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Exploring Challenges of Adolescent Females in Child-headed Households in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The adolescent females who take the responsibility of being foster-parents while young need emotional support and care. Owing to multiple factors such as the death of parents, adjustment in parents' roles, inadequate social support and exposure to sexual and emotional abuse, majority of this group tend to face a bleak future. By employing the systematic review as the research methodology, the researchers explored previous research from doctoral dissertations, internet journals and explored the published research articles. This research paper is aimed at providing a broad picture of challenges of adolescent females in child-headed households in South Africa. Drawing from social exchange theory, alcohol myopic theory, integrated stress and coping process model and Children's Acts, as conceptual framework which underpinned this study, research found that adolescent females in child-headed households are susceptible to early pregnancy, alcohol abuse, school dropout, prostitution and psychological problems as compared to their counterparts who live with authoritative significant others (example, extended family, step-parents, biological parents). Based on these findings, the study recommends a collaborative approach as there is no single model of best practice to effectively and appropriately address the needs of child-headed families.