou and Symeou (2018) proposed that parental style is a significant influencer in developing externalizing and internalizing behaviors on the part of children. The authoritative parenting style, which promotes psychological well-being, contributes negatively to the development of criminal behavior. Children require guidance toward appropriate responses and autonomy to build independence and correct decision-making, a characteristic of authoritative parenting. Parents' insufficient or excessive behavioral control of their children is associated with adverse behavioral outcomes (authoritarian and permissive parenting styles; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018).

Behaviors that go against societal rules are known as externalizing behaviors, and these behaviors have long-term effects on both the individual and the public (Georgiou & Symeou, 2018). Most externalizing responses tend to be displayed during adolescence; thus, positive parenting skills are fundamental at this developmental stage (Pakmehr et al., 2017). Children who have experienced positive parenting in early childhood will also carry the experience into adolescence.

Social bonding theory emphasizes the importance of attachment between children and parents (Hirschi, 2002). The lack of affection between parent and child predicts criminal involvement due to a lack of overall respect for authority figures (Moreno-Ruiz et al., 2018). The initiation of violent behavior in school has also been linked to the parent-child relationship's adequacy (Llorca et al., 2017). Increased family cohesion

ensures higher confidence levels in children, thus decreasing the likelihood of engagement in antisocial activities (Moreno-Ruiz et al., 2018).

### **Juvenile Delinquency**

Children with authoritative parents are more likely to display prosocial behaviors and, consequently, to not engage in juvenile delinquency (Llorca et al., 2017). Children with prosocial behaviors and good relationships with their parents are also less likely to associate with deviant peers. The lack of association with deviant peers signifies that these children are less likely to learn antisocial behaviors (Llorca et al., 2017).

Children who are taught empathy and sympathy toward others through their parents' behaviors carry these behaviors into adulthood (Llorca et al., 2017). Children who are empathetic toward others are less likely to become involved in antisocial behaviors. The lack of antisocial behaviors shows that individuals can determine possible negative consequences for themselves and others (Llorca et al., 2017). Children with inadequate emotional development are more likely to grow up and have behavioral problems (Llorca et al., 2017). Inappropriate emotional development can be caused by neglectful parenting, which is linked to delinquency in children who experience it (Llorca et al., 2017). Adequate emotional development is achieved through social learning, mainly from parents as the most influential people in their lives.

The parent–child relationship shifts as children grow up, and the child behaves as an individual (Lippold et al., 2018). The change in the relationship due to developmental changes is described through family life cycle theory (Lippold et al., 2018). The early adolescent developmental stage may disrupt the positive parenting style and cause the

child to engage in substance use. Well-established family systems prioritizing a supportive mechanism can recover from disruption, ensuring that the child does not participate in antisocial use (Lippold et al., 2018).

### **Substance Use**

Substance use is associated with aggressive behaviors and can be linked to juvenile delinquency (Tur-Porcar et al., 2019). Tur-Porcar et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between parents' influence and substance use prevention. Parenting styles based on communication and affection are more likely to ensure a productive relationship between parents and children. Affective relationships between parents and children reduce children's likelihood of engaging in substance use (Benchaya et al., 2019). Parenting programs should advocate for warm family environments and discipline (Tur-Porcar et al., 2019).

Benchaya et al. (2019) found that the authoritative parenting style was positively associated with Brazilian adolescents' excellent school performance and well-being. It was also found that this association regarding authoritative parenting style deters substance use. Authoritarian parenting styles are associated with a higher likelihood of substance use (Tur-Porcar et al., 2018). Adolescents who commonly engage in substance use due to peer influence need to feel accepted.

### **Research Approaches**

The main strengths found in the approaches employed by previous researchers in analyzing this social problem are how they have addressed the parents' parenting style and the well-being of their children (Hadfield et al., 2017). A limitation found in previous

research concerns how parenting styles influence adopted children's criminal involvement. There is evidence regarding the likelihood of maladjustment in adopted children (Barroso et al., 2017). This evidence validates the need to understand the influence of parenting style on the adopted child's behavior (Stevens, 2018). Another essential factor with limited evidence is the adequacy of the social services available to support adoptive parents in providing appropriate parenting skills to address their children's needs.

The studies reviewed have addressed the concept of parenting styles concerning their effects on children's well-being; however, they are not specific to adopted children. Previous research lacks information on adopted children's likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. The lack of literature regarding the influence of parenting style and emotional well-being on adopted children's criminal involvement validates the use of these concepts in the current research. The inclusion of social services' adequacy is confirmed within the research's positive social change aspect. The present research aimed to provide appropriate policy changes that social services can initiate to improve the parent-child relationship and decrease the likelihood of criminal activity involvement within the Mozambican context.

### **Conclusion**

Adoptive parents experience high levels of anxiety due to the challenges experienced during the adoption process (Bergsund et al., 2018). Adoptive parents need to be supported during and after the adoption process to ensure that they develop adequate parenting skills, resulting in positive development. A secure attachment



between adoptive parents and their adopted children is at the core of positive well-being. As a consequence of the negative experiences that adopted children may have experienced, adoption can be a protective factor (Barroso et al., 2017). The adoption process can be emotionally healing for the child if it culminates in a stimulating and loving environment. The healthy functioning of adoptive families is congruent with positive attachment and family cohesion, and incongruent with juvenile delinquency (Llorca et al., 2017). These are protective factors for the adopted child and adoptive parents (Wydra & O'Brien, 2018).

Research has shown that securely attached children can surpass previous negative experiences (Barroso et al., 2017). Adopted children are capable of the plasticity of attachment, considering that they change caregivers from the family of origin, foster care, and adoption (Wydra & O'Brien, 2018). Emotionally secure children are less likely to engage in socially harmful behaviors, including criminal activities. Children who have positive academic performance and perceive the school system as safe and supportive are also less likely to engage in criminal activities (Llorca et al., 2017). Social service policies encourage positive parenting to ensure that parents have adequate tools to best parent their children. The literature gap focused on parenting styles and adopted children's involvement in criminal activities. In Chapter Three, details regarding the methodological approach for the current study are provided. An overview of the research design, data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures followed will also be provided.

## Chapter 3: Research Design

### **Introduction**

In the current study, I aimed to ascertain whether adoptive parents perceive certain parenting styles to increase adopted children's likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. Participants shared their perceptions of how their parenting styles influenced their children's well-being. Parenting styles affect the attachment between adoptive parents and their children and, thus, the children's well-being (Llorca et al., 2017). This project was intended to assist in developing appropriate policies regarding providing support to parents during the adoption process in Mozambique.

The target group for this study was adoptive parents from Mozambique. The aim was to determine whether parents perceive that their parenting style could influence children engaging in criminal behavior. Adoptive parents are also critical stakeholders in ensuring that their adopted child does not engage in illegal activities (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). I analyzed participants' lived experiences concerning their perceptions of the adequacy of their parenting style in preventing involvement in criminal activities (Eatough & Smith, 2019).

In this chapter, I provide information on the research design and rationale, including the chosen research tradition. My role is discussed in detail, including how I dealt with possible biases as the interviewer. The methodology section incorporates participant selection logic, instrumentation, and the data analysis plan. The last element in the chapter addresses trustworthiness and ethical considerations regarding the research process.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research question for this study was: Which parenting style do adoptive parents feel is best to ensure that their adopted child does not enter the justice system? Qualitative research is used to extract data from an event and describe it adequately and within a specific context (Gorman et al., 2005). In this study, I used a phenomenological approach to address the study's aim to understand the participants' lived experiences (Husserl, 1962). The rationale for choosing a phenomenological approach for this research was to understand the parents' perceptions based on their responses. The purpose was to gain insight from participants, regardless of their parenting type (Husserl, 1962).

Phenomenology is focused on studying experiences directly from an individual perspective (Lester, 1999). A researcher is expected to maintain a neutral tone during the interview process. I maintained neutrality during the interviews and did not influence the participants' responses. Phenomenological studies do not generalize but are used to develop a general theory regarding lived experiences (Lester, 1999). In the current research, I aimed to analyze the lived experiences of adoptive parents concerning their perceptions of their parenting practices and how they may influence their adopted children to become involved in criminal activities.

Interpretive phenomenology was appropriate in this research, as the analysis was focused more on psychological and sociological factors affecting the reactions of individuals' perceptions (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) focuses on personal lived experiences, aiming to understand the parenting

style's perceptions of children's future behavior (Eatough & Smith, 2017). IPA was used as the methodology for analyzing the research results and allowed me to identify biases (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

### **Role of the Researcher**

In this study, I examined parents' perceptions of parenting styles and children's criminal involvement, specifically within Mozambique's adoption process. The objective of social change is appropriate for qualitative research (Fusch et al., 2018). In qualitative research studies, a researcher's role is participatory in developing interpersonal relationships with participants. My role as a researcher involved gathering, organizing, and analyzing participants' perceptions as the primary tool for data collection (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2017). As the researcher, I was an observer during the interview process. As a data collector and analyst, I was responsible for collecting data from interview notes and transcripts. I analyzed the data by identifying common themes among the responses.

I had no previous relationship with the study participants and was not biased toward the participants' responses. As a researcher, I was aware of my preferences beforehand and ensured they did not alter the interpretation of the information received from the participants (Karagiozis, 2018). I was culturally self-aware, which was fundamental in ensuring that participants' information was contextualized within a specific culture.

I explained and clarified the data collection materials to the interviewees to ensure mutual understanding (Karagiozis, 2018). I confirmed that participants fully understood

the interview questions and the research's purpose. Before the interviews, all the research components were clarified to ensure the scientific quality of the research findings (Birkmann & Kvale, 2017). I ensured that participants felt comfortable responding to the research question openly and honestly (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I adhered to ethical guidelines by providing confidentiality to the participants and took appropriate steps to ensure the information collected was secure.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The target population was adoptive parents of Mozambican children adopted within Mozambique. Interpretive phenomenological interviews focus on interpreting individuals' lived experiences (Roulston & Choi, 2018). The focus of the research was on the lived experiences of adoptive parents concerning the perceived influence of their parenting styles on adopted children's involvement in criminal activities.

The sample target group of the research was adoptive parents; thus, criterion sampling was used (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Snowball sampling was also used; participants were asked to identify additional willing participants (adoptive parents who could be interested in the research). The inclusion criteria of participants were adoptive parents of Mozambican children: a) Mozambican children adopted in Mozambique and b) adoptive parents and children still residing in Mozambique. To recruit participants, I posted an invitational text on Facebook pages directed at Mozambican adults, commonly used to exchange information. Potential participants who contacted me were first screened based on the inclusion criteria. I provided the informed consent form for review

and signature through email to the participants if they met participation requirements. Consent for participation was provided by responding to the email stating that they had consented or at the start of the interview. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all communication with the participants was done online, including interviews, and sharing consent forms.

Qualitative research usually has a small sample size (Schreier, 2018). The current study had four participants. This sample size was appropriate for the study, as the phenomenon under investigation was quite specific and did not require many participants (Dodgson, 2019). Only adopted parents who volunteered for the research were interviewed. The research aimed to achieve a theoretical generalization by building evidence concerning parenting styles' perceived effects on adopted children's criminal involvement (Schreier, 2018). Saturation for the current research was not predetermined due to the limited number of participants.

### **Instrumentation**

Individual semistructured interviews were the data-gathering method, as I gathered people's perceptions of a particular phenomenon. The instrument used for data collection was a list of interview questions I developed and posed to the participants (Appendix A). The interview questions were designed to cover the concept under investigation. I asked probing questions during the interviews to clarify or gather additional information.

The individual interviews were voice recorded, and I transcribed them afterward. Two interviews were in English, and two were in Portuguese. The participants chose the

language spoken. The interviews were unstructured to allow interviewees to provide information freely (Roulston & Choi, 2018). In phenomenological interviews, people's own words of their lived experiences are fundamental (Roulston & Choi, 2018).

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

I posted an invitational text on various Facebook pages directed at parents in Mozambique. The invitational text provided the context of the research, its purpose, and my contact information in case anyone wished to clarify or volunteer to participate. Participants contacting me for participation were screened to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent forms were sent to all participants, who replied via email, consenting to participate in the research. Participants were not asked to sign the consent forms because this would involve having software for electronic signatures or the availability of a printer and scanner, which some participants did not have. All participants were above 18 years of age and following approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (approval number 01-28-22-0574805), it was discovered that none were from a vulnerable population.

I transcribed the interviews manually because a limited number of participants allowed for this. The interviews were conducted through Zoom or Microsoft Teams, allowing for recording. The participants chose to use Zoom or Microsoft Teams, depending on which software they already had available. Data collected during the research will be kept electronically on my password-secured computer for 5 years.

The sample size of the research was small (four participants); a small sample size is acceptable in interpretative phenomenological research (Schreier, 2018). The small sample size allowed me to gather detailed data from the interviewees. The interviews were semistructured, and probing questions were asked, depending on the participant's reply and the need for clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I prepared a set of probing questions in advance, but I asked further unprepared questions as the need arose (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Additional unprepared probing questions were posed when clarifications were needed regarding the responses provided.

The interviews took place in a private setting to ensure no interruption or confidentiality breach of participants' data. The interviews ranged from 20 to 45 minutes. I informed participants that participation was voluntary and if they wanted to stop at any time during the interview, they could do so.

The participants were debriefed once the interview was completed to address questions or concerns they may have had. I thanked each participant for their time and participation in the study and asked them if they knew of any other adoptive parents they could inform of the study. Participants received a summary of their interviews for member checking to confirm that my interpretation accurately depicted their experiences.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

I used semistructured interviews to obtain specific data for the following research question: Which parenting style do adoptive parents perceive is best to ensure that their adopted child does not enter the justice system? I followed the four essential steps of bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing to identify the central themes of the study



(Sanders, 1982). I developed specific keywords to identify themes in the research for the coding process. I began by bracketing all the participants' perceptions concerning the parenting of adopted children. I then immersed myself in the information that focused on the participants' perceptions of appropriate parenting practices and analyzed this specific information that dealt with the study focus by coding the identified themes. The final step was to describe the identified themes in detail.

The credibility of the current research lies in understanding adopted parents' lived experiences concerning their perceptions of parenting style. Saturation is determined once new information is no longer received from the interviewees (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). With phenomenological research, saturation is difficult to achieve, as the interpretation of the lived experiences of each participant is unique (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

There are four components to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The recordings of the interviews allowed for verification of the audio against the transcribed notes. I also ensured that the transcribed notes were sent to the participants for member checking, and this validation of the interview transcripts allowed for the credibility of the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). During the interview, I also posed additional clarification questions to the participants to ensure that the response was clear and that there would be no misinterpretations during the data analysis. The dependability of the current research was assured, as the data collected are specific to the Mozambican

context (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). The triangulation process of member checking also ensured the dependability of the research. Participant validation is fundamental to ensure that the interviewees confirm the interviewer's accounts as interpreted.

The triangulation process provided the research's credibility by demonstrating that the interviewees' representation of their experience had been reported accurately (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Through triangulation and detailed documentation of the research process, I ensured the trustworthiness of the research results. Internal validity was confirmed by cross-checking the perceived meaning of the interviewee's responses with the participants' actual responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Internal validity can only be ascertained by cross-checking the interpretation of the interviewees' responses with themselves (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The research process was fully documented, including bracketing interpretations of the interviewees' responses. The current research does not ensure transferability, as the data collected are specific to Mozambican adoptive parents' lived experiences (Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

### **Ethical Procedures**

I adhered to the American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Guidelines by obtaining institutional approval before conducting the study. I received informed consent from each participant, including permission for an audio-recorded interview. I informed the participants of the nature and purpose of the research and that their participation was voluntary; thus, they could quit at any time. The participants' private information was kept confidential, and I secured their information using my personal computer, which is password protected and only accessed by me. The participant's

interview recordings and transcripts were not labeled by their names. Participants were labeled Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc. Additionally, I took precautions to minimize the potential for psychological harm for all participants by providing them with detailed information regarding the questions posed during the interview.

Participant recruitment and data collection only started once approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University. The IRB approval number is 01-28-22-0574805, which expires on 27 January 2023. Research participants were recruited through an invitational text posted on various Facebook pages directed at parents in Mozambique. Participants were also asked to reference other adoptive parents at the end of the interview. The participants' contact details will not be kept in writing, and they will only reply to the email containing the consent forms.

I was the only one conducting the interviews and carrying out the transcriptions. The interview transcripts and other data did not include the participants' names; instead, the participants were labeled with a number to protect their identity. All research materials will be kept for 5 years, as per the Walden University protocol. After 5 years, all materials will be destroyed. Those who participated in the study had no previous history with me, professionally or personally.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the purpose of the study, the research question, the phenomenon under study, the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology for participant recruitment and sampling strategy, and the data collection procedures. The issues of trustworthiness and the importance of establishing credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability were also addressed in this chapter.

Transferability is limited in qualitative research because the goal is to achieve detailed descriptions of the data and the context, not generalize findings across other contexts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The transferability of this study is limited, as the target group was Mozambican adoptive parents. Dependability was achieved through stability and consistency in data collection and alignment with the research question.

I adhered to APA's (2017) Ethical Guidelines and Walden's IRB requirements to ensure that the research was conducted without exposing participants to psychological harm by obtaining institutional approval, obtaining informed consent from all participants, and maintaining confidentiality. The instruments used in this research were a set of interview questions and computer software to conduct online interviews, namely Microsoft Teams and Zoom. In this chapter, I described how I maintained participant confidentiality and how the study data was protected. In Chapter 4, I will discuss participant demographics and characteristics, data collection and analysis methods, evidence of trustworthiness, and the study results.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

In this phenomenological study, I aimed to determine adoptive parents' perceptions regarding which parenting style provides the least chance for adopted children to enter the judicial system. For this purpose, I conducted one-on-one interviews with four participants to obtain their perspectives on what they perceived to be the most appropriate parenting practice to ensure the well-being of adopted children. The main research question was: Which parenting style do adoptive parents perceive best to ensure that their adopted child does not enter the justice system?

I explored this research question by gathering data from four adoptive parents of Mozambican children. Through open-ended questions, the parents had the opportunity to provide their personal opinions regarding their parenting practices. I used a phenomenological qualitative research design, as I was seeking to understand the phenomena through the experience and perspective of the research participants through direct interviews (Creswell, 2014). In this chapter, I provide information on participant demographics and characteristics, data collection and analysis methods, evidence of trustworthiness, and study results.

### **Setting**

The initial study proposal setting did not change, as I had proposed conducting interviews online through Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or in person if the participant wished. All the participants chose to conduct the interviews online. All interviews were conducted using either Zoom or Microsoft Teams, depending on the platform the

participants had available. Participants were reminded of the purpose of the study, its anonymous nature, and their freedom to stop the interview at any time.

### **Demographics**

The study consisted of four participants between the ages of 35 and 55, all of whom had adopted one Mozambican child. There were three female participants and one male participant. All participants were Mozambican; two spoke Portuguese only, and two spoke Portuguese and English. Participants who spoke English were interviewed in English. Three participants had biological children, and one had only an adopted child. Two participants were single parents, and two were married and parenting the children with a spouse. The interviews with the married parents took place with only one parent. I made several attempts to recruit additional participants through the social media invitation and through referrals provided by participants. The attempts made were not successful.

There was no predetermination of the age group of the adopted child as an inclusion criterion. The intention of the research was to look at the perception of adoptive parents on their parenting styles and how they perceived this would influence the tendency of criminal behavior on their children later. The age range of the adopted children was 4 to 19 years, which provided evidence of parenting style from toddler to young adulthood and parents' perceptions on the likelihood of the adopted child engaging in antisocial behavior.

Participant 1 is a single mother of one adopted and one biological child. The adopted child was adopted before age 1 and is currently 6 years old. Participant 2 is the

single mother of one adopted child. The child was adopted before 1 month old and is currently 4 years old. Participant 3 is the father of one adopted child and has three biological children; the adopted child was adopted at 11 and is currently 19. Participant 4 is the mother of one adopted child and two biological children; the adopted child was adopted under 1 year and is currently 13.

Three of the participants are parents to adoptive children below the age of 14 and only one has an adopted child above 18. The participants assisted in answering the research questions, as the focus was on adoptive parents' perceptions of their parenting practices being adequate to support their adopted child not entering the justice system later in life. The adoptive parents provided their perception of the adequacy of their parenting practice in ensuring that their children were well behaved and what they perceived would be the future behavior of their child.

### **Data Collection**

For this study, I collected information from four individuals willing to share their experiences of being a parent to an adopted Mozambican child. A social media invitation was posted on two Facebook pages whose primary target audience was adults living in Mozambique. I asked those already interviewed to pass on information regarding the research to other parents of adopted children. Participants who expressed interest in participating in the research were sent an informed consent form to review and provide consent to participate in the research.

I conducted individual face-to-face interviews (for the initial part of the introductory part of the interview, and then I switched off the camera) using Zoom for

two participants and Microsoft Teams for two participants. At the start of the interview, all participants verbally acknowledged their willingness to participate. The interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. Participants were first asked the primary research question and then three to four probing questions depending on their responses. The probing questions I posed focused on clarifying aspects of the primary research question and the information provided by the participants.

Interviews were recorded using the software available within Zoom and Microsoft Teams. I manually transcribed each recording, and I was the only one with access to the data. Electronic copies of recordings and interview transcripts were kept on my password-protected personal computer. No identifying data of the participants were included in the interviews or the transcripts. Each participant chose the method and location of the interview and was reminded that electronic data and written records would be stored securely for 5 years, as required by Walden University. After 5 years, I will destroy the data following Walden University IRB guidelines.

I initially planned to reach between 5–10 participants; however, I was only able to recruit four participants through social media invitations or through referrals from participants. I conducted member checking by sending all participants the transcripts via email summaries. All participants confirmed that the recorded transcribed information was accurate and that no changes were necessary.

### **Data Analysis**

I completed the data analysis using a phenomenological research methodology to establish themes and subthemes that describe the experiences' meaning (Eatough &



Smith, 2017). I followed the four essential steps of bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing to identify the central themes of the study (Sanders, 1982). I recognized my preconceived ideas and beliefs regarding the research topic through bracketing.

Bracketing allowed me to focus solely on the perceptions provided by the participants. Following this, I immersed myself in the information provided by the participants and followed my intuition in identifying common themes. I used no transcription software. Future researchers may develop different interpretations of the data from mine due to their understanding of it.

Four themes were identified through the analysis: (a) parenting style is the same between biological and adopted children, (b) parenting style influences, (c) Baumrind's styles, and (d) feelings of lack of support. Finally, I described the themes using textural descriptions by identifying specific quotes from the participants that substantiated the identified themes.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

There are four components to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, all the interviews were recorded to verify the audio against the transcribed notes to confirm the information. I also sent the transcribed notes to the participants for member checking, and this validation of the interview transcripts allowed for research credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). During the interviews, I posed additional clarification questions to the participants to ensure responses were clear and there would be no misinterpretation during data analysis. The dependability of the current research

was assured as the data collected are specific to the Mozambican context (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). The triangulation process of member checking also ensured the dependability of the research. Participant validation is fundamental to ensure that the interviewees confirm the accounts as collected.

During member checking, I asked the participants to confirm whether my interpretation of their responses was correct. Participants affirmed the accuracy of the transcriptions and my understanding of the phenomenon. This process allowed me to make appropriate conclusions based on the information provided during the interviews. I reviewed the interview transcripts several times to ensure I was thoroughly familiar with the perspectives and did not let my biases influence my interpretation of the responses. The previously described processes assisted in ensuring the confirmability of the data.

The study's dependability was ensured by posing the main research question in the same format to ensure consistent data gathering (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Transferability of research findings refers to applying the findings to other contexts and populations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The goal of qualitative research and this study was not to generalize but to provide rich and in-depth data about the phenomena under study from the participants' perspectives and guide future research of the phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

## **Results**

This phenomenological study aimed to ascertain whether adoptive parents perceive that certain parenting styles will likely increase adopted children's likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. The research question for this study was: Which parenting

style do adoptive parents feel is best to ensure that their adopted child does not enter the justice system? The participants were Mozambican adoptive parents between 30 and 60 years of age currently living in Mozambique.

In this phenomenological study, I explored parents' perceptions of how their parenting styles influence adopted children engaging in antisocial behavior. All participants took part in a semistructured virtual interview regarding their perceptions of their parenting styles and the well-being of their adopted children. I identified themes from their responses, which are detailed along with a summary of results in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Results*

Theme	Sub-Theme	Results
Parenting style is the same between biological and adopted children	Displays of antisocial behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All participants said they had the same parenting style for their biological and adopted children.</li> <li>Two parents reported cases of antisocial behavior from the children, which stopped after a sensitization session from the parents.</li> </ul>
Parenting style influences	Positive parenting experiences during childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants reported that they based their parenting style on their upbringing and how their parents raised them.</li> </ul>
	Negative parenting experiences during childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One participant explained that because her parents simply imposed rules during her childhood without explaining the rationale behind them, she decided that she would not do that with her children.</li> </ul>
Baumrind's styles	Provide support to the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All participants reported that they based their parenting style on being supportive while</li> </ul>

		instilling a sense of discipline in their children.
	Provide boundaries/discipline to the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants explained that although they wanted the best for their adopted children and provided them with the necessary support, they also wanted to ensure that the children were well disciplined.</li> </ul>
Feelings of lack of support	Lack of support from the social welfare system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two of the participants reported a lack of support from the social welfare system.</li> </ul>
	Lack of knowledge by the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participants reported that an issue they faced was the unwillingness of the community or extended family to accept adoption.</li> </ul>

### **Theme 1: Parenting Style Is the Same Between Biological and Adopted Children**

The responses from the participants validate the evidence found in the studies of Moran et al. (2018) and van der Kaap-Deeder et al. (2017) that positive parenting styles are evident in both biological and adopted children. All participants indicated having the same parenting style for their biological and adopted children. For example, Participant 1 said:

I wouldn't say I have a parenting style for an adopted child. I would say I have a parenting style—period. Because I have two kids, one child is biological, and the other is adopted. So, I don't have a specific parenting style for the adopted child that is different from the biological child.

Participant 2 responded, saying:

I have three biological children, but I always answer that I have four. I would say they have the same status as the other siblings regarding treatment. In the house, especially after all these years. It doesn't matter, at least, I don't feel it. You treat even that child, your biological child, in one way or another; for example, the youngest has more pampering from the mother because he is younger. This difference in parenting is typical among children of the same belly. But I would say that, nowadays, we don't have a glaring difference, for saying that this is not my daughter, no, on the contrary, it is more rooted in our family, and there is no distinction. If we go out, take a trip to South Africa, and want to buy clothes for the children, she has to be there. Same rights and obligations. Everyone here must go to school to do well, and there were never any excuses for her.

Participant 3 responded, by saying:

In my opinion, there is no difference between being an adoptive parent or a parent of their biological children. The sense of responsibility that you have for them is the same. There is no change. So, for me, it is the same. Caring for that child is the same as caring for my other children. The care I have, the responsibility, and the feeling will make my child okay tomorrow. How can I best help my child? My child is the firstborn and has other brothers, so I instill in him the feeling of responsibility, taking care of his siblings, and it goes on like that for me. I don't see any difference.

Participant 4 responded, saying:

From my experience, I understand that an adopted child is an average child.

Although he has this adoptive label, he is a child like the others, so the style of education that we should give an adoptive child should be as usual as possible so that the child is not labeled. So, sometimes I believe that society assumes this label when looking at the child because from the time we take a human being and legalize the adoption, this name of adoption dies. It's our mother, actually our offspring. We are the progenitors.

***Subtheme 1.1: Displays of Antisocial Behavior***

Two parents reported cases of antisocial behavior from the children. The participants said that although the children displayed antisocial behaviors within certain instances, they have stopped the antisocial/negative behaviors. Both participants reported that although they did get mad, they spoke to the child and explained why the behavior was wrong and the consequences of the negative behaviors. The participants said that the children understood the parents' reasoning and promised not to repeat those behaviors. The positive relationship between adoptive parents and children prevents future criminal behaviors (Llorca et al., 2018).

Participant 1 stated that:

So, my son has a tendency. I don't want to label it, but he has certain behaviors that can be included within the term defiant. I want it my way, or it is the highway. That is something we deal with every day. He wants it, and if he wants it, he wants it now. So, if you say to him that he can only have it at a specific time, let us say if he wants food, or wants cake or a biscuit or juice, and you say to

him, yes, you can have it, but only in the afternoon snack time, he will say okay, but then he will go and take it. And then he gets into trouble because now he has broken a rule, and the rule was to tell the truth, and do the right thing, and the right thing could have been, “But I want it now, can I please have it now and I won’t have it later” or something, some negotiation. What happens for me is a lot of frustration, and because of that, sometimes I will call him to order, have a discussion, or sometimes if it is big, like taking something that is not his from another child, then I will be really upset. So how to find the balance between calling on the bad behavior every day but at the same time reinforcing the idea that you are accepted, you are loved, you are not excluded, there is nothing wrong with you, you are just anxious, you seem to be anxious, you want it now, you don’t want to wait, but there is nothing wrong with you as a human being, you are just a child. Those are the challenges I face.

Participant 2 responded by stating:

I would say that my adopted daughter, we had an episode, very recent, she was preparing for the exam, she leaves, I live in Matola, she was preparing for the prep exam, somewhere in the Patrice area. She hangs up the phone, gets disconnected, and we get worried. She arrived, and there was a scolding. At that moment, regardless of being a biological daughter or not, it is a person who is my responsibility. She is a minor, we are responsible, and as I said, the bond we created is of a daughter, so there’s no difference. We scolded her, and the same scolding would be with any of my biological children. We ordered her to come,

explained the dangers, and understood. And having understood that, she said that it wouldn't happen anymore, so she couldn't go out late at night and have no communication, and on top of that, she went on public transport and came back at night. When they grow up and start going to parties, if there is a situation like this, they come back late, they are not communicable, that is it, I give them scolding.

Participant 4 stated that:

That's how children are children, there's a lot of innocence, sometimes we say, "oooh daughter, don't play with the knife, or rather don't take the shoes off," of the doll, for example, and the child, because she's in her moment of curiosity, of investigating, of discoveries, she takes off the doll shoe. I sit with her, so why do you take off your shoes? Don't you think the doll had to have the shoe? So you take it off, why? You can't screw things up; this is one time. "The second time you take the shoe off the doll," I say, probably in a more severe voice, "next time, mom won't buy you a doll. So again, if you continue to break the toys, mother will not buy them," for example, if we are watching television. The child likes cartoons. I have to talk to my daughter to limit the time watching the cartoons, but sometimes I want to see the news, and sometimes she wants to continue watching the cartoons. Then I say, "no, you won't see the cartoons because you've seen them all the time. Now it's time for us to see the news". It costs a little, but the moment comes when she already knows, and she says, "mom do you want to see the news? Now it's time for the news" I say "yes," and we see the news.



**Theme 2: Parenting Style Influences**

Participants reported that they based their parenting style on their upbringing and how their parents raised them. Another influencing and related factor is cultural influence. Cultural influence is prevalent in Mozambique, as the child-rearing process typically involves the support of the extended family (Waid & Alewine, 2018).

Participant 2 informed that:

Well, I'm not in her head, but what I see is that she is well framed, and she realizes that many of the things that were sometimes even harshly imposed are for her good, and this is no different. That is education, which I had from my parents, so there were things that the parents said no, this you have to do, you have no choice, this is mandatory. Then you only realize later that my father was right after all when he made me do this.

Participant 4 stated that:

Okay, the education rules that I have given my daughter since she was days old, it's the education I received, I have to impose limits, I have to scold the child, if necessary, but not because it's an adoptive child, it is the same education that I would give to others who are not adopted. It's love; it's limits, a conversation, everything within limits, love, care, and attention. There are spaces for conversation, dialogue, and room for sharing information. These are all things that I provide my little one. And I'm not going to provide it because she is adopted; no, it's the education I would offer many others.

***Subtheme 2.1: Positive Parenting Experiences During Childhood***

Participant 4 stated, “The education I received, I have to impose limits, I have to scold the child if necessary, but not because it’s a child adoptive, is the same education that I would give to others who are not adopted.” This shows that the education received during the participant’s childhood was adequate and influenced how she believed children should be raised.

***Subtheme 2.2: Negative Parenting Experiences During Childhood***

Participant 1 explained that because her parents simply imposed rules during her childhood without explaining the rationale behind them, she decided that she would not do that with her children.

So, for instance, honesty is important; you must always tell the truth, don’t lie; lying is not nice and will get you into trouble. It can save you in the minute, but it will get you into trouble, so certain principles like don’t lie, be integrity, be organized, and find order in your life are in the middle of the lounge. Take off your t-shirt and shoes; you can do it momentarily but be responsible for cleaning up afterward. I don’t negotiate such things. I discuss with them; there is an open explanation and discussion of why those things are important. I don’t just say you must do it because I say so, and I am the mother; I think it is important for children to understand why things get done in a certain way for their growth and development.

Participant 1 also provided examples of a negative parenting experience as a child.

If I look at my own life and life of many people that I know, the way we have been raised and the things that we have been informed and the things we have been told, as contributed largely to the negative perceptions we have held against ourselves.

### **Theme 3: Baumrind's Styles**

#### ***Subtheme 3.1: Provide Support to the Child***

All participants reported that they based their parenting style on being supportive while instilling a sense of discipline in their children. Two of the participants could discern the different parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive)

Participant 1 described her parenting style in the following:

I think that to be truthful, I am more authoritative, not authoritarian; I am more authoritative in the sense that I discuss with my children rules, I discuss with my children principles, and I explain to them why certain principles are essential. I discuss certain principles with my kids that I enforce in the family. Honesty is one of them, so I don't lie to them so that they don't lie to me. I always tell the truth. I apologize so that they can understand why it is important to apologize. Thank you, every time somebody does something for you, I thank them as well.

Participant 2 informed that "When she was doing the 10th grade, many people said she would fail because she didn't have the capacity. We insisted on giving support, especially mental support."

***Subtheme 3.2: Provide Boundaries/Discipline to the Child***

Participants explained that although they wanted the best for their adopted children and provided them with the necessary support, they also wanted to ensure that the children were well disciplined.

Participant 3 stated that:

Okay, my parenting style is, I wouldn't say authoritarian, but I am more of the one that sets the rules at home, different from my husband, who is the one that is always kidding and playing with them. I am like the government as I am called at home. I instill the rules, and one of us is to do that, so that is my style. Not to say I don't play with them. I do. But I want them to get this part of education. To know the rules. To say "thank you" to say "please." I say that education is an ongoing process. It doesn't stop whether you are at home or on the road. Wherever you are, it is a continuing process. And when you have children, they do not understand, because for them it is like mom is very serious, but I feel like one of us, as to be. It is either my husband or me and here at home, it is me.

Participant 1 replied that:

So, when I look at why I say I am authoritative, it is more about establishing rules and discussing them, showing principles, life principles, and discussing them. So authoritative in discussing rules and principles and demonstrating how these things are applied to them. And make sure that everybody in the house follows the same so that we can be in harmony. But also, I like to play.

Certain participants could not label their parenting style; however, their descriptions of the characteristics fit within the description of authoritative parenting. Authoritative parenting has the following features defined by parents: calm, controlled parenting skills that are reasonable, encouragement of verbal communication, and exertion of control without coercion or abuse. Tarmizi and Karim (2022) found that their children's self-esteem was well established in parents with authoritative parenting styles.

Participant 4 described her parenting style: "It's love, it is limits, it's a conversation, it's care, it's attention; there are spaces for conversation, space for sharing information; these are all things that I provide my little one."

#### **Theme 4: Feelings of Lack of Support**

##### ***Subtheme 4.1: Lack of Support From the Social Welfare System***

Two of the participants reported a lack of support from the social welfare system. The participants resorted to investigating for themselves, mainly through the Internet, how to care for an adopted child. Stevens (2018) explains that it is fundamental for adoptive parents to receive adequate support. Parental training is essential, especially for first-time parents (Harris-Walles et al., 2018).

Participant 1 stated that:

This country has no established parenting style for adopted parents. Even speaking for myself, everything I have learned about parenting an adopted child, I have had to research on my own. The literature is mainly from the US and some from South Africa but primarily outside the continent. There isn't a conversation, a dialogue; there is no narrative about adoption in Africa. As I said earlier, I

realize more and more that I need help. He is a child and very little cognitively, even socially. There is very little that he can do to help himself, so I look at myself and realize that I am the one that needs help. I am the one that needs the therapy to be able to develop the skills to deal with that. Because what I am trying to establish is that, as he grows, he doesn't develop the idea that he is always getting into trouble because that is just going to reinforce the idea that he's a troubled child. So, I don't want him to think, "I am a troubled child," which will push him into those more serious defiant behaviors.

Participant 4 replied in the following manner:

I'm going alone trying to interpret, probably because I also studied clinical psychology. Well, I'm trying, I know it's not applicable, but I'm trying to interpret this phenomenon. So, it's just that we do that. We start to discriminate in the treatment of our children, so I think we adults are the ones who create all the conditions, even if it's unconsciously, so that that child reacts the same way he reacts and maybe sometimes leaves home until sometimes he becomes rebellious. It's a subject that we need to address, to talk about what adoption means, the consequences, and the strengths of an adoption.

#### ***Subtheme 4.2: Lack of Knowledge by the Community***

The participants reported that an issue they faced was the unwillingness of the community or extended family to accept adoption.

Participant 3 said that her hope for the current research would be that it:

Also helps to understand adopted children and above all I hope, is that this research helps in the Africa context that more woman, go out and adopt, because that is what we need. Women, whether they have biological children or not, have that courage to go out and adopt, especially in the African context, because we are still very far from that due to our cultural background.

Participant 1 described how even adoptive parents do not like to report that they have adopted a child:

In Mozambique, especially parents who have adopted children. Adoptive parents don't talk to each other, and there is a little secrecy about it. It is very seldom that you hear someone saying that they have adopted a child. I think, on the one hand, that is not a negative thing as you are protecting your child. On the other hand, it is also this idea that if I speak about having adopted a child, then they will start judging my fertility. Those are the two main ideas I have found in talking to parents who have adopted a child. They don't talk about it loudly because they don't want those judgments against them.

**Which parenting style do adoptive parents feel is best to ensure that their adopted child does not enter the justice system?**

The prevailing factor influencing the parental style of adoptive parents is the desire to see their children thrive. This was explained by Participant 3: "The care that I have, the responsibility, the feeling of, will my child be okay tomorrow. How can I best help my child?" The African culture does not value adoption as an option for families that cannot have biological children, including those who have their children but would

still like to give a home to an orphaned child citation needed. This is confirmed by

Participant 3:

Of course, being an African, we still have a very long way to go, due to our cultural differences, and all the cultural taboo that we have behind adoption. That is one of the reasons why we still have so many children in care centers that are not adopted. Mostly it is because of the ideas that we have because of our cultures. I feel that if it weren't for that, the number of adopted children would rise. I spoke to women who have not given birth and have love to give and willing to adopt, but because their spouse or the family of the spouse or even their own family, they have gone back, or they have retracted from adoption.

The lack of knowledge and understanding from the community of adoptive parents also influences their willingness to open up about having an adopted child. A lack of support for adoptive parents, including education about parenting practices, is prevalent in Mozambique. All participants explained that they investigated how to parent their adopted children, as they could not find relevant literature or assistance from the social welfare system.

Participant 1 explained:

There isn't an established parenting style in this country for adopted parents. Even speaking for myself, everything I have learned about parenting an adopted child, I have had to research on my own. The literature is mostly from the US, some literature from South Africa but mostly outside of the continent. There isn't a conversation, a dialogue, there is no narrative about adoption in Africa.



The lack of support is also within the family, as explained by Participant 3:

Even my own family, I have heard, my own family not understanding why I adopted. I have had to sit with my family and be serious and harsh on the decision. If I have to choose you part of my family and my son, I will choose my child, always, always.

All the parents reported that they parented their adopted child in the same manner as their biological children.

Participant 2 explained this further:

I have three biological children, but I always answer that I have 4. In terms of treatment, I would say they have the same status as the other siblings. in the house, especially after all these years. It doesn't matter, at least, I don't feel it.

Participant 1, only has an adopted child reported that she parented her child in the same manner she was parented. This would be the same way she would parent her biological children if she had them.

Okay, the education rules I have given my daughter since I received her is the education I received. I have to impose limits. If necessary, I have to scold the child, but not because it's an adopted child. It is the same education I would give to others who are not adopted if I had them.

The adoptive parents reported an authoritative style for their biological and adopted children. All parents reported being supportive of their adopted child while still maintaining a level of education and teaching of being respectful.

Participant 1 explained her parenting style:

I am more authoritative in the sense that I discuss with my children's rules, discuss with my children's principles, and explain to them why certain principles are important. So, for instance, honesty is important. It would be best if you always told the truth, don't lie. Lying is not nice, and it will get you into trouble. It can save you in the minute, but it will get you into trouble in the future. So certain principles like don't lie, be in integrity, be organized, and find order in your life.

Participant 3 explained that although she is the rule setter at home:

Okay, my parenting style is, I wouldn't say authoritarian. Still, I am more of the one that sets the rules at home, different from my husband, who is the one that is always kidding and playing with them." She also sees the value of play. Not to say I don't play with them. I do. But I want them to get this part of education.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided the study results, which explored the perception of adoptive parents' parenting styles on their children's well-being. This study addressed the gap in the literature by exploring adoptive parents' perceptions of the effects of their parenting styles on the adopted children's likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior. The study's goal was to have a perception of Mozambican adoptive parents. To address this gap in the literature, semistructured interviews were conducted with four participants.

This research revealed several key commonalities in the lived experiences of adoptive parents, specifically their perspectives and observations regarding parenting styles. Through the analysis of the transcription and the coding process, I identified four

themes: 1) parenting style is the same between biological and adopted children, 2) parenting style influences, 3) Baumrind's styles, and 4) feelings of lack of support.

In Chapter 5, I will present my interpretation of the participants' lived experiences, validate the findings, and expand the literature and understanding of adoptive parents' parenting styles and their perceptions of their influence on the children's possible future engagement in criminal activities. I will also discuss the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, and positive implications for social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this qualitative study, I aimed to identify which parenting style Mozambican adoptive parents perceive as the best to prevent their adopted child from engaging in antisocial behaviors. Based on the interviews with adoptive parents, aspects of their own parenting experiences and desire for the adopted children's well-being influenced the parenting style employed. This current study is relevant in increasing research on the parenting styles of Mozambican adoptive parents.

Chapter 5 consists of themes and findings from the phenomenological interviews that explored the four participants' lived experiences. An interpretive phenomenological approach was used to obtain, study, and analyze the responses of the participants and thus allowed me to interpret the answers and develop themes. Chapter 5 consists of the following sections: (a) introduction, (b) interpretations of findings, (c) limitations of the study, (d) recommendations, (e) implications, and (f) conclusion of the study.

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of adoptive parents regarding how their parenting practices influence their adopted children engaging in criminal behaviors in the future. The gap in the research that the study addresses is the lack of research available in Mozambique regarding the parenting practices of adoptive parents. The conclusions drawn in this study are the result of analysis of data collected through semistructured interviews with four adoptive parents of Mozambican children regarding parenting practices concerning their adopted children.

The lack of evidence regarding the parenting practices of adopted children in Africa is confirmed in this study, as it was found through the literature review there is an

overall lack of knowledge regarding parenting practices in Africa (Taliep et al., 2018). The semistructured interviews conducted in this study confirmed that participants had no information regarding parenting practices in Mozambique. Providing a safe and emotionally stable environment for adopted children is essential to allow them to overcome the traumatic experiences they have already faced after having been placed for adoption (Anthony et al., 2019). Roth et al. (2019) found that children who are supported and allowed to develop autonomously in a caring environment are capable of emotion regulation and positive development. This is paramount for adopted children, as they may not have had this support mechanism in their formative years.

A phenomenological research design allowed me to gather data through semistructured interviews with participants and learn about their actual experiences with their adopted children when implementing their parenting practices. The open-ended questions allowed me to obtain rich and in-depth responses, resulting in sufficient data about the parenting practices of Mozambican adoptive parents. I conducted two individual semistructured interviews with participants through Zoom and two over Microsoft Teams. The key findings revealed that (a) parenting style is the same between biological and adopted children, as the adoptive parents do not see a difference between the children; (b) parenting style is influenced by own parenting received in childhood, whether negative or positive; (c) authoritative parenting style is prevalent among the participants; and (d) the majority of the participants felt a lack of support from the social welfare system and a lack of knowledge regarding adoption among the community.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The study's findings are consistent with the literature review results provided in Chapter 2. The study results confirm the evidence found in Chapter 2 regarding a lack of knowledge in Mozambique about adoption. Taliep et al. (2018) and Sahithya et al. (2019) found that most of the literature available is from outside of Africa and most commonly from Western countries. The importance of positive parenting practices and the need for further evidence, especially within the African context, are validated in the current research. Parenting practices need to be contextually based due to divergent cultural traditions; thus, evidence from the Western context does not apply to the African context. The adoptive parents interviewed confirmed that they had no access to local adoption information or parenting practices.

SDT as the chosen framework for this research is adequate, as study results have shown that the positive socialization adopted children receive from adoptive parents can lead them to display positive behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2017). BPNT (Ryan & Deci, 2017) also supports the evidence found in the study regarding the provision of a positive context for the development of positive well-being. The participants who found that their children displayed certain antisocial behaviors agreed that these were stopped when they positively explained the future effects of negative behaviors to the children. All participants reported that their adopted children were developing well and were emotionally stable.

The participants reported that the parenting practices for their adopted children were the same as they provide to their biological children and were influenced by their

own childhood parenting experiences. The participants aimed to ensure that their adopted child had positive well-being and thus employed an authoritative parenting style (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017). The authoritative parenting style described by the participants included the following factors: loving, being present for the child when they needed the parent, providing structure to the child, explaining the correct behaviors that should be displayed within specific contexts, etc. Moran et al. (2018) and van der Kaap-Deeder et al. (2017) validated the effects of positive parenting in preventing antisocial behaviors, even among adopted children. The adoptive parents who reported that their children initially displayed negative behaviors, including not wanting to be within the adoptive family, informed that they later adapted through the adoptive parents' continuous display of affection and reassurance.

The participants also reported that the parenting they received as children influences their parenting styles (O'Neal et al., 2016). One participant stated that because she does not perceive the parenting she received as truly supportive, she actively attempts to provide a more positive experience for her children (Hadfield et al., 2017). Another participant explained that she parents her child in the same manner she was parented; she believes the structure and establishment of rules associated with displaying love and affection works best (Zinn, 2017). The participants' experiences support the evidence in the literature regarding the influence of childhood experiences on the development of parenting styles.

Parents who employ an authoritative parenting style will do so regardless of whether a child is biological or adopted (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017). The adoptive parents

reported that they parent their adopted children in the same way they parent their biological children. Consistent parenting also assists in the adopted child feeling like an integral part of the family. The participants stated that their adopted children are well adjusted and do not display antisocial behavior, which aligns with the prosocial behaviors of the children of authoritative parents (Llorca et al., 2018).

The prosocial behaviors provided to children at a young age are carried over into adulthood and assist in preventing antisocial behaviors (Doctoroff & Arnold, 2017). I collected no evidence regarding substance abuse, as none of the participants mentioned it as a problem. Participants reported that substance abuse was a preoccupation and one of the reasons they aim to provide a stable, positive environment for their adopted children.

### **Theme 1: Parenting Style Is the Same Between Biological and Adopted Children**

All the participants unanimously stated that they use the same parenting styles for their adopted and biological children. The parents do not perceive the adopted child as separate from the biological children and thus use the same parenting style. The participants reported that all children had the same rights and duties within the home. Therefore, if a child misbehaves, whether adopted or biological, they are reprimanded in the same manner. The same parenting style ensures the adopted child develops a stronger positive relationship with the parents and the family (Opiola & Bratton, 2018).

Adoptive parents believe that displaying warmth and guidance to biological and adopted children ensures they feel equal (Wuyts et al., 2018). Similar treatment between biological and adopted children results in the adopted child not building any resentment toward the biological child or the adoptive parents (Martinez-Escudero et al., 2020). A



feeling of belonging decreases a child's likelihood of engaging in antisocial behavior (Opiola & Bratton, 2018; Wuyts et al., 2018).

Two of the adoptive parents reported antisocial behavior. They both said that they calmly explained to the children why their behaviors were wrong and the consequences of their behaviors. The children understood the parents' position and promised not to repeat the behaviors. Opiola and Bratton (2018) validated the assumption that adopted children can overcome behavioral problems by having a positive relationship with their adoptive parents.

## **Theme 2: Parenting Style Influences**

The parents expressed that their childhood experiences influenced their parenting styles. The influence may have been either negative or positive, but it nonetheless influenced the development of the parenting style. For example, one parent reported that because she believed that the parenting she received as a child was inadequate, she made an effort to develop a more supportive parenting style. The participant aimed to ensure that her children would feel loved and heard; thus, she always sought to explain the reasoning behind the rules in the household.

Another participant reported that she parented her child following the same rules she had as a child. The participant believed that the mixture of love and discipline she received was adequate; thus, she based her parenting style on the same methodology. In their study, O'Neal et al. (2016) confirmed that a parent's early childhood experience directly influences parenting styles. Sahithya et al. (2019) also confirmed that culture and

context influence child rearing or parenting practices due to how culture shapes parents growing up.

### **Theme 3: Baumrind's Styles**

All parents agreed that a combination of positive parenting and compassion with order and discipline (authoritative parenting style) was beneficial in ensuring their children's well-being. Through his study, Cau (2018) validated that even children in high-risk environments, such as slums in Mozambique, can develop positively if their parents support them at home. One parent reported that the adopted child initially did not obey the rules of the house until they understood that the rules were there for their benefit.

The emotion regulation process can be positively encouraged when parents can allow their children to be autonomous while being supportive (Padaná & Krulichová, 2018). This concept is described by Roth et al. (2019) as integrative emotion regulation. Participant 1 expressed concern about her adopted child being unable to control his adverse reactions when he did not get what he wanted. The participant employed supportive and positive responses, allowing the child to understand his wrong behaviors and adjust accordingly.

All participants were unanimous that they wanted to ensure the best development for their adopted child. To ensure this positive development, they ensured that they were clear with the child regarding appropriate social norms through dialogue and explaining why they asked the child to behave or carry out specific household tasks. The authoritative parenting style was taken up by certain parents without their knowledge of

the label of the parenting style but through their desire to provide the most supportive parenting style. Martinez-Escudero et al. (2020) validated that an authoritative parenting style is related to better psychosocial adjustment.

#### **Theme 4: Feelings of Lack of Support**

Two parents clearly stated that they felt a significant lack of support from the social welfare system and the community. The lack of support resulted in the parents' self-research of appropriate parenting practices and the development of trial-by-error methodologies with their children. The other two parents reported a lack of knowledge regarding parenting styles within Mozambique but did not provide information specific to adoptive parenting practices. The adoption process is usually quite long, as there is a need to ascertain the parent's adequacy to the child. Not having the necessary support from social welfare may result in adoptive parents becoming stressed, which may result in them not being as attentive to their children as needed (Harris-Waller et al., 2018). The adoption process is also strenuous for the child as they become accustomed to the new family. The adopted child not receiving the necessary attention from the adoptive parents may result in them developing resentful feelings.

Harris-Waller et al. (2018) reinforced the importance of the social service system in assisting adoptive parents in the initial stages of adoption. Parents well prepared for the incoming adopted child have higher parental satisfaction and have reported improved parent-child relationships (Drozd et al., 2018). An improvement in the parent-child relationship is correlated with the positive well-being of the child, as they feel able to speak with their parents about any social issues (Melero & Sanchez-Sandoval, 2017).

Children who feel secure reaching out to their parents are less likely to engage in antisocial behaviors.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A review of the current literature indicated a lack of evidence regarding parenting styles in Mozambique. There was an overall shortage of evidence regarding the parenting styles of adoptive parents, even less so regarding adoption practices and parenting styles in Africa. I conducted an extensive literature review within the Walden Online Library and Google Scholar for recent literature (in the last 2 years) on the research topic and found none. A possible reason for the lack of research is the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have limited the ability of researchers to contact participants, specifically in Southern Africa.

The interviews were carried out based on the predetermined research question intended to gain more insight into parenting styles from the participants. Additional probing questions were posed to clarify ambiguous responses and to receive additional information when necessary. One limitation of the study was the small sample size. Only four participants volunteered to participate in the study; only one was male. I placed invitational calls on social media sites and received replies from adoptive parents who were unwilling to participate. As explained by some research participants, the unwillingness to participate could be aligned with a lack of willingness to discuss adoption. The sensitive nature of the research topic within the context of Mozambique limited the range of participants.

The lack of volunteers for the present research also reflects the perceptions of the interviewed adoptive parents regarding a lack of willingness from the community to discuss adoption openly. The phenomena are represented by the perceptions of the individuals who participated in the study but may not represent the general population of individuals who adopt children in Mozambique. All participants were from middle-income societal levels; thus, the study is not representative of adoptive parents from other levels of society. All participants were residing in Mozambique, which limits the range of Mozambicans who have adopted children in Mozambique but have moved abroad. The study focused on adoptive parents who have adopted legally, thus limiting those who have not formalized the adoption process. The adopted children were from different age ranges, from 3 to 19 years old, which limited the observance of the children having opportunities to display anti-social behaviors.

To ensure the study's trustworthiness, I used a reliable recording platform for the interviews, which allowed me to record the interviews and, consequently, personally transcribe the interviews and become more familiar with the information provided. Manual transcription was possible due to the limited number of participants. I followed up with the participants for member checking to ensure that my representation of their responses was accurate. The representations and conclusions drawn from the study are thus precise for this specific target group. Researcher bias was avoided by having committee members and the IRB review all interview questions before the start of data collection. I also avoided research bias by carrying out member checking before finalizing the compilation of the research results.

## **Recommendations**

Adoption is a practice that occurs all over the world. Usually, the more developed the country, the more instances of adoption there will be. Western societies, for example, are more accustomed to adoption practices, having already developed concrete international adoption legal frameworks and standards for ensuring that the child is well taken care of (Dalia et al., 2021). Social services in Western societies provide follow-up to adopted children's households and the necessary support from adoptive parents (Dalia et., 2021).

The interviews conducted for this research indicated that adequate follow-up of adoptive families is not the case in Mozambique, as even those adoptions occurring within the country are not followed up by social welfare. It is recommended that future research focuses on the perception of social welfare regarding their limitations in providing adequate support to adoptive families. I did not take an in-depth look at the legal framework of Mozambique regarding adoption. Thus, future research could address this issue. It is also recommended that the government of Mozambique liaises with the Portuguese government for exchanges regarding adoption practices, considering that Portugal influences most of the policies in Mozambique.

Mozambique still has some remnants of regulations and policies from the colonialization period of the Portuguese. Adoption regulations are not a component of these, as, during that time of colonization, even the Portuguese were not well versed in adoption. Portugal has now come far, and adoption has been described in its 1586 line of the Civil Code: "bond that, like natural affiliation, but regardless of blood ties, it is

legally established between two people” (de Lima & Varela, 1995). This excerpt from the Portuguese Civil Code embodies the responses of the participants in this research regarding the bond they felt with their adopted children.

Recommendations for future research include finding a larger sample to participate in the study such that more data can be available for analysis. None of the participants were from the northern region of Mozambique. It is recommended that future research looks for these due to the different cultural practices that can influence parenting practices. More research is needed with adoptive parents of children already in adulthood and no longer living with parents to determine if the parenting style employed is carried on into adulthood.

The participants described a lack of support and guidance from social services during and after the adoption process. This lack of support became evident to the adoptive parents when the adopted children displayed behaviors that the parents did not understand and believed could have a hereditary influence. The adoptive parents who experienced this reported feeling helpless, as they had no knowledge of what to do and had to investigate by themselves, with no support mechanism available from social services.

I recommend that future research also interviews social workers to gain their perspectives on the limitations of assisting adoptive parents. Social welfare professionals must be fully equipped to support adoptive parents and ensure the adopted child’s well-being during adoption (Patterson et al., 2018). Rolock et al. (2019) found that vulnerable children, adopted children, require a skillful parent and an emotionally positive

environment to thrive (Courtney et al., 2019). Social service professionals ensure this positive environment for children (Panlilio et al., 2019 and Waid & Alewine, 2018).

Sahithya et al. (2019) and Taliep et al. (2018) found a lack of literature regarding parenting practices in Africa. From the study results, it can be concluded that the lack of literature is extended to Mozambique due to the lack of information available to the participants on parenting practices. The lack of information available also correlates to the lack of knowledge provided to the participants by social welfare services. The low level of literature available in Mozambique could be associated with the public's low acceptance/knowledge level regarding child adoption.

### **Implications**

Several implications have emerged from this study. First, as reported by the participants, adoption is not commonly discussed in the Mozambican culture. Least of all, it is a discussion concerning which parenting practices would be most suited for adopted children. Accepting adoption as a regular practice to ensure the provision of a family to a child is still uncommon in Mozambican society. The participants reported that even when adults could not have biological children, they would not contemplate adopting one.

Second, the participants reported wanting the best for their adopted child in the same manner as they wished for their biological child (even the one participant who only had the adopted child reported that she would treat them all the same). The parenting style employed by the adoptive parents, even if not named, was authoritative. This desire to want what is best for the adopted child could imply that if more information on adoption was available, more adults would be willing to adopt a child.



Third, I did not identify any support mechanisms available to adoptive parents, and the participants reported none. Trindade et al. (2017) found that most incarcerated children in Mozambique were orphaned and lived with extended families. The number of orphaned youths in Mozambique is problematic, as most children placed for adoption are orphaned. This could be because the adoptive parents did not have the tools to adequately parent the adopted children.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

The participants reported an overall lack of evidence available on parenting practices in Mozambique and none regarding parenting specific to adopted children. An increased knowledge base will allow individuals that wish to adopt to become better informed beforehand and after the adoption process on appropriate parenting practices. Evidence shows that the authoritative parenting style provides adequate grounds for an adopted child's positive well-being (Ayala-Nunes et al., 2017; Chang et al., 2018). The increased number of parents utilizing an authoritative parenting style leads to an increased number of children growing up in supportive households and a decrease in children who do not feel loved and, consequently, engage in antisocial behavior. This positive social change is applicable not only to the parent but also to the adopted children, by ensuring a more positive upbringing and well-being.

The positive social change implications for this study include raising awareness of the adoption of Mozambican children and the experiences of adoptive parents' parenting practices. The awareness-raising component includes informing the public of the importance of adopting to provide a better life for children in orphanages. The positive

social change is on the community being more accepting of adoptive families and being able to provide them with the necessary support within the community.

The adoptive parents interviewed also reported not feeling supported by the social welfare system. The lack of support felt was particularly regarding guidance on possible behaviors to be displayed by the adopted children and how best to address these. The reported lack of support from social services could be due to a lack of capacity. Another positive social change of the current study is to assist social welfare and adoption agencies in developing policies that ensure adequate parental support. Social welfare professionals can become more aware of adoptive parents' difficulties and develop mechanisms to support them (Meakings et al., 2018). Based on the current research, social welfare can develop appropriate sensitization materials for the public on the positive aspects of adoption.

The current literature base is primarily Western, which is more individualistic than the collectivist societal norms of Africa and India (Sahithya et al., 2019). Future researchers could expand on the available literature and identify critical problems with the current delivery of support services within the African context. The increased evidence base through research can influence public policy to improve support from social services for adoptive parents. Improved social policy can correlate to adequate parental support, protecting youth from depression and engagement in antisocial activities (Meakings et al., 2018 and Simpson et al., 2018). The positive social change aspect is on the support provided to parents from social services.

### **Methodological Implications**

The literature on parenting in Mozambique is quite limited, especially regarding adopted children. The participants provided rich accounts of their parenting practices and the influence they aimed to have on their adopted children. The methodological implication of this research is that qualitative interviews provide an opportunity to explore the parenting practices of adoptive parents in Mozambique. The evidence gathered through this study will provide a methodological basis for future research. The current research was limited to adoptive parents, and future research should consider adopted children as a target group. The sample for the present research was also limited to four participants; thus, future research could expand on this sample and target participants from more diverse regions of Mozambique.

### **Theoretical Implications**

SDT proposes that the socialization process of individuals is an influencer in their likelihood of engaging in antisocial behaviors. The information passed on by parents as the primary social influencer of the child is a predominant influencer in this aspect (Ryan & Deci, 2017). If more information and support are made available to adoptive parents, they will be better informed and have a more positive influence on their children (Taliep et al., 2018). The theoretical implication of this study is that the participants reported that they believed they needed to be supportive and provide balanced discipline to ensure positive well-being in their adopted children. Understanding how to best support adoptive parents to ensure adequate parenting for their children will lessen the likelihood of adopted children engaging in antisocial behaviors. Understanding the perceptions of

adoptive parents' parenting practices can contribute to services designed to support them and improve the outcomes for adopted children.

### **Conclusion**

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the perceptions of adoptive parents regarding how their parenting practice influences their adopted child possibly engaging in criminal behavior in the future. The study focused on the perceptions of the adoptive parents and not of the children. The parents may have a limited perception of the well-being of children. The participants also reported that they had developed parenting styles based on their own childhood experiences. The adopted children were parented based on events that occurred before they were born. The adoptive parents reported no support from social services or from the orphanages from which they had adopted their children. The lack of support provided to the parents resulted in the parents having to investigate how to parent an adopted child or just base their parenting on the parenting they received as a child.

The interviews reflected the adoptive parents' perceptions of several essential points. First, adoptive parents do not have differing parenting styles for adopted and biological children. The adoptive parents reported that they desired their children's general well-being. The adoptive parents had the same desire for the well-being of both the biological and adopted children. Second, the prevalent parenting style is authoritative. The authoritative parenting style is characterized by support, love, and guidance toward appropriate societal norms. The adoptive parents reported that they ensured a middle ground between providing love and educating their children on appropriate societal

norms. Third, the participants reported a lack of support from social services and the community. All adoptive parents reported that they did not receive any follow-up support from social services upon the finalization of the adoption process.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), one fundamental right for children is to grow up in a family. This alone would suffice to say that governments and societies would want to ensure that children who do not have a family would be provided with one in a supportive manner. From the interviews, this is not the case from the participants' points of view. The participants unanimously reported that they wanted the best for their adopted child, who, for them, was the same as their biological children.

Mozambique needs to build its evidence base to better support adoptive parents. The cumulative effects of inadequate parenting practices are problematic for all children and worst still for a child who has experienced trauma (being placed for adoption). More research must be conducted to develop appropriate policies to support adoptive parents and ensure a better future for adopted children in Mozambique. The adoptive parents are doing their part in loving their adopted child in the same way that they love their biological children. They need to be supported and provided with tools to reinforce their parenting practices.

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## Appendix A: Research and Interview Questions

Research Question: Which parenting style do adoptive parents feel is best to ensure their adopted child does not enter the justice system?

### Interview questions:

- Describe the parenting style you employ with your adopted child(ren).
- How would you characterize (describe) your child's well-being?
- Tell me about a time your child got in trouble. How did you handle it? What did you do?
- How do you believe your parenting style influences your child's well-being?