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**COPING WITH POVERTY: A STUDY OF STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY SINGLE
MOTHERS IN CHIREZI TOWN, ZIMBABWE.**

BY

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DECLARATIONS

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work. It is being submitted in fulfillment for the requirements of the degree of Master of Social Work at the University of Fort Hare, Alice. It has not been submitted anywhere else before, for any degree purposes or examination in any other university.

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Dedications

I dedicate this research project to:

- My dad and sister Kesani and Weekly Svodai Mafa respectively. May their souls rest in perfect peace.
- My grandparents (Samson Baloyi, Petina Baloyi), my auntie Dr Charity Lindile Dhliwayo and the entire family.
- All the single mothers around the world for your resilience, determination and courage to defy the odds.

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to assess the effectiveness of the coping strategies that are employed by single mothers in alleviating and averting poverty in Chiredzi Town, Zimbabwe. The researcher wanted to investigate whether the survival strategies implemented in towns of developing countries are able to rescue single mothers from the grasps of poverty.

A qualitative inquiry was utilized in this research due to its ability to delve beneath what the physical eye can see. Also, purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method was used for both in-depth interviews and the focus group since the researcher optimized two methods of data collection. Triangulation in this research project assisted to increase the trustworthiness of the findings, thereby substantiating the results thereof. An interview guide was used as a data collection tool while responses were captured with an audio recorder.

The research disinterred that solo motherhood is an overwhelming predicament as it is associated with social condemnation, poverty and hopelessness. It has been found that single mothers employ different mechanisms as they attempt to curb the manifestations of poverty. However, despite all their individual efforts and assistance from families and charity organizations, the majority of matrifocal families are still trapped in the relative poverty circle even though some have managed to escape absolute poverty. Factors such as impoverished families, lack of marketable skills and Zimbabwe's unstable economic base have been identified as hindering factors.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| AMTO | Assistance medical Treatment Orders |
| BEAM | Basic Education Assistance Module |
| FACT | Family Aid Care Trust |
| FBOs | Faith Based Organizations |
| GMRDC | Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre |
| GNU | Government of National Unity |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| LEDCs | Less Economically Developed Countries |
| MCCW | Montgomery County Commission for Women |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MRCH | Mathew Rusike Children's Home |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| OCVs | Orphaned and Vulnerable Children |
| RDP | Reconstruction Development Programme |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programmes |
| ZANU-PF | Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front |
| ZBC | Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and Background

The introduction and background chapter seeks to give more related information on the topic of the current study. This includes the background information of the study, the problem statement, the aim and objectives, the significance of the study and finally the overall structure of the research project. A preview of literature review and research methodology is also given.

Modernization and industrialization have enormously influenced the alteration of the composition and the structure of the traditional family. Kange'the and Mafa (2014) are of the view that the African culture has been eroded as westernization and globalization neutralize different social phenomena. The traditional family which emphasized on extended families and communal socialization has globally been expatriated leaving a vacant gap for the nuclear family. As a result, a tremendous transition from two-parent families to one-parent families has universally made its appearance, inevitably leading to the surfacing of single motherhood (Landau & Griffiths, 2007). Ypeij and Ypeij (2009) call this a matrifocal family. Africa is not an exception in this regard as Dlamini (2006: 68) reveals the following unsettling figures of children staying with their mothers: South Africa (34.4%), Namibia (27.3%) and Zimbabwe (26.3%). These figures then help to shed more light on the prevalence of single motherhood in Southern Africa as well as Zimbabwe, a nation central to this case study.

However, it is the irrefutable connection between women and poverty, as identified by researchers that is pivotal to the present research (Gilbert, 2004; The World Bank, 2003; Moyo and Kawewe, 2009). For single mothers, poverty becomes even more daunting as children depend on these women for food security and daily economic, social and emotional needs. One can only envision the extent of this predicament as child poverty and feminization of poverty fuse and face a single mother living in an impoverished, politically and economically unstable nation such as Zimbabwe (Alao, 2012). These women are then forced to live in a float or sink dilemma and the remedies they adopt to try to keep afloat can only be left to one's imagination. Obviously, just like in the jungle, these lone mothers employ different mechanisms to ensure that ends meet, not only for their sake, but for their children's as well.

Given the empirically proven prevalence of poverty among single mothers and their children, this study then seeks to find out the effectiveness of the survival strategies being implemented to alleviate and avert poverty in Chiredzi Town, Zimbabwe. Also, the already stated dual problems of political upheaval and the rapid shrinking of Zimbabwe's economy have posed grievous challenges on its citizens especially women and children (Sachikonye, 2011). Although a few people are exploring the situation to their advantage, absolute poverty, where people live from hand to mouth, is a characteristic of many households headed by single mothers. This state of impoverishment is slowly but surely stealing away children's capabilities thereby closing doors of opportunities for this future generation (Moyo & Kawewe, 2009). It is this inability to meet the basic needs which is forcing single mothers to initiate different survival mechanisms in an attempt to surmount these overwhelming circumstances.

Depending on the lenses scrutinizing these strategies, one may label some as 'decent' while others may be seen as socially 'unacceptable' or rather 'improper'.

The effectiveness of these survival strategies therefore depends on the ability and extent to which poverty is being eradicated by such mechanisms. Imperative bodies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) have also armed themselves with bullets that are aimed at bringing poverty to its knees (Gebre-Egziabher, 2010). Whenever such bodies are in vigorous pursuit of an agenda, it only shows the gravity and emergency of such a phenomenon at hand. This is mostly supported by the initiation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), an instigation that seeks to diminish poverty by 2015 (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013; Gebre-Egziabher, 2010). Despite the various programmes being put to trim down the effects of poverty globally, factors such as HIV and AIDS experiences, high divorce rates, teenage pregnancies, peer pressure, insufficient education on the use of contraceptives, choice single motherhood - among other factors - are countering these efforts (Bumpass, 2010).

Although feminization of poverty and its eradication claimed the spot-light years ago, it seems as if this phenomenon is a hard nut to crack. This then leaves a lot of questions unanswered. For instance, is it that the strategies being implemented are irrelevant or that there is little or no monitoring and evaluation efforts to identify gaps and take remedial action? The present research is concerned with gap-finding and assessing the effectiveness of the already implemented survival strategies. In other words, the present study is an extension to the work of other researchers who have exhumed the

circumstances and causal factors to lone motherhood (Jensen, 2009; Moyo & Kawewe, 2009; Kwok-bun, 2013; Landau & Griffiths, 2007).

The despicable stories and observations made by the researcher of the present study, pertaining to the callous circumstances surrounding single motherhood while attached at Mathew Rusike Children's Home (MRCH) have led to the undertaking of this research. Of all the people who came to the organization for assistance, single mothers were common and their cases revolved around raising their children and meeting their basic needs such as school fees, clothing and food security. Researchers such Jensen (2009), have also uncovered cases of many children whose future is doomed because their mothers could not afford to take care of their basic needs. The researcher also observed that the emphasis on the nuclear family has stripped many children and single mothers off the extended family support, thereby exposing them to vulnerability and exploitation of many kinds.

1.2 Preliminary Literature Review

This part comprises an overview of poverty, single motherhood and the effectiveness of survival strategies implemented by single mothers. A comprehensive discussion of literature will be covered in chapter two.

1.2.1 An Overview of Poverty

So many theories and definitions have been put forward in trying to understand poverty. The intricacy of poverty is that it does not respect gender, age, color or nationality (Blakemore & Griggs, 2007). Hence, no one is immune to poverty on the basis of any

outward characteristics. However, there are terms that help to define its manifestations among different groups for example urban poverty, child poverty and the feminization of poverty, which are central to this research. Jensen (2009) scrutinizes poverty in relation to the degree of lack, giving birth to “absolute” and “relative” poverty.

1.2.2 Understanding Single Motherhood

So far, no common ground has been found as to how to define the controversial phenomenon of matrifocality. Therefore, several adjectives such as ‘solo mothers’, ‘lone mothers’, ‘sole mothers’ have been used interchangeably to refer to women who raise children without a male partner (Ypeij & Ypeij, 2009). A more generalized definition of single mother family is where a woman who has at least one dependent child is living alone without a partner. The common factor in all the definitions advocated for is the nonexistence of a father figure or husband and the presence of children.

1.2.3 Factors Leading to Single Motherhood

Among others, Keswet and Dapas (2010) cite the following contributing factors to single motherhood: rape and sexual harassment; divorce or separation; teenage pregnancy; desertion by one parent; death. Also, a high tolerance in domestic violence as a gender role has caused separation and divorce to spring up (The World Bank, 2003; Sachikonye, 2011). Apart from that, in Zimbabwe, migration which occurs due to unequal distribution of resources and opportunities between the source and the destination places has also led to increased single motherhood (Yeboah, 2008). Interestingly, Morrissette (2008) identifies what she calls ‘choice motherhood’. She

explains: "...some women have such a strong desire for motherhood that they wonder even in their twenties why they have to wait for a husband." This is another cause of single motherhood as women are becoming more independent even though single motherhood is stigmatized in religious and cultural families where unmarried daughters may be expelled for having a child out of wedlock (The World Bank, 2003).

1.2.4 Challenges Faced by Single Mothers and their Children

Despite the factors leading to single motherhood, the psycho-social, economic and emotional needs of the children remains the burden of the mother (Morrissette, 2008). There are some single mothers who are coping just fine, but others struggle to carry the weight alone especially in molding their children's behavior. According to The Montgomery County Commission for Women (MCCW) (2008-2009), lone mothers of low income find themselves and their children struggling against formidable obstacles. Frank (2012a) is of the view that 'nightmare fear' makes the responsibility even more unbearable. These circumstances can be aggravated by the inability of single mothers to access loans, social stereotyping and social labeling. Consequently, it goes without saying that the experiences are daunting in such a capitalistic and patriarchal society.

1.2.5 Strategies Employed in Poverty Alleviation

Feminization of poverty as an inclination in developing countries has proved to be a horrendous challenge in governments and the society as a whole. Keswet and Dapas (2010) are of the view that the most traumatized by uneven distribution of resources are the lone mothers and their children. In an attempt to surmount the pressure, they form

women groups for emotional, social and economic support. According to Cavendish (2004), lone mothers have also developed an entrepreneurial mind where they buy and sell to earn a living, given that the unemployment rate in Zimbabwe is over 80% (Sachikonye, 2011). Women have resorted to self-employment as a survival strategy to trounce the excruciating challenges they face. Moreover, Makina and Kanyenze (2010) disinter that some stranded single mothers resort to grey activities such as prostitution and crime. This can be latent or conventional prostitution depending on the person and the circumstances thereof. A common trend in Zimbabwe, according to Sachikonye (2011:175), is that of “small houses” observed as “get-rich-quick” methods. This is where a woman is having a latent relationship with a rich and married man. Seeking external help from families, and other philanthropic organizations may also assist in making up for the deficiencies.

1.3 Research Methodology

This can be viewed as a plan which clearly stipulates how the data is to be collected, how respondents will be chosen and even the process of data analysis. Klenke (2005) is of the view that careful consideration must be taken in choosing an approach which is in line with the objectives and purpose of the research. A thorough discussion of research methodology is presented in chapter three.

1.3.1 Research Approach

In order to make well informed conclusions on the effectiveness of the survival strategies employed by single mothers, there is a dire need to extract detailed

information from the respondents that encompass personal values. A qualitative approach was used as it goes beyond numbers but holistically burrows into the experiences of single mother's lives, falls in with the requirements of this research. "Qualitative research is a method of naturalistic enquiry which is usually less obtrusive than quantitative investigations" (Bowling, 2009: 380).

1.3.2 Methods of Data Collection

The researcher utilized face to face in-depth interviews as they allow clarity and follow-up questions. "Unstructured interviews aim to delve deep beneath the surface of superficial responses to obtain true meanings that interviewees assign to their experiences and the complexities of their attitudes and behaviour" (Klenke, 2005: 125). A focus group consisting of key informants from the Social Welfare, NGOs and FBOs is another method of data collection that was adopted to substantiate the findings.

1.3.3 Data Collection Instrument

In order to aid the flow and direction of the interviews, a research guide with questions was preferred. An audio recorder was used to capture the responses from the respondents and key informants allowing replay which enables free-flow as well as familiarization with the unedited responses (Creswell, 2003). Audio recording also permits data to be captured in its original and unscripted form, which provides rich information like sighing, hesitation and emotions.

1.3.4 Research Domain

Creswell (2003) defines a research domain as a place or site where accessible individuals willing to give distinct information about a phenomenon being studied are found. Chiredzi town, in Zimbabwe is the domain of this research. It is situated in the South-East part of the country in Masvingo province, 245 km from the Zimbabwe and South Africa's Beitbridge boarder post.

1.3.5 Population

A population in research is any set of people from which a sample is selected and to which the study's results will generalize (Bowling, 2009). In this study, the population was the single mothers residing in Chiredzi. Representatives from the Social Welfare (government), Non Governmental Organizations(NGOs) and Faith Based Organization (FBOs) were also part of the population.

1.3.6 Sample

A sample is known as a representative subset of the research population. "Sampling in qualitative research serves to tap into the breadth of variation within a population rather than to focus on the 'average' or 'typical' member of that population" (Babbie, 2012: 230). A sample of 15 single mothers were used (according to the principle of saturation) in order to acquire detailed information for making conclusions. In order to substantiate this research, 3 key informants were selected to form a mini focus group.1 key informant from each of the following stakeholders: the Ministry of Social Welfare, NGOs

and the FBOs were also interviewed as a focus group. Therefore, the overall sample was therefore 18.

1.3.7 Sampling Method

There are different types of non-probability sampling. However, the researcher preferred the purposive technique to select the sample as it "...selects a desirable group of people" (McBurney & White, 2009: 258). This method entirely depends on the researcher's judgment to select respondents and key informants that will give the relevant and detailed information that addresses the outlined research questions.

1.3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis can be seen as categorizing the data that has been collected in order to draw out meaningful conclusions and interpretations. In the present research, the researcher used thematic analysis and coding "...whereby the data are broken down into their component parts and these parts are given labels" (Bryman, 2012: 13). Data was arranged in themes according to the research questions for thematic interpretations.

1.4 Problem Statement

Even though poverty is a global phenomenon that is attracting the world's attention, it is the palpable prevalence of poverty among women, especially single mothers and their children that has led to the undertaking of this research. In many cases, fathers are physically absent or do not honor their paternal role in the upbringing of their children,

even though children have the right to be cared for by both parents (The World Bank, 2003). This absence inevitably compromises the adequate meeting of the children's basic needs. Lone mothers are then left to carry the burden of fending for the children in order to address their mental, emotional and physical needs (Hein, 2005). This is attributable to the fact that women are biologically the instruments that carry and bring the children to life. Due to the stated fact, their maternal attachment and responsibility to children is special hence they mainly stick around through thick and thin. Circumstances such as high levels of illiteracy among women, high levels of unemployment and social discrimination squeeze energy out of these single mothers, thereby making their efforts almost fruitless. Also, women's educational lifespan is cut short as they drop out of school to care for children. As a result, their chances of being employed in the formal sector where they can earn a better salary necessary to push them out of poverty are choked. With little income, such vital aspects as education, health, food and shelter which are of great importance to children may become inaccessible. Consequently, these children may become school drop-outs leading to high criminal activities such as drug abuse. They may also engage in sexual activities causing teenage pregnancies and possibly leading to single motherhood too. In the long run, their future may be doomed as they may also be trapped in the poverty cycle.

1.5 Aim of Research

The aim of the study is to examine the effectiveness of the survival strategies that are employed by single mothers in averting and alleviating poverty in Chiredzi Town, Zimbabwe.

1.5.1 Specific Objectives

The following are the specific objectives to be addressed:

- To establish the challenges that single mothers face in Chiredzi Town.
- To explore the survival strategies employed by single mothers in Chiredzi Town as well as assessing the effectiveness of such strategies.
- To establish sources and kinds of assistance available to single mothers in Chiredzi Town.

1.5.2 Research Questions

- What are the life challenges faced by single mothers in Chiredzi town?
- How effective are the survival strategies employed by single mothers in Chiredzi in alleviating and averting poverty?
- What sources and types of assistance are available to single mothers to help them fight poverty?

1.6 Theoretical Frameworks

In this research, two theories will be used in an attempt to explain the prevalence of poverty among single mothers and the effectiveness of their coping strategies. These are the structural theory on poverty and the strengths perspective theory. The complementary relationship between the two theories is explicitly outlined in chapter two.

1.6.1 The Structural Theory

The structural theory maintains that structural failure, (for example the collapse of an economy leading to high levels of unemployment) is the cause of poverty, not personal failings. According to the structural theory,

...poverty results from institutional breakdown: economic institutions that fail to provide sufficient jobs and pay, educational institutions that fail to provide adequate education in low-income districts, family institutions that do not provide two parents and governments that do not provide sufficient public support (Mooney, Knox & Schacht, 2011: 95).

The structural theory seeks to explain the prevalence of chronic and transitional poverty among single mothers in Zimbabwe. Evidently, structural failure is seen in the country's present economic and political flux where even the country's indigenous currency has been pulled out from circulation.

1.6.2 The Strengths Perspective

Even though the structural failure may be the lead cause of poverty in Zimbabwe, people still soldier on due to their in-built resilience. The strengths perspective theory recognizes that single mothers have stored capabilities that can empower them to discover positive survival strategies help them to conquer the detrimental effects of poverty, thereby raising their children in a noble manner (Lum, 2011). It also individualizes people appreciating their uniqueness and ability to cope even in overwhelming situations.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study sought to uncover sustainable and practical solutions to feminization of poverty and child poverty rather than just identifying problems. Its findings are crucial as they will assist the government with planning at national, regional and local levels in the restructuring and the implementation of policies that could ameliorate the lives of single mothers. Children are the future generation of any nation, region or community. Therefore, this research intended to investigate the stumbling blocks that are deterring social progress, assisting NGOs and other humanitarian organizations in deciding the form and level of intervention necessary to ensure the social functioning of single mothers and their children. In this way, the identification of latent resources that can be developed and utilized for the sustainable livelihood of single mothers and their children can be made easier. Without such information, the government and/or NGOs may fail to address the real challenges faced by lone mothers thereby wasting resources. Where there is no empowerment and sustainable development, a dependency syndrome and acute poverty are prevalent. The findings will also add value to a block of knowledge to which social theory and urban poverty relate.

1.8 Chapter Outline

This is a break-down of the chapters in their sequence.

Chapter One: Introduction and Background

Chapter one comprises the introduction and background of the research. It also has the problem statement, justification of the study and the specific objectives and questions of

the research. Brief outlines on literature review and methodology are also given as overviews of chapter two and three. The chapter is then wrapped up by a brief plan of the whole study which gets unpacked as the study progresses.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Review of related literature on feminization of poverty and survival strategies of single mothers. The two theoretical frameworks that are central to this study will also be discussed here.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The chapter provides an in-depth of the research methodology, the sampling and data collection methods used in the research as well as the process of data analysis.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings

The findings of the research will be presented in this chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Interpretation and discussion of findings will be carried out under this chapter. General conclusions will be laid out and recommendations for future researchers, single mothers and other stake holders are also given.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The tussle against poverty among women, especially single mothers, has drawn the attention of many governments and other organizations such as the United Nations. It is the severity of the poverty phenomenon that has propelled the United Nations to draft the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be met by 2015. This research is mainly concerned with the MDGs numbers one and three which are aimed at poverty eradication and women empowerment respectively. “Conventional wisdom has it that the environment is just as threatened, if not more threatened, by global affluence as by global poverty” (Hollander, 2003: 237). The Economic Report on Africa (2005) also shows that poverty has been declared a state of emergency in the world especially in Africa. Such information evidently shows the gravity of poverty on a global, national, regional and on communal levels as well.

It is nonetheless the prominent prevalence of poverty among urban single mothers that has influenced the undertaking of this research. This chapter will review literature in relation to: an overview of the poverty phenomenon; definition of single motherhood; the factors leading to single motherhood; challenges underpinning lone motherhood and the strategies they employ to avert and alleviate poverty. It also encompasses the two theoretical frame works that seek to explain poverty among single mothers in Chiredzi

Town, namely the structural theory and the strengths perspective. Finally, a conclusion is drawn, thus putting this chapter in perspective.

2.2 An Overview of Poverty

Poverty is such an intricate subject matter such that its definition and trend has attracted the attention of many researchers and scholars. “Poverty is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon affecting different groups of people in different ways and having different causes” (Blakemore and Griggs, 2007: 99). Hence, the term poverty can best be defined in relation to the sects of people that are affected, for example urban poverty, child poverty and the feminization of poverty.

Other scholars such as Gilbert (2004) and Kwok-bun (2013) define poverty by looking at the degree of lack in comparison with other people. Jensen (2009) in his book differentiates between ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’ poverty. Absolute poverty being the scarcity of such necessary requirements as shelter, running water, clothes and food while relative poverty is the economic status of a family with an overall income which is insufficient to meet its society’s average standard of living (Jensen, 2009).

Malaba (2006) also reveals that poverty can be chronic or transient. Here, the difference lies in the causes and duration of the prevalence of poverty. “Structural poverty is rooted in socio-economic, political and cultural institutions and is experienced over the long term and is often transferred inter-generationally” (Malaba, 2006: 5). This is the kind of poverty that developing countries such as Zimbabwe are facing because their policies do not lead to economic growth and employment necessary to effectively eradicate

poverty. Compensation sought by war veterans from the government, the 'Land Grab policy', the nationalization of mines and the political instability of Zimbabwe have all immensely contributed to chronic poverty (Alao, 2012). "In contrast, transient poverty is due to cyclical or temporary factors and is experienced over shorter periods of time" (Malaba, 2006: 5). Again, it is interesting to note that both types of poverty co-exist and are prevalent in third world countries.

Either way, it is evident that poverty is a chronic, debilitating condition that results from numerous and assorted menacing factors that affect the holistic social functioning of single mothers and their children. A closer analysis on poverty uncovers that poverty goes beyond material things but it is also linked with deprivation of opportunities and capabilities to meet one's needs (Blakemore and Griggs, 2007). Vicente (2005) supports the above point arguing that poverty includes exclusion and discrimination that people experience through the various dimensions in which their lives unfold in the socio-economic, political and cultural, as well as in the subjective and symbolic dimensions. Social, economic and political exclusion and discrimination aggravated by poverty consequently lead to the erosion of a sense of belonging among the poor as their inalienable human rights are compromised.

This inevitably leads to the perpetuation of a vicious cycle of poverty as there is no developmental approach that can cut off this sequence. The fierce poverty cycle is true with children of poor people or households. True so mainly because the stick of poverty is handed from one generation to the other until such a disruption is implemented. Disruption can be done through education which unlocks the potential to a better tomorrow. As this current research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of such

mechanisms employed by sole mothers in dismantling the poverty trend, the following pages will explore the meaning of single motherhood as used in this project.

2.3 Understanding Single Motherhood

To date, no common ground has been found as to how best to define the controversial phenomenon of matrifocality. Hence many adjectives such as 'solo mothers', 'lone mothers', 'sole mothers' have been used to refer to women who raise children without a male partner (Ypeij & Ypeij, 2009). Gordeev (2005: 105) defines single motherhood as "...an unmarried woman aged between 18 and 55 living on her own with her dependent children younger than 18."

Other scholars adopt a more generalized definition to single motherhood. Gonzalez (2005) and Dlamini (2006) agree that a single-mother family is where a woman who has at least one dependent child and is living alone without a partner. Their definitions have no age restriction in relation to the mother or the children. However, the unifying factor in these definitions is the absence of a father or partner and the presence of children in dire need of dual parental care. It is also crucial to outline the difference between single motherhood and a female-headed family as the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, in other texts that is. A female-headed family entails a woman taking the pivotal role of ensuring the social, economic and overall enhancement of the family with the possibility of a male and other older people being present (Dlamini, 2006; Gordeev, 2005; Ypeij & Ypeij, 2009).

Single motherhood in this research is when a divorced, separated, never-married and widowed woman is solely responsible for the well being of her children. This then entails the absence of a male figure as a husband to the woman or a father to the child/children. Now that the wrinkles surrounding single motherhood have been ironed, theoretical frameworks which explain poverty among single motherhood are explained below.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

Theories in research aid to get a better understanding of a phenomenon under study, in this case, the unconcealed prevalence of poverty among single mothers. The structural theory and the strengths perspective have been preferred because of their applicability to Zimbabwe. They also complement each other because the structural theory explains the prevalence of chronic poverty in Zimbabwe while the strengths perspective reveals the secret behind single mothers' survival despite the excruciating circumstances surrounding them and their children.

2.4.1 The Structural Theory

The structural theory is concerned with the organization of a society in relation to the prevalence and the origin of poverty. This is why it is simultaneously called the environment theory. Vicente (2005: 4) in this regard says,

Poverty is not the product of individual processes or particular pathologies or psychologies, but rather a product of relational processes, of complex power relationships that produce, maintain and reproduce it.

This view therefore departs from the individualistic view on poverty as it takes the route towards those factors external to a person. In a nutshell, the structural theory upholds that failure in the organization of the nation's vital structures causes social malfunctioning and poverty is the definite manifestation of such a failure. This theory then looks at the economic, political and social systems which limit people's choices, resources and ultimately their opportunities (Bradshaw, 2005). For a better understanding, Brady (2009) defines a structure as a set of labor market opportunities and demographic vulnerabilities that explain the population's rate of poverty.

This theory is largely applicable to Africa and more specifically to Zimbabwe as a developing country facing economic downsizing and political shakiness. Brady (2009: 146) forwards that, "Structural theory contends that macro level labor market and demographic conditions at risk of poverty and cross-sectional and temporal differences in these structural factors account for the variation in poverty." Hence, Zimbabwe as an agricultural nation which depends heavily on agriculture has experienced such variations in line with the policies implementation and rainfall availability per season. The land-grab policy (where commercial white farmers had their farms forcibly taken by the government) and drought over the past years have contributed profoundly to the crippling of Zimbabwe's economy and other facets of the nation (Alao, 2012; Mooney et al., 2011). Also, the international sanctions have led to the shrinking of the job market as well as the closure of many industries when the economy went on its knees. Rodgers-Dillon (2004) points out that the unavailability of legitimate opportunities therefore compels citizens to resort to illegitimate temporary solutions that may worsen the structure of the nation such as criminal activities, prostitution and corruption.

This then helps to shift the prevalence of poverty from the individuals-be it single mothers or any other citizen - as all aspects of poverty are directly linked to social and economic opportunities (Rodgers-Dillon, 2004). It can then be argued that the policies and structure of Zimbabwe expose single mothers to vulnerability to poverty due to lack of a favorable environment that can allow them to provide for their children. Educationally speaking, despite having the highest literacy rate in the Sub-Saharan Africa of 91.4%, Zimbabwe is among the poorest in the whole world (Shizha and Kariwo, 2011). This is evident that the citizens are victims of the nation's structure and that their wellbeing or fate is not in their hands as the individualistic theories emphasize.

In this regard, Rodgers-Dillon (2004) argues that a person may do everything humanly possible but still be poverty-stricken because of reasons beyond him or her. For example, lack of jobs to those who are willing and able to work. Notably, in Zimbabwe, economical power and politics are directly linked as the poor are segregated and out-skirted in matters that concern political processes and economic decisions (Bradshaw, 2005). As a result, the structural theory then suggests that the only way to escape poverty is by overthrowing the structural theory that exacerbates poverty among its citizens. This can be implemented through reformulating more accommodating policies as well as grassroots participation in issues that concern the general public such as poverty eradication among single mothers.

Unfortunately, the structural theory fails to notice the resilience of human beings especially that of mothers. Despite the unemployment rate of over 80% (Kanchense, 2008), and the politically motivated violence, citizens are surmounting the challenges that come with the faulty structure of Zimbabwe. Simply put, this theory fails to explain

or appreciate the maternal power that enables single mothers to care for their children despite having gone through divorce or the demise of their ex-husbands and other traumatizing events. This gap fortunately is filled by the strengths perspective as outlined below.

2.4.2 The Strengths Perspective

Humans as they are known are not immune to challenges and difficulties. However, the ability to swim or sink may be determined by the attitude of the person faced with a challenge. Also, the approach being adopted by the therapist may significantly influence the outcome of the helping process. Is the therapist obsessed with emphasizing on the drawbacks of the client or is he/she facilitating in the realization of the client's strengths? That having been said, as the name implies, the strengths perspective is centered on the strengths, abilities and gifts of an individual contrary to the weaknesses, limitations and flaws thereof. "The strengths perspective seeks to identify, use, build and reinforce the strengths and abilities people already have" (Zastraw, 2010: 77). In other words, the environment is believed to have all the necessities that humanity needs for survival. It only takes the processes of identification and exploration, developing such resources into usable chattels.

This theory marks a paradigm shift from the pathological approach of social work which labels people as 'sick' and in need of cure or a savior (Saleebey, 2013). The medical approach adopts a superior-inferior relationship where the client assumes a role of a mere recipient at the mercy of an all-knowing doctor who gives out prescriptions. Such an approach in social work disempowers and victimizes clients. Hence forth, the

versatility approach of the strengths perspective relies on the courage as well as the creativity of clients in maximizing available resources. Dwelling on weaknesses can only bring frustration, despair and a sense of hopelessness. In fact, Saleebey (2013) argues that fixation on pathology and victimization is a counter-productive exercise on the part of both the social worker and the client. According to Chui and Wilson (2006), the strengths perspective emerged out of the mental health field from the vast work of researchers and educators at the University of Kansas. As such, its vast difference is making progressive waves in the social work field.

The fact that the strengths perspective puts people's destinies into their own hands have made this theory gain much ground in the social work profession (Norman, 2012). Despite calamity, humanity can actually decide on its fate through exploring each and every system in an attempt to evade entropy (Chapin, 2011). Feelings of inferiority and deficiency are replaced by aspiration and zeal for a better tomorrow. As such, the strengths perspective is built upon a number of principles that shape and uphold its uniqueness and relevance to various social phenomena. Among such principles are that: it believes in people having the ability to solve their problems; it focuses on the strengths rather than the weaknesses of individuals; it upholds self determination; it seeks to empower individuals; it believes that problems are brought about as a result of interactions between individuals, organizations and structures rather than on the pathologies thereof (Chapin, 2011).

In the present study, the above principles aid to explain the survival of single mothers despite being poverty stricken in an economically shrinking nation such as Zimbabwe. Normally, whenever a person is faced with a trying phase, people expect

them to show some signs of defeat or at least the signs of strain (Chapin, 2011). Yet, these principles support the argument forwarded by the strengths perspective, arguing that each individual has the ability and potential to help themselves if only supported and linked to the necessary resources (Saleebey, 2013). Such a chief principle has a resounding meaning with the social work practice which is aimed at helping individuals, groups and communities to help themselves through professional facilitation. The notion of resilience and capabilities then justifies the applicability of this theory to the single mothers that are residing in Chiredzi Town.

Also, Chui and Wilson (2006: 121) maintain that, “This approach seeks to understand how marginalized and oppressed people have survived in an oppressive catastrophic environment; such survival strategies are indicators of strengths.” Indeed, this is the notion of single-mindedness and determination. The tenacity and resolve to keep going despite the stumbling blocks and unforeseen challenges that may await them. The theory further explains that the hardships and trials that humans undergo work as masks that bullet-proof them from future challenges. In other words, past experience if handled with wisdom may be a fountain of latent strength that catapults people far beyond their challenge (Chapin, 2011). The adoption of this theory will help to unveil the sources of strengths – if any – that have helped single mothers in developing countries, more so Zimbabwe.

As social work practice is shifting from a pathological perspective to a systems theory, it seeks not only to identify the limitations of the clients but their potency too (Zastraw, 2010). This productive approach is beneficial in that people usually put their best feet in front. Ultimately, from the strong points, weaknesses are eliminated thereby creating an

environment which fosters growth, positive change and social functioning. Total departure from the social work conventions gives clients a new identity which boosts their self confidence, identity and self worth (Saleebey, 2013). The installation of hope ensures that problems are seen as challenges that can be overcome and not as a dead-end for progress. Therefore, the strengths perspective theory will be the major microscopic lenses by which the effectiveness of survival strategies employed by single mothers in Chiredzi will be analyzed. Putting the theoretical frameworks into perspective leads to the factors leading to single motherhood as discussed below.

2.5 An Outline of Factors Leading to Single Motherhood

There are various aspects mounting to the prevalence of this developing family pattern. Bumpass (2010), Gibbs and Grey (2011) argue that single parenthood - be it single motherhood or single fatherhood is mainly a result of unforeseen misfortunes rather than by choice. Hence, in order to have a better perception of single motherhood and its effects, it is essential to examine those factors that directly lead to it. These causes will be explicated below:

2.5.1 Widowhood

Death as a natural occurrence is inevitable and its effects are heinous to those left behind. Among the deeply affected by death are the spouses and children as their lives are altered beyond human elucidation. A series of chronic diseases such as the pandemic HIV/AIDS, which snatches away the lives of many parents, has contributed greatly to the emergence of single motherhood in Zimbabwe (Moyo and Kawewe,

2009). It is poignant to note that even the lives of young parents are cut at an early age leaving children as orphans with no one to cater for their needs.

According to the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare of Zimbabwe (2004), cited in Mahati, Chandiwana, Munyati, Chitiyo, Mashange, Chibatamoto and Mupambireyi (2006), malaria, tuberculosis, political violence, cholera and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are the lead causes of mortality in Africa, including Zimbabwe. Mahati et al. (2006) further discloses that the Sub-Saharan Africa has 25.4 million people living with HIV. These are disconcerting figures as it is just below two thirds (64%) of the people living with HIV in the whole world (Mahati et al., 2006: 02). The figures are broken down by the UNAIDS Statistics Department (2003) as cited in Mahati et al. (2006), which revealed that about 30% of people in Zimbabwe are living with HIV and AIDS. The UNAIDS (2013) further clarifies that the Eastern and Southern Africa with only 5 per cent of the world's population, is home to half the world's population living with HIV. Given these shocking figures it is probable to say that almost every family has a grave of a person succumbed to AIDS, a scary thought to ponder.

Evidently, from these alarming rates, children are turned into orphans while spouses are turned into widows and widowers. Of interest in this present research are the widows and the orphans left behind. Sadly, despite having to grieve their loss, they yet still need to strategize on how to survive in the jungle of life. Inescapably, the yoke is sorely left on the shoulders of the mothers to ensure that the diverse needs of the child/children are adequately met.

2.5.2 Divorce and Separation

Marriages are no longer sacred institutions and life covenants that the institutor meant them to be. The number of women who eventually find themselves alone to support themselves and their children seem to be on the verge of increase due to various reasons including marriage instability or consensual unions (Hein, 2005). Instead, they have been turned into convenience arrangements. Bumpass (2010) in their study have also revealed that insecurities about the variability of marriage have reduced investment in some marriages leading to disruptions. Other couples actually anticipate for life after divorce even before marriage, for example the signing of prenuptial contracts (Bumpass, 2010). This lack of a ligament that binds two people together has contributed immensely to the significant increase of single motherhood because many people no longer identifying with its value.

Another silent cause of divorce in this modern society is abuse. According to The World Bank (2003), domestic violence is increasingly being accepted and tolerated as a gender role. This view is supported by Sachinyoka (2011:172) who reveals that “...political and traditional elites have deliberately cultivated what has been termed ‘dodaism’ which extols ‘virtues’ of manhood or masculinity.” In support of the above view, Kwok-bun (2013) says men’s violent behaviors and their general lack of trustworthiness pushes women out of marriages. In this urbanized society, women no longer stay in abusive relationships for financial security or for the sake of children as they have learnt to be self-sufficient and being resourceful. Hence the increase for divorce rates on a global level.

Yet, The World Bank (2003) argues that, men's masculinities are measured by their abilities to cater for the financial needs of their partners and children, not through sadism and brutal behavior. Women may become beleaguered by such kind of abuse to an extent that they may desert their marriages to single-handedly raise their children. Also, the liberalization of divorce laws has escalated the divorce rates subsequently causing an increase to lone motherhood (Neckerman, 2004). It is crucial therefore to note that despite the high rates of divorce, marriage is still highly regarded as the stable way of a family structure. Seventy fivepercent(75%) of respondents of the interviews carried out by Bumpass (2010) supported that a couple should remain together for a lifetime except under extreme intolerable conditions.

2.5.3 Out-of-Wed Births

Modernization and the adoption of a western culture have led to the increase of out-of-wed births. Bumpass (2010: 35) argue that,

The rapid increase in the prevalence of non-marital childbearing is evidence of, and contributes to, the erosion of norms against behavior traditionally described by such terms as 'illegitimacy' and 'bastard'.

This view is also supported by Neckerman (2004) who notes the inclusive tolerance being awarded to sex and single motherhood mainly due to the sexual revolution that destigmatized premarital sexual activity. Bumpass's (2010) study further revealed that, only one fifth of the adults disapproved premarital sex showing that it is widely accepted as normal behavior. Apart from that, The World Bank (2003) adds that low contraceptive use among sexually active adolescents is leading to unplanned teenage pregnancy.

Even though there is a variety on contraceptive choices, usage is not guaranteed as teenagers' behavior may be influenced by peer pressure, the media and even substance abuse. The media and the entertainment industry have contributed greatly in eroding the notion of abstinence and by so doing, premarital sex has lost its stigma, as is giving birth before marriage (Kilbride and Rage, 2012). According to Hiramine (2010), the world that revolves around children's lives is progressively inclining into their hearts and soul, shaping them and molding them into a replica of its values. The media is then working as a benchmark determining the behavior of the children and how they should relate to the world around them, influencing them to make irrational decisions like unprotected sex.

The World Bank (2003: 39) also points out that the high number of out-of-wed births is caused by,

...propensity for men to float among several partners and the absence of expectation for men to be responsible partners and fathers to their children leading to unstable families.

According to Bumpass (2010), another alternative put forward by the majority of respondents is cohabitation to check their compatibility before marriage. This 'trying out' pre-requisite to marriage subsequently leads to single motherhood in the event that 'shacking up' couples are incompatible. Women are willing to settle down with someone who can support them financially and treat them with respect (Newman and Newman, 2011). Otherwise, they will opt to remain single or delay marriage usually leading to single motherhood.

To make matters worse, the legalization of abortion in many countries and societies has also accelerated sexual activity (Neckerman, 2004). Since abortion is illegal in Zimbabwe, its acceptance in many countries may influence increased sexual activity even among Zimbabweans. Hence forth, single motherhood may come about as it will be both illegal and difficult to terminate the pregnancy.

2.5.4 Choice Motherhood

It is interesting to note that even though solo motherhood is usually brought about by unanticipated occurrences, findings by other researchers reveal a different view. Morrissette (2008), in her book that works as a guide to single mothers identifies what she calls 'Choice Motherhood'. This is a sect of women who make a conscious decision to be sole mothers. Morrissette (2008: 6) explains, "Some women have such desire for motherhood that they wonder even in their twenties why they have to wait for a husband..." This shows a case where the instinctual longing to become a parent overrides the expectations or norms set by the community. Of the interviews carried out by Neckerman (2004), other choice lone mothers outlined a sense of freedom as the motive behind their choice. One sole mother said, "I am in charge..." while the other proclaimed, "I am in control" (Neckerman, 2004: 53). The above responses show that some marriages have turned out to be a prison cage forcing some women to raise children without any form of paternal support from the child's father. According to Kwok-bun (2013), the abusive nature of other men and their promiscuous behaviors suffocates women's desire to get married.

“Because marriage provides a shaky lifetime guarantee, adolescent girls may increasingly recognize that they must be able to support themselves if necessary” (Bumpass, 2010:7). As a result, this economic freedom mindset has contributed to the emergence of choice mothers as women are learning to be financially independent (Hein, 2005). This freedom has empowered women to make bold decisions and to have the satisfaction and grace that comes with being committed to another human being (a child or children) (Morrisette, 2008; Joyce, 2007).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that single motherhood is still stigmatized against, especially in religious or cultural families where unmarried daughters may be expelled from home for being pregnant out of marriage (Bumpass, 2010; The World Bank, 2003). Zimbabwe is a Christian country that upholds some strict values concerning out-of-wedlock pregnancies and abortion. For example, school children are expelled from school in such cases where they become pregnant. In fact, a girl child can be banned from home if she is impregnated out of marriage. However, this does not guarantee reduced unplanned pregnancies although it stirs a little bit of fear among school teenagers and unmarried women.

2.5.5 Migration

The world we live in today has been turned into an illimitable global village where people can go anywhere easily. This exodus of people can be within or beyond national borders depending on an individual’s destiny. Migration, according to Yeboah (2008), occurs where there is uneven distribution of resources and opportunities between the source country or place and the destination. Unlike diffusion which is the movement of

particles from a place of high concentration to that of lower concentration, people in this case move to greener places where their lives can be enhanced.

Alao (2012) maintains that the economic collapse of Zimbabwe and its political instability has pushed away many citizens who have sought better lives in neighboring countries and even abroad. Makina and Kanyenze (2010: 21) shed more light on migration revealing that about 3 040 000 Zimbabweans have migrated, with South Africa alone having 2 120 000 Zimbabwean citizens. These are only legal records, suggesting that the numbers of Zimbabweans may be higher because of illegal immigrants or boarder jumpers.

With such long distances, separation and divorce is unavoidable. Mansuri (2007) notes that men dominate international migration as compared to women. This is another contributor to sole motherhood in developing countries especially Zimbabwe, due to its present circumstances. Evidently, women and children are abandoned to scramble for food, shelter and other basic necessities for sustainable livelihood. This situation is sad but very common in Zimbabwe. A detailed discussion on the challenges faced by lone mothers is explicated in the subsequent paragraphs.

2.6 Challenges Underpinning Single Motherhood

In a natural setting, parenting should be a dual responsibility except in cases that are beyond human control. Alterations in marriages, childbearing patterns, women's economic views, parenting styles and other facets of life have impacted on the normative prospects of the family structure (Bumpass, 2010). This fast increasing

compositional structure of single motherhood is coupled with diverse challenges as outlined below. It should still be noted that these challenges do not occur in isolation but that they are inter-related and that they co-exist.

2.6.1 Feminization of Poverty

Although it is true that poverty is not a respecter of persons, scholars maintain that females by virtue of being women are more prone to poverty, compared to their male counter-parts. The feminization of poverty concept is derived from "...women's purportedly disproportionate and rising share of poverty" (Chant, 2006: 2). Biologically, socially, economically and otherwise, women tend to be more susceptible to the effects of poverty, be it at individual, communal or societal levels. Malaba (2006) argues that women overall carry the heaviest saddle of transient and/or chronic poverty consequential to their reproductive and feminine household roles. This then reflects a double jeopardy where single mothers are exposed to womanly susceptibility to poverty and then the absence of a partner to share the responsibilities with. As if that is not enough, an unfavorable Zimbabwean environment does nothing but exacerbates their lives (Alao, 2012). The patriarchal society we live in tends to economically and socially favor men at the expense of women. The other challenges below also help to strengthen the feminization of poverty concept.

2.6.2 Child Poverty

Child poverty is the central reason why single mothers have shifted from their comfort zones to strategize for the survival of their children and securing their future. Meanwhile,

“A child living in extreme poverty is defined as a child living in a family with an income less than 50% that of the poverty threshold” (Kotch, 2013: 139). According to Minujin and Nandy (2012), child poverty is assessed as the result of overlapping dimensions of deprivation, as well as the derivation and non-fulfillment of basic economic, social and human rights. Hence, child poverty encompasses the extent and profundity of vulnerability, focusing on the basic needs of the child concerned (Ismael, 2006). Even though the terms ‘basic needs’ can vary from time to time and from developed to developing nations, of importance are the necessities that are required for the holistic development of children. The location, nationality or race of a child is immaterial at this point as humans have some common basic needs.

The fact that the mother is the legal custodian of a child below the age of 18 years makes child poverty women’s challenge and ultimately, single mothers’ worst nightmare. Out-of-wed births, divorce, HIV and AIDS pandemic and migration have all increased the number of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) who are in need of assistance. This shows that children are not poor on their own but because their families are poor also (Ismael, 2006). According to Hein (2005), poverty amongst children in sole-parent households often far outstrips poverty in two-parent households simply because two is better than one. This is attributable to the fact that couple-households can share the responsibility of raising children unlike single parents who bear the burden on their own. Hence forth, being a single mother can be a disheartening experience as single mothers own their children’s problems.

In this regard, Ismael (2006) is of the view that children of the poor do not have the same opportunities as the non-poor. The author argues that, “The problem of the poor,

in other words, is not poverty but competitive advantage” (Ismael, 2006: 6). It is therefore crucial for all the concerned stakeholders at international, national, communal and individual levels to realize that children are the future leaders. If children are supported, the future is bright but if they are forsaken and neglected, the future may look unpromising. In support of the above statement, Minujin and Nandy (2012) uphold that children hold the key to breaking the poverty chain and hence they need to be empowered to face future prospects.

2.6.3 Urban Poverty

The whole world has witnessed an enormous exodus of people from rural areas into urban areas as industrialization and globalization have become the typical lifestyle of today (Kange'the & Mafa, 2014). This development is escorted by various challenges that are threatening the stability of the environment together with the living standards of people. Literature has pointed out that migration is associated with urban poverty because this puts a strain on the limited resources as the demand for these resources continues to increase (Gebre-Egziabher, 2010). A situation where the urban poor have limited access to basic requirements such as education, health services, potable water, electricity and proper housing is what the term urban poverty entails.

According to Mitlin and Satterthwaite (2013), the Sub-Saharan Africa had about 20 million people living in urban areas in 1950. These figures are believed to have skyrocketed to 298 million people by 2010 (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2013: 77). Zimbabwe as a developing country in the Sub-Saharan region is also experiencing these unsettling changes. It is the economic meltdown and political snags of Zimbabwe which are

overwhelming the urban dwellers especially the single mothers, because of their vulnerability to numerous challenges. As a result, urban problems such as unemployment and underemployment, deteriorating infrastructure, overcrowding, environmental degradation and severe housing shortage manifest as daily hurdles in the cities and towns (Gebre-Egziabher, 2010).

Seemingly, urban poverty has been underestimated and little research has been carried out on it as it is believed that rural poverty is more prevalent. Rural to urban migration has subsequently given birth to the term 'urbanization of poverty' (Gebre-Egziabher, 2010). This is because problems are married to people and they tend to shadow wherever people are. In Zimbabwe, Operation *Murambatsvina* (Drive Out Filth/ Restore Order) which transpired in 2007 is somehow liable for having contributed incalculably to homelessness among city dwellers (Chikuhwa, 2008). The operation involved demolishing of houses that were considered as sub-standard by the government. Instead of revamping the informal housing structures and providing better houses for the urban poor, the government mercilessly pulled down the houses that were mansions for the low-income earners especially single mothers and their children.

This was followed by a Land Grab exercise that pushed many white farmers and employers out of the country, later on leading to the closure of several industries as investment had decreased (Chikuhwa, 2008). Underemployment and unemployment thereby resulted in the aggravation of urban poverty since urban life is monetized. As a result, single mothers found themselves struggling to cater for the needs of their children. Competition on the economic market is also strife for them as they are inflexible due to their other role of child care, making them easy targets of

retrenchments. This even intensified urban life due to its nature of being centered on pumping out money for everything, in this case the money these lone mothers do not have (McDonald and McMillen, 2010; Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2013; Gebre-Egziabher, 2010). In line with the above findings, Chikuhwa (2008) noted the commonness of a 0-0-1 diet among many single-mother households. This is when the family does not have breakfast and lunch, but only supper leading to malnutrition and vulnerability to diseases. All these challenges ultimately come back to lack of finances. Lack of finances can be another causal challenge as highlighted below.

2.6.4 Financial Problems

As it is often said that money is the lubricant that smoothens everything, single mothers also need it for survival and to lead a decent and dignified life. Worse still, is the fact that these single mothers have to fend for themselves and for their children as well, making the strain even more unbearable. Moyo and Kawewe (2009), Newman and Newman (2011), Morrissette (2008) and Keswet & Dapas (2010) are of the view that financial constraint is the most overwhelming challenge faced by lone mothers, whether in developed or developing countries, especially where the fathers of the children's whereabouts are unknown or where fathers play no role in the children's lives.

The needs of the child are in fact the challenges of the single mother as she carries the child or children's burdens. Whether staying in a one-parent family or two-parent one, all children need to be fed, clothed, sent to school and sheltered (Morrissette, 2008). The economic impediments of Zimbabwe make it difficult for the efforts of these single mothers to come to fruition. With no job and no help, meeting the daily needs of the

children is nightmarish to most single mothers. There is therefore a dire need for strategies to increase the financial base and food security of the children. Financial challenges exist alongside economic difficulties as the following paragraph portrays.

2.6.5 Economic Challenges

Any change to one part of the world inevitably affects the other parts as well because of the inter-dependence of countries for economic growth and stability. For a couple of years now, the whole world has been witnessing the recurrence of financial and economic catastrophe with greater frequency (Minujin and Nandy, 2012). This global economic crisis is creating vicious marks to the Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) with the inclusion of the Zimbabwe's economy (Peleaz and Peleaz, 2007). According to the Economic Report on Africa (2005: 70), the overall growth rate of 4.6% is 2.4% below the minimum average required to halve the continent's poverty rate by 2015 as advocated by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Evidently without economic growth, poverty in Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe, will continue to wreak havoc on the lives of those people on the poverty pole, undoubtedly women and children.

Since the 1990s, Zimbabwe as a nation has been faced with drastic economic challenges. Mawere (2011: 66) puts it as follows:

As if nature itself was supportive of the emerging Zimbabwe's economic problems, especially that of high unemployment rate, the devastating drought of 1991/1992 that ravaged the country also contributed to the downfall of Zimbabwe's national economy. It is in the context of this devastating drought that the Zimbabwe's economy situation began to vividly show various forms of

morally questionable embezzlements, overpricing, misinformation and other forms of corruption.

As depicted above, the drought gave birth to a series of events that contributed greatly to the weakening of the Zimbabwean dollar. In fact, the consequences of economic mismanagement brought Zimbabwe's economy to a precarious position, such that the term "economic structural and adjustment programme" entered the country's vocabulary (Alao, 2012: 96). Following the economic rival caused by the drought, the government offered the war veterans unbudgeted money as a way of showing gratitude for the liberation (Mawere, 2011; Alao, 2012). Even though the thought behind this act might have been positive, this once-off pension brought the economy of Zimbabwe to its knees. The money that was meant for economic growth was diverted to personal fulfillment at the expense of the greater population of the nation. Only a hand full of people benefited but the grievous consequences of this hasty decision increased the vulnerability more so of the impoverished people.

Apart from that, the land seizure (Land Grab) policies that were followed by sanctions from the European countries made the economy even more unbearable as revealed by Alao (2012). Production declined leading to closure of many companies and industries that were once people's tickets to the next meal. This is supported by McEachem (2012: 491) who states that, "Less investment occurs if potential investors believe that their capital could be seized by the government..." The Zimbabwean economy became so bungled such that in 2009, the Zimbabwean dollar had to be phased out and the South African Rand and American Dollar were introduced into circulation. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cited in Kanchense(2008: 407), Zimbabwe is characterized by food insecurities, severe economic crisis and being one of the world's

highest rates of HIV and AIDS (151 out of 177) on the UNDP Human Development Index.

Given these economical facts, their efforts to survive are unfortunately blocked by the fact that the formal unemployment rate in Zimbabwe is estimated at 80% (Kanchense, 2008; 405). Their case is also exacerbated by the reality that they have no one to share this burden with as they do not have a spouse or partner to relieve them or meet them half-way. They end up being under-employed in order to get a few dollars for survival. According to The Montgomery County Commission for Women (MCCW) (2008-2009), although lone mothers face several challenges, mothers of low income find themselves and their children struggling against formidable obstacles. One cannot help but to wonder how these people still breathe irrespective of all these forces relentlessly working against them. These obstacles may eventually lead to psycho-social challenges and this is explained fully below.

2.6.6 Psycho-Social Challenges

Being a single mother is an excruciating experience because it weighs down the psychological and social resilience of single mothers and their children. In most cases, single motherhood comes like a thief in the night, when least expected (Moyo and Kawewe, 2009; Newman and Newman, 2011; Morrissette, 2008). This heightens the susceptibility of single mothers to different stressors. Some of the psycho-social problems are discussed below:

2.6.6.1 Social Discrimination and Labeling

The society through culture, religion and other social considerations determines what is acceptable and non-acceptable in a bid to try and uphold social values. Single parenthood is given birth to by a variety of reasons, some of which are morally permissible than others (Farmer, 2008; Kange'the & Mafa, 2014). Widows are more accepted followed by divorcees as compared to single mothers who have never married (Farmer: 2008). McCarthy (2010: 163), argues that

...any woman who acts outside the allotted legal moral roles legislated for her was harming public morals: the prostitute, the single mother, the abandoned wife, the unruly daughter, the woman sexually assaulted, the daughter born too pretty and- all were deemed a danger to moral society.

This displays the solemnity of how single mothers are discriminated against despite the cause thereof. It seems as if the society has already ruled a death sentence against women for being divorcees and single mothers as though it is a criminal offence.

This stigmatization may lead to marginalization and social isolation. In many cases, single motherhood is highly allied with promiscuity or licentious behavior despite the fact that some are lone mothers because of circumstances beyond their human control such as widowhood, rape and being divorced (McCarthy, 2010). According to Newman and Newman (2011), in addition to constant worry associated with poverty, single mothers are apt to suffer from social isolation, constant pressure to meet the needs of their children, and overworking in trying to balance work, parenting and household demands. Social discrimination and labeling therefore have adverse outcomes as they tarnish the image and ultimately the self esteem of the victim.

2.6.6.2 Despair

For single mothers, despair originates from unsatisfied needs, great expectations and very little and limited opportunities. According to Ypeij and Ypeij (2009), disappointment is usually coupled with despair, regret and a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. These intrinsic negative feelings are fuelled up by frustrations on how to equate work and childcare, and the guilt of some women who deny their children access to their fathers to satisfy their selfish anger and pride (Exil, 2005). With these issues under contemplation, single mothers may consequently experience a cycle of hopelessness and despondency, which is felt by both themselves and their children (Johnson, 2009).

Frank (2012a) is of the view that nightmare fear makes the responsibility even more unbearable. This may be due to the observations made by Johnson (2009), who forwards that the excruciating load for single mothers lies in managing the pain, solitude and vulnerability of being a lone mother. She says, "Behind us the past is littered with the wreckage of our relationship and before us the future looks bleak and ominous and our present is not safe either" (Frank, 2012a: 32). This reveals a great deal of desperation and vulnerability. In her other book, Frank (2012b) further elaborates on the above view arguing that single mothers in despair see their lives as a bottomless pit without any visible means of escape, an endless dark tunnel without even a ray of sunlight. Hence, instead of crucifixion, what these single mothers need is a little bit of emotional support and understanding. It does not have to be monetary help.

Johnson (2009) calls out for a greater connection with God, family and supportive friends among single mothers in order to tap into their latent strengths to hope for a

better tomorrow. People who find themselves without any help tend to sink into psychological problems such as distress and isolating themselves. Familiar issues in low-income families include depression, chemical dependence, hectic schedules and all factors that interfere with the healthy attachments that foster children's' development (Jensen, 2009). It is therefore crucial for the church and all that are able to lend a hand either in words and deeds to ensure the restoration and optimum functioning of broken families. Due to pride and other reasons, these single mothers may not cry out for help, even though they need it desperately. Spiritual identity is pointed out by Frank (2012b: 82) as she says:

When an unsaved single mother reaches a place of despair, she is perfectly aware that her physical world is crumbling around her. She is looking for a miracle, for something to change the physical devastation. Even if she cannot verbalise or identify it, she is deeply aware of her place of despair, her thirsty soul.

As if brokenness was not enough, the present mobile generation promotes greater opportunities for men to move on (Gibbs and Grey, 2011). This exacerbates the frustration of women as reconciliation with the father of their children is doomed. As single mothers' burden is added by the children in need of care and tenderness, finding a partner becomes even more complicated. Therefore, the overwhelming challenges of single mothers are wrapped around raising their children and settling down (Kotwal and Prabhakar, 2009; Keswet and Dapas, 2010). This can be seen as the genesis of single mothers' psycho-social problems as it underpins all other factors. Despair can be a high mountain, but the good thing is that there is hope and help from God and the people that have been placed around as pillars of strength in times of helplessness and hopelessness (Frank, 2012b).

2.6.7 Absence of a Male Role Model and Maladaptive Behavior

Even though the absence of the father can be due to unfortunate circumstances, the importance of a male role model should never be underestimated. Males and females project different images and values that provide nurturing which is reflective of their gender (Gibbs and Grey, 2011). This shows that the maternal and paternal roles are vital for the well being of children's development. Although the mother's love is often irreplaceable (Horrell and Krishnan, 2006), the father's love, role and presence in any child's life is also undeniably crucial for children's overall wellbeing. Even for a 'super mom', there are things that she is limited to - the aspects that only a male-touch can do.

Kwok-bun (2013) is of the view that living with a single parent among other factors increases the risk of negative outcomes like maladaptive behavior. This is due to the fact that the male role models have disappeared as a traditional two-parent family is melting away like ice in the scorching heat. Gibbs and Grey(2011: 326)are of the view that:

Men bring the most important dimension to the understanding of a male child's psyche and an understanding of their inner male pride, fear, and ego, which may manifest outwardly as strength.

If male children do not find a male role model to identify with, they may find solace, self-worthiness and self image in the streets with other peers. This is how gangs originate and subsequently streets become dangerous places even during broad daylight.

On the other hand, a girl child without a father-figure may become obsessed with such things as low self image and beauty views. Empirical findings reveal that girlschildren have a higher exposure to the 'perfect' images in magazines, televisions and in social

medias than male children and this leads to psychological challenges like bulimia and anorexia affecting their self images (Gibbs and Grey, 2011: 326). This kind of obsession may also affect the next generation as the girl child with a low self esteem may also end up becoming a single mother, thereby creating a trend of single motherhood and most probably poverty.

Ypeij and Ypeij (2009) also reveal that the absence of husbands and fathers or their marginalization within the conjugal units leads to unstable, wearisome behavior to both male and female children. Nurturing a child or children single-handedly has proved to be a challenge to most lone mothers since the cultural and biblical approach intended it to be a two-fold responsibility. It is however of significant importance to note that the absence of the resident father does not guarantee problems in a child's development or behavior. Gibbs and Grey (2011) argue that single mothers are not less capable of nurturing their children; they just need to develop a greater capability in order to perform dual roles of a mother and father. This shows that there are some single mothers who have learnt to play twin parental roles and are well equipped to raise their children in normally acceptable ways.

Maybe the behavior of children depends not on single motherhood but rather on the cause. In this regard, Lamb (2010) argues that, since most single-parent-families are caused by divorce, and since divorce is often preceded and accompanied by episodes of overt and covert spouse hostility, parental conflict may assist in explaining the problems of fatherless children. After divorce, some parents use children as weapons to get back at each other, thinking they are fixing their ex-spouses. Instead, they basically hurt their children. Since behavior can be learnt, the anger and hatred displayed may

have detrimental effects on children's behavior. Some single mothers also express their feelings of betrayal and loneliness thereby rubbing them on to their children who may adopt destructive behavioral patterns (Gibbs and Grey, 2011). Such behavior may be linked to limited information on how to cushion children from self pain. Illiteracy is addressed below.

2.6.8 Illiteracy

Many researchers have documented the incontrovertible correlation between illiteracy and poverty. "Individuals are functionally illiterate if they cannot, with understanding read and write a short simple statement about their everyday life" (The World Bank, 2004). Most single mothers are illiterate because they are usually impregnated while still at school. Once the baby arrives, most of them never go back to school. Instead, they get into the industries to earn a living for them and their children. As much as it is nature for women to carry babies in their wombs, this puts them way behind their male counterparts who can freely move on chasing their goals and realizing their dreams – hence the promotion of feminization of poverty.

Dreeze (2002) is of the view that illiteracy is 'unfreedom' and a major restriction that imposes limitations to economic growth. Single mothers then struggle to compete on the job market if they do not have the proper qualifications. Illiteracy and a subsequent lack of job opportunities lead to discouragement, thereby weighing down and sucking strength out of single mothers (The World Bank, 2013). These are the daily stumbling blocks that single mothers have to evade or overcome if they are to progress in life. With the challenges of single motherhood laid on the table, the survival strategies

adopted by single mothers to ameliorate their lives are put under the microscope in the following paragraphs.

2.7 Survival Strategies Employed

Lone motherhood is an unfortunate predicament even though some women make a conscious decision to become one. In other words, as much as there are choice mothers, others are sole mothers due to unpredictable circumstances like divorce and death (Hein, 2005). In order to curtail the challenges that come with single motherhood, these women employ various strategies. Depending on the intensity of the external factors impinging on them and their ability to resist the pressure, some single mothers find themselves sailing across the river while others are swept away by the unseen current. Apart from that, the effectiveness of these strategies heavily depend upon the external support offered to these women and their children as we all need a helping hand to make it through the day as supported by Mahati et al. (2006).

2.7.1 Entrepreneurship

If there are no jobs, it only makes sense to try to create one at least for oneself. Elam (2008: 62) defines entrepreneurship as "...a practice or habituated strategy of action that is legitimated and chosen according to social differences of status appropriate behavior and expected competences." Put in short, this involves starting up a business with the aim of making a profit. Elam (2008) goes on to elaborate that men and women on average do not commence business from the same set of circumstances such that cultural ideas about gender appropriate work and life priorities combine with practical

dilemmas to create very dissimilar patterns of choices. This then reflects the different push factors from men and women's perspectives as they plan on establishment of businesses. For single mothers, it is pivotally the desire to curb poverty and other adverse circumstances that come with the job description of being a lone mother.

It goes without mention that entrepreneurship requires human capital, intellectual capital and above all, financial capital (Hein, 2005; Bose, 2010; McEachem, 2012; Mawere, 2011). Lack of collateral is the major deterring factor suffocating the progress of efforts made by sole mothers as they try to initiate projects and small scale businesses. The banks and other financial institutions need tangible and valuables guaranteeing the return of loans. Delchambre (2011) states that lack of collateral is worse in the case of illiteracy and lack of marketing skills such as bookkeeping. Without a shadow of doubt, this can be seen as one of the key root of small business failure within the five years of start-up. In line with the failure of women's entrepreneurs, Elam (2008) identifies gendered entrepreneurship as another cause. The scholar is of the view that there is discrimination in the business sector, in favor of the male counter parts. Especially in African and traditional societies, women are mainly regarded as experts in child-care and house-keeping.

2.7.2 Prostitution

Lack of employment and external financial support specifically in Zimbabwe is compelling single mothers to go to the extremes because desperate times call for desperate measures. Frances (2007) defines prostitution as the art of selling and buying sex. The Criminal Law of Zimbabwe part 3 on Sexual Crimes against morality in Section

61 however defines a prostitute as a male or female person who for money or reward allows other persons to have anal or extra-marital sex or engage in other sexual conduct with him/her or solicits other persons to have anal or extra-marital sex or engage in other sexual conduct with him or her (NewsDay, 12 January 2013). These definitions imply that prostitution (conventional or latent) is not just having sex, but rather a transactional service that is meant to bring money. A demarcation can then be made between prostitution and promiscuous behavior where money might not be the pushing factor. "About 70% of prostitute women are mothers mostly single mothers struggling to support families" (McCarthy, 2010: 159). This portrays the desperation of these single mothers as they do anything humanly possible to fight poverty, ensuring that there is enough food on the table.

Frances (2007) reveals that industry hierarchy, the physical environment or location and the type of clients serviced, determines the earnings together with the risks involved. This brings to light the forms of prostitution single mothers can find themselves in. There are more organized brothels where the 'madam' organizes for all the clients while she gets a cut from it (Frances, 2007). The other forms involve 'catching' clients on the roads. In Zimbabwe, one of the common types of prostitution is what is known as the 'small house' observed as 'get-rich-quick' methods (Sachinyoka, 2011: 175). This is when the woman has an affair with a married man without any formalization of their relationship or intention to get married. Street prostitution and what is known as 'sex on wheel' are also prevalent (Sunday News, 15 Dec 2013). These are sex workers who move from one town to the other in pursuit of clients to service. It may be easy for people who are not in the prostitution industry to judge these single mothers and label

them as reckless, immoral and lazy. Maybe a day in their situation may change the way the society, the government and men look at them.

The present research is concerned with evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies. As much as single mothers get a little something out of prostitution in order to put food on the table and clothes on the backs of their children, literature reveals that there are many predicaments associated with this survival strategy. Firstly, although it is legal in some countries, prostitution is still illegal in most African countries such as Zimbabwe (McCarthy, 2010). According to Frances (2007), this makes it a very dangerous job and these sex workers are enemies with not just their communities but the long arm of the law as well.

Many sex workers are vulnerable and subject to rape, arrest and physical abuse (Ditmore, 2011). The most painful of it all is that the police officers demanding sex workers for free sex to obtain immunity from arrest (Frances, 2007). Hayward (2010) also points out the transmission of sexual diseases like HIV and AIDS as a reality in this industry. The vulnerability and desperation of single mothers in dire need of any amount of money they can get may put them in a tight corner to negotiate safe sex, thereby leaving them with the probability of picking up unwanted pregnancies. Despite all these adverse circumstances, these lone mothers still remain in the streets even in freezing weather while some of us are clinging on to our blankets. Of this, Ditmore (2011: 159) asks, "What are women supposed to do to ensure there is food on the table?"

As if that was not enough, the 'madams' in an organized brothel get the larger piece of the cake even though they are not the ones servicing the clients. The menace

associated with prostitution fuelled the debate on whether to legalize or criminalize it. This is the never-ending debacle between the advocates and abolitionists of prostitution (Weitzer, 2009). Other nations require all sex workers to register with the police to ensure safety and the endorsement of their rights as sex workers. However, Ditmore (2011) argues that the stigma that is attached to prostitution may be increasing the risk thereof. Hence, it is up to the nation to legalize or criminalize prostitution even though a cost benefit analysis is paramount in order to enforce the constructive law.

2.7.3 Women Groups/ Societies

When one survives a fall, it is therapeutic and helpful to share the experience with other people or group members for everyone's improved functioning. This is the ligament that holds together single mothers' societies (Kanchense, 2008). They believe in togetherness, information transference and personal growth through continual interaction. This is probably why other scholars usually say there is comfort in numbers. Not that the problem will miraculously disappear, but the information shared brings insight to tap into the latent strengths associated with the resilience of humans and lone mothers in particular (Chui and Wilson, 2006; Keswet and Dapas, 2010).

A problem shared is a problem half solved. This notion seeks to reveal the possibility of finding solutions from each others' problems and testimonies. An individual without external help usually reaches entropy and eventually dies due to lack of new and improved information (Zastraw, 2010). Such organizations as 'stokvel' have proved to help women especially single mothers in an attempt to ease each other financially, psychologically and emotionally. Some women groups are so intimate such that they

resemble a family which is a crucial agent of socialization (Kanchense, 2008; Morrissette, 2008).

Single motherhood is also coupled with emotional turmoil (Frank, 2012a; Newman & Newman, 2011). Since solo mothers lack partners to share the baggage surrounding parenting and financial constraints, women groups can also be effective in relieving each other's stress and worries over the children's affairs. Cavendish (2004) is of the view that women groups have been credited for being the genesis of sustainable and developmental projects such as sewing and knitting. Women groups then function as fountains of water in a severe drought because of their relevance and ability to refresh single mothers' troubled souls. It is not surprising however that some women groups may be destructive in nature. Brothels are usually more or less like a cooperative, being operated by a number of sex workers (Ditmore, 2011). Francis (2007) is also of the view that mobile sex workers move in numbers invading one place at a time for their business. Other forms of destructive behaviors include drug abuse and alcoholism. Therefore, the success of these women groups is linked to the type of single mothers making up the group as well as their personalities and focus in life.

2.7.4 Employment

As much as poverty goes beyond financial insufficiency, it is the lack of money that excruciates single mothers and proving that single motherhood can be an overshadowing experience to someone who is poverty stricken. Many single mothers resort to employment as urban life pumps out money on a daily bases (Gebre-Egziabher, 2010). Also, single mothers residing in urban areas such as Chiredzi cannot

depend on subsistence farming like those in rural areas due to differences in land use. Industrialization is the main magnet that attracts people into towns and cities (McDonald and McMillen, 2010; Chikuhwa 2008).

Given the economic and political challenges faced by all Zimbabweans, it is very convoluted to secure a job in Zimbabwe. With an official unemployment rate of over eighty percent (80 %) (Kanchense: 2008: 405), this structural failure makes single parenting problematic. This is fuelled by the fact that single mothers' working time is not flexible as they are also responsible for child care back home. As a result, the informal sector is the doorway for most single mothers (Gebre-Egziabher, 2010; Joyce, 2007). Obviously, income in this sector is inadequate. One wonders if it can cover the medical, educational, daily needs and rentals for the single mothers and their children.

Apart from that, some women become single mothers as a result of being impregnated while at school. This poses serious problems because some women will never get an opportunity to finish their education as the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe does not allow pregnant students to proceed with their studies. Even though the intention of this policy is to plant a seed of responsibility among school goers, it fails to tolerate these young women by giving them a second chance to education (Kanchense, 2008). This seemingly harsh and intolerant approach to misbehaving is attributable to the persistence of the poverty cycle because the children born by mothers without an unmarketable skill are likely to run along the poverty line as well (Word Bank, 2004).

Looking at the study carried out by Bumpass (2010), it revealed that one third of the male respondents indicated that they preferred their wives to be working. This choice is

justified because if both parents are working, the financial burden is made lighter. Nonetheless, there are other traditional husbands who echoed that the wife is supposed to take care of the house chores (Landau and Griffith, 2007). In line with women who are forbidden to work, Bose (2010) argues that the cultural ideologies serve to discourage able women's employment make living in a male-headed household the most desirable option, thwarting the dreams of women. Single motherhood then gives them space and financial freedom to pursue their chosen careers.

With single mothers also, seeking employment is not an option but rather an obligation to ensure that children's needs are satisfied. Limited options corner them to opt for the informal sector for the beggar cannot be a chooser. Thus, it may be wise for the single mothers to go back into the educational system and obtain a skill that can be sold on the market. Otherwise, their children would inherit nothing but the button stick of poverty. Zimbabwe's literacy rate of over 90% (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011), intensifies the competition making it even hard for those with no tertiary qualifications. In summary, girls + education=poverty reduction =improved health (Kanchense, 2008). As outlined above, single motherhood can be a shattering and devastating experience such that there is a great need for relief from other stake holders. The sources of external assistance to single mothers are discussed in detail below.

2.8 External Assistance Available to Single Mothers

In this present life we live in, almost everyone has a pillar to lean on when feeling weak, a shoulder to rest on when all strength is gone. This part examines the forms and levels

of external help that are available to single mothers. These are discussed in detail below:

2.8.1 The Family Support System

The family is the primary agent of socialization as it serves as the ligament that holds one's values, responsibilities and form of identity and a sense of belonging. Families and communities are central to the very existence of individuals. The traditional and African family structure is however being molded and altered into a modern and western unit (Kangethe and Mafa, 2014; Landau and Griffith, 2007). Bonds of an extended family are slowly but surely weakening leading to the surfacing of a nuclear family.

It is true that the nuclear family is more intimate and personal and often has impermeable boundaries. Unfortunately, it strips single mothers and their children the privilege to get support from various family members, if the extended family was preferred (Bose, 2010). Any burden is lighter when shared among numerous people. Families come in handy in dark days when one is in need of financial assistance, in an emotional break down and even in happy moments (Morrissette, 2008). Sadly, no one is immune to life's unforeseen struggles, whether married or not. It gives comfort to those who have family and friends to run to in trying times. Morrissette (2008) further reinforces that for single mothers, a strong family support is essential as the children need a male role model to help with the identity formation.

No one can live as an island. Like a system, people depend upon each other from time to time. Having identified that there are many factors underpinning single motherhood

(Gibbs and Grey, 2011), this matters not when it comes to the needs of these matrifocal families. Irrespective of the cause, these are unpredictable circumstances which may drive someone to the wall if they lack proper support and help. In order to go to work, these single mothers may need a helping hand in looking after the children. Mahati et al. (2006) sadly, dig up a situation where children are subjected to inhumane treatment when their mothers are not around. In their own words they say these forms of punishments towards children include "...cunning strategies, denying them access to food and assigning heavy tasks" (Mahati et al., 2006: 13).

Apart from the above mentioned unfortunate incidents, research has discovered that children are often raped by their relatives or persons close to them (Mahati et al., 2006). Instead of finding solace in families, this exacerbates the relations of the family. As such, single mothers are torn between fending for their children and caring for them (Newman and Newman, 2011). Single mothers who are unable to obtain family support on child care or who do not have faith in their families may be forced to institutionalize their children as they run out of options. From a glance, this may seem like a selfish act but, frankly speaking, sometimes it only takes a person who is wearing the shoes to know exactly how and where they pinch.

Although institutionalization comes with its drawbacks, sometimes it is safer than abusive family members. Single mothers can utilize such organizations to align their lives into a productive life waiting to reclaim the custody of their children (Bose, 2010). On the contrary, there are some who may abuse these institutions and wasting their lives through engaging in destructive behavior like drug abuse, alcohol abuse and prostitution (McCarthy, 2010). It is therefore up to the individual single mother to choose

life or death, to build or to destroy her life and that of her children. Nevertheless, many single mothers desire to raise their children in a dignified manner and hence they strategies to ensure that the dreams for their children are realized.

2.8.2 Faith-Based Organizations

In addition to family support, Hilton, Crowson, Mouhort and McKay (2012) add that Christian Aid emerged through the efforts of the World Council of Churches as the church desired to bring change in the lives of the poor. “In a culture characterized by disintegration of the family, churches are the strong fortress for the defence of healthy families” (Farmer, 2008: 159). The fading away of the extended family has made churches to fill this gap by offering emotional, financial and social support to the single mothers and all who are in need. According to Exil (2005), the churches act in response to the commandment of their Lord Jesus Christ who expects them to serve and meet the needs of those who require aid. In other words, the church is seen as a family unit that upholds and seeks to strengthen each other as they wait for the coming of their Lord and Savior. Almost all churches now have a plan for the disadvantaged and those that are in need, including single mothers and their children.

Couture (2007) reveals that the church does significantly much more in the ministry of poor children and single mothers than is commonly acknowledged. The efforts of the church stretch beyond the church members even to those who are not saved. Frances (2007) as well as Frank (2012b) point out that some church organizations go in streets and in court rooms on a mission to rescue ‘fallen women’ who are usually single mothers selling sex for survival. These organizations equip women (single mothers and

single women) by assisting them to exit prostitution and empowering them morally and financially to curtail the hardships that come with single motherhood and the feminization of poverty (Weitzer, 2009). They support them too with school fees, groceries and piece jobs and the erection of sustainable projects that can generate income in the long run (Couture, 2007).

Exil (2005) is of the opinion that single mothers are the most abandoned group in the society and possibly the most in need. Fortunately, the church is not just concerned with the spiritual well being of its members but the physical aspects as well since a human being is a spirit dwelling in a body with real needs. Poverty among single mothers and in general is so dire that the faith organizations are not able to combat it on their own. Couture (2007) encouraged the denomination to actively advocate for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a clean environment, for the just economy, since those involved in local ministry do not seem to have invested enough resources needed to tackle these issues. This then calls for increased engagement between the government, NGOs and other philanthropic organizations to join resources in fighting the feminization of poverty and child poverty.

Sometimes, we find despair where we are supposed to get hope, love and comfort. McCarthy (2010) reveals that some church denominations are too judgmental such that they label the single mothers as immoral and sinners, thereby marginalizing them. The church is supposed to bring comfort to the weeping and those wounded by life, helping single mothers in raising God fearing young men and women who can add significant value to the society (Exil, 2005). In other instances, they may actually be labeled as 'prostitutes' by virtue of being single mothers. This is devastating in the sense that these

single mothers will feel inferior and all alone despite the challenges they already face. What they need is love, peace, support and encouragement to conquer the mountains before them (McCarthy, 2010; Frank, 2012a; Exil, 2005).

2.8.3 Non-Governmental Organizations

The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other charity organizations have emerged to relieve the government and the church of the intense pressure resulting from an increase in the demand of assistance by less privileged households. Corcoran-Nantes (1995) claims that World NGOs have more than doubled since 1995. These organizations mainly deal with poverty eradication and sustainable development as empowerment tools for the less privileged especially (Hilton et al., 2012).

Africa as the poorest continent receives assistance from many internationally based organizations such as World Vision, Plan International and other organizations (Gilbert, 2004). The impact of these NGOs has also reached the shores of Zimbabwe. Other NGOs are small and only serve a niche group while others take the national podium because of their coverage and popularity. Although NGOs have played undeniably huge roles in shaping the welfare of Zimbabwe, the political instabilities have led to the downsizing and closure of many of these organizations (Alao, 2012). This did not just affect the safety nets of those who depended on these organizations for school fees and food baskets but it has also increased the unemployment rate of the nation (Makina and Kanyenze, 2010).

Moreover, the dollarization of the currency is also liable for the shrinking of the impact previously caused by NGOs (Alao, 2012; Peleaz and Peleaz, 2007). Prior to 2009, the foreign currency could be exchanged to Zimbabwean dollars and a couple of US dollars could go a long way in covering operational expenses, initiating projects and covering school fees for disadvantaged children. However, the Land Grab policy followed by a series of European sanctions soured the relationship of Zimbabwe and the international donors because this rekindled the black and white beef (Chikuhwa, 2008). As a result, the whites who are the majority donors withheld their generous hands leaving Zimbabwe high and dry, in a dire need for social help and food security.

Apart from that, the strife between the government of Zimbabwe and international NGOs therefore still remain to this day as they are failing to partner together for the greater good of the people. This rivalry is fuelled up by the political outcomes causing intense conflicts between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and these NGOs (The Financial Gazette, 2013). There are interestingly many grey areas surrounding international donors which make the researcher to pose for a while. Firstly, how is it our former colonialists are willing to help us? Secondly, why should their assistance be linked with the current government that is in power? These are some of the unanswered questions underlining international NGOs. Finally, the government as - supposedly the sole provider of social welfare - is discussed next.

2.8.4 The Government

Besides the NGOs, every government is legally responsible for the economic, social welfare and overall well being of its citizens. On a large scale, the living standards of the

citizens say a lot about the government in power and its policies concerning the economy, poverty eradication and the holistic future of the nation. Developed countries like the United Kingdom provide free education, health and housing for low income households as an approach to curb the impacts of poverty (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2013). Policies like these help in lightening the weight of the poverty stricken as well as narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa is one of the countries that offer tremendous support to its citizens by formulating policies that are aimed at eradicating poverty that was created by the apartheid era (Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy for South Africa, 2008). In South Africa, there are grants for the disabled, the old, the children and Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP)(low-cost houses for the poor). As much as the policies are centered on the citizens' welfare, it goes without saying that these policies have economic repercussions in the long run(Social Grants South Africa, 2006).Also, the fact that beneficiaries enjoy tax payers' money which they do not contribute to creates a psychological dependency syndrome. Developmental and sustainable projects as well as investing in education are the only secure exits points out of poverty.

In Zimbabwe, many strategies have also been put in place to surmount the challenges surrounding single motherhood in relation to poverty. Orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) are awarded such schooling packages as Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) and the prestigious presidential scholarship on merit (Mahati et al., 2006), of which the researcher is also a beneficiary. This form of scholarship gives students from less privileged a life-time opportunity to study in international universities especially the

University of Fort Hare in South Africa, where comrade Robert Mugabe (the president of Zimbabwe) studied as well. These programmes do make a difference in the lives of the chosen few. Unfortunately, serious charges of corruption and a contribution to the weakening of the economy have been associated with this exercise and many of the beneficiaries do not suit the category of 'less privileged' (Alao, 2012). For the past five years, students on this programme have greatly suffered in foreign lands with no food and accommodation as the fees are not being paid on time, forcing students into such activities as prostitution to survive.

Also, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Welfare also help in the eradication of poverty in Zimbabwe (Moyo, 2005). These organizations engage mainly in Food for Work programmes, where poor people work for the government in road constructions or other services in order to earn income or to secure the payment of their children's school fees. However, these programmes and policies are not exclusively for single mothers. Assistance Medical Treatment Orders (AMTOs) are also issued for those who prove to be poor but in need of medical attention especially with the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in Chiredzi Town. The government's involvement is mainly in the rural areas where they offer inputs like fertilizers, seeds, ploughs and advice to the poor for subsistence farming (Moyo, 2005).

Unfortunately, the economy of Zimbabwe is failing to adequately sustain the demands of its citizens due to prioritization by the government to other commitments at the expense of the citizens' welfare (Alao, 2012). For example, huge sums of funds were channeled towards the 2013 governmental elections and developing the new mining sector that is currently taking off from the ground. The Government of National

Unity(GNU) also made it difficult for the government to function fully as the parties could not agree on any matter. In short, the policies and organizations put in place are just a formality stunt as there is no much progress in the area of poverty eradication and meeting the Millennium Development Goals(MDGs) by 2013. This wraps the review of literature on the effectiveness of single mothers' survival strategies.

2.9 Conclusion

Many researchers have exhumed that single motherhood used to be an uncommon family type which is presently gaining popularity even in African nations and traditional countries such as Zimbabwe. The development of such a structural factor has been associated with an acute increase in the prevalence of poverty among single-mother households as child poverty and feminization of poverty inter-marry. Despite the structural failure of Zimbabwe, these lone mothers have been applauded for implementing sundry mechanisms in an attempt to augment their living standards and that of their children. Many researchers have exhausted their strength on the causes of single motherhood and the challenges governing this circumstance. The current research seeks to delve a little deeper to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of such survival mechanisms in an effort to enhance the living standards of matrifocal families. This will help in exposing the latent factors that are perpetuating and lubricating the poverty cycle as research has shown that feminization of poverty is on the increase. By so doing, the form and level of intervention necessary for meeting the MDGs one and three will be ensured. Now that the literature review has been completed, attention is now towards the research methodology in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed outline of the research methodology applied in the present study. Central to research methodology is the research design, sampling procedure, data collection methods, instruments used, method of data analysis as well as validity and reliability of the data. A research design is fundamental to the overall research as it offers comprehensive information essential to the substantiation and validation of the research procedure as well as the subsequent findings. Research methodology ensured that suitable answers relevant to answering the research questions were extracted from the respondents. Thus, there is always a need to be scientifically cautious when deciding on the type of research methodology appropriate for each particular research topic in order to align findings to the overall aim and objectives of the research.

In order to carry out research effectively, there was a dire need for devising a plan which clearly stipulated the research design. Lee (2012) in this regard, argues that careful consideration must be taken in selecting an approach that fuses with the objectives and purpose of the research so as to adequately explore the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, Creswell (2003) supports this by pointing out that research design uses delimitations to narrow the scope of a study and also presents limitations to the identification of potential weaknesses of the study. In this present research, the last point was considered in an attempt to anticipate factors that could impinge on the

outcomes of the study. Ultimately, corrective action was also implemented to eliminate such foreseeable challenges.

3.2 Research Approach

The researcher espoused the qualitative research method due to its outstanding ability to capture insider`s views and perspectives and also its knack to capture social action in its natural context, which allows the exhumation of rich information (Tracy, 2013; Hatch, 2002). Natural context therefore entails that the environment is not manipulated, altered or influenced by any external circumstances which may have effects on the general results and conclusions to be made. As a result, the body language, for example hesitation, sighing and facial expressions were observed and captured in an effort to augment the findings of the research.

Moreover, a qualitative study encompasses personal values into the study thereby enabling meticulous information to be incorporated in the findings to be presented (Creswell, 2003). The data needed to assess the effectiveness of the survival strategies employed by single mothers ought to be exhaustive and thorough, thereby justifying the use of a qualitative approach. Such information is unfathomable and hence it cannot be quantified, numbered or tabulated. In fact, qualitative paradigm utilizes inductive data analysis, thereby allowing ratification of the social aspect under study (Hatch, 2002).

3.2.1 Methods of Data Collection

The present study adopted two methods of data collection in order to improve the trustworthiness of the findings. A triangulation of the in-depth interviews and a focus group were preferred as explained in the succeeding paragraphs below:

3.2.1.1 In-depth Interviews

Face-to-face interviews are the most frequently employed methods of data collection in qualitative research. “Unstructured interviews aim to delve deep beneath the surface of superficial responses to obtain true meanings that interviewees assign to their experiences and the complexities of their attitudes and behaviour” (Klenke, 2005: 125). According to Cooper (2008), qualitative researchers through interviews attempt to understand the world from the participants’ point of view and to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences to uncover their lives prior to scientific explanations. Hatch (2002) also emphasizes that interviews promotes flexibility of respondents, allowing them to ventilate their underlying experiences, emotions and perspectives.

With face to face interviews, all grey areas are clarified while the wrinkles are ironed out in an attempt to disinter the experiences of a phenomenon under scrutiny; in this case, the circumstances surrounding single motherhood in relation to poverty and raising their children. Hence forth, the physical presence of the researcher eliminated all doubt and reluctance that the respondents might have had on the phone or if a questionnaire was preferred instead (Babbie, 2010). Therefore, interviews were ideal as they allowed for follow-up questions and clarity on ambiguous aspects.

3.2.1.2 The Focus Group

To diversify and strengthen the findings of the present research, a mini focus group with key informants, one each representative from the social welfare department, the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and the Faith Based Organization (FBO) was also carried out as another method of data collection. According to Hedges (1985) a mini focus group can consist of 2 to 4 key informants to utilize the advantages of a small group. The three organizations were selected because they are central to the social welfare of single mothers, children and poverty alleviation. Focus groups by virtue of their name are aimed at exploring a specific topic scrupulously, through the interactions between participants (Hatch, 2002). Group dynamics in focus groups is essential revealing aspects that individuals may be uncomfortable to unveil. For example an individual single mother may be timid to talk about the 'immoral ways' she employs to provide for her children (Babbie, 2010). Therefore, the discussion dug up uncensored and diversified information mainly because the participants of the focus group offered a professional insight on this aspect of single motherhood. Also, because they are third party respondents, they did not have a reason to hold back on 'sensitive' vital information which may ameliorate lives of single mothers and their children (Cooper, 2008). The bias-free information obtained in the focus group corroborated that which was obtained from individual respondents.

In order to understand how the research questions fit with the methods of data collection, table 1 below seeks to shed light on that.

Table 1: Research Methods Linked to Research Questions

| Data Sources and Methods | Research Questions | Justification |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Data was obtained from both key informants and single mothers using a focus group and in-depth interviews respectively.</p> | <p>What are the life challenges faced by single mothers in Chiredzi Town?</p> | <p>Single mothers are the ones living in poverty and key informants have a professional understanding on single mother's challenges.</p> |
| <p>Data was extracted from both key informants and single mothers using a focus group and in-depth interviews respectively.</p> | <p>How effective are the survival strategies employed by single mothers in Chiredzi Town?</p> | <p>Single mothers know how survival strategies have affected their living standards. Key informants also have a professional way of assessing the change in the lives of single mothers.</p> |
| <p>Data was acquired from both key informants and single mothers using a focus group and in-depth interviews respectively.</p> | <p>What sources and types of assistance are available to single mothers to help them fight poverty?</p> | <p>Single mothers know the sources and types of assistance available to them. Key informants also know of organizations which offer assistance and the form thereof.</p> |

3.2.2 Data Collection Instrument

Different interview schedules were used for individual interviews and the focus group in order to certify the flow and direction of the interviews. (Copies of the interview schedules are attached as Annexure A and B.) The questions on the interview schedule were almost the same except that for single mothers, direct questions were asked while key informants were asked questions on behalf of the single mothers as third party, professional respondents. To capture responses, an audio recorder was employed as it allows a replay which enables familiarization with the unedited responses (Creswell, 2003).

Audio taping also allowed the data to be captured in its original and unscripted form which provides rich information such as sighing, hesitation and emotions. Fluency in speaking and capturing data also improved the quality of responses given by the interviewees unlike having to repeatedly stop the respondent in order to inscribe down the responses (Babbie, 2010). A researcher is also human; jotting down points may lead to omission of vital information that might enrich the data collected. Klenke (2005) and Hatch (2002) emphasize that the researcher is the primary data collection tool of the qualitative research because of the flexibility and adaptability of qualitative researchers. Therefore, the manner in which the researcher structures research questions is of utmost importance because the answers depend on such pre-made questions.

3.3 Research Domain

A geographical location where the research will be conducted is what may constitute as a domain of the research. Fox and Bayat (2007) define a research domain as a place or site where accessible individuals willing to give distinct information about a phenomenon being studied are found. Chiredzi town, in Zimbabwe is the domain of this research. It is situated in the South-East part of the country in Masvingo province. Chiredzi town is 245 km from the Zimbabwe and South Africa's Beitbridge border post (Chiredzi West Constituency Profile, 2011). The researcher has chosen the place because she is familiar with it as she resides in Chiredzi. Even though researching a familiar area is advantageous as far as gaining entry and rapport is concerned, there is a possibility of being biased in sample selection and also the respondents might take the researcher for granted since it will be someone they know. However, the researcher used her professional and communication skills to maintain objectivity thereby overcoming bias. Also, the town has many single mothers who sell sex in the famous Chigarapasi beer hall and many single mothers who seek employment in the Hippo valley and Triangle sugar plantations.

3.3.1 Population

A population in research is any set of people from which a sample is selected and to which the study's results will generalize (Maunganidze and Latif, 2004). In this study, the population is the single mothers residing in Chiredzi Town, Zimbabwe. Representatives from stakeholders dealing with single mothers, namely Social Welfare (government), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Faith Based

Organizations (FBOs) will also form the population of the study from which the focus group was drawn.

3.3.2 Sample Size

Mathematicians are of the view that a sample is like a subset which is carefully extracted from the larger set. “Sampling in qualitative research serves to tap into the breadth of variation within a population rather than to focus on the ‘average’ or ‘typical’ member of that population” (Babbie, 2012: 230). A sample is therefore a special subset of a population observed for purposes of making inferences about the nature of the total population itself. The researcher used a sample of 20 single mothers in order to obtain relevant and detailed information for making conclusions.

However, the actual sample interviewed was less than 20 according to the principle of saturation (Hatch, 2002) which determines when adequate information has been obtained. It is important to emphasize that qualitative data methods are not concerned with the wideness of the data but rather the profundity thereof. Hence, the information obtained from one respondent may be good enough as that from 13 or more respondents (Creswell, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Babbie, 2010). In order to authenticate the findings of this study, the researcher also included 3 key informants from three different organizations. These were purposively selected, each from the government social welfare, from the NGOs and from the FBOs. So, the actual interviews carried out were 13 and the focus group comprised of 3 key informants.

3.3.3 Sampling Method

There are different types of non-probability sampling. However, in this study, the researcher utilized the purposive technique to select the sample as it "...selects a desirable group of people" (McBurney and White, 2009: 258). This method enabled the researcher to get responses only from the target group, in this case single mothers and representatives from organizations that deal with the social wellness of single mothers and their children. So, purposive sampling is based entirely on the judgment of the researcher in that, a sample is composed of elements that contain the relevant characteristics, representative or typical attributes of the population (Hatch, 2002).

3.4 Research Procedure

A research procedure entails the actual events and all proceedings that transpired from when the researcher gained entry and the extraction of raw data. Stoecker (2005) describes the research procedure as an overall plan of data collection from seeking consent from different stakeholders to the gathering of the data from respondents. With this present research, the researcher firstly got her ethical clearance in accordance with the university's policy (attached as Annexure D). The certificate gave her acquiescence to approach communities for her data collection procedure. Secondly, she approached different organizations to seek permission into the communities- a process known in research as gaining entry into the community (Bryman, 2012). The purpose of which is to familiarize with the environment and to explain to concerned parties the importance of the research.

After that, the researcher then extended the letter from the university to the different organizations, validating that indeed the researcher is a master student. (The letter is attached as Annexure C.) It was also deemed necessary for the researcher to elaborate on her topic to these relevant organizations, clearly stipulating how she was going to conduct her research and the period she intended to be engaged with the community. Consent from these stakeholders paved a way for the researcher to commence her data collection procedure.

The researcher then purposively selected 20 single mothers who were willing and comfortable to respond to the questions according to the ethical considerations of the research (Hatch, 2002). The researcher took a moment to explain on the level of confidentiality, voluntary participation and informed consent; the key ethical considerations that are pivotal to ensuring the comfort and welfare of respondents (Bryman, 2012; Babbie, 2012). After all the ethical procedures were clearly explained to the potential respondents, the initial screening of the sample was preceded by setting a date for the actual carrying out of one-on-one interviews.

On the day of the interview, the researcher visited the respondents as per agreement on the previous meetings; the researcher checked if the respondents still wanted to participate in the interviews. The researcher then gave a brief introduction of her topic, her credentials and other personal information as an ice-breaking strategy. Upon asking if participants had any questions, the researcher asked each single mother to sign the informed consent form in accordance with the requirements of ethical clearance procedures (Babbie, 2011). (The copy of the ethical clearance certificate is attached as annexure D). Permission was sought to switch on the audio recorder, clearly indicating

that respondents were permitted to stop or pull out of the interview at any point in time. Then, a pre-outlined interview guide was used to ensure an easy flow of the interview as data was audio taped (Creswell, 2003).

The interviews lasted between 22 and 43 minutes depending on the information obtained from these single mothers. During the interview, there were emotional moments and the researcher (a qualified and registered social worker) had to offer on-spot counseling and assurance (Babbie, 2011). Body language such as a squeeze on the hand, were also used for strengthening single mothers. A non-judgmental attitude, empathy and good communication skills were also tools that assisted the researcher in her data collection procedure. It should be noted that the circumstances surrounding single motherhood are highly sensitive as old wounds will be re-opened (Frank, 2012a; Frank, 2012b). Some of the single mothers' experiences may include death, rejection and other traumatizing events such as abuse. After asking for permission to proceed, all the interviews were successfully conducted. Fortunately, none of the single mothers was severely affected by the interviews. Otherwise, the researcher would have referred them to appropriate counseling agencies.

For the focus group, a neutral venue was decided on by all the stakeholders that were invited to the focus group pre-discussion meeting. In the focus group discussion, the researcher introduced herself and gave a brief recap on her topic and its relevance to the stakeholders represented. Ethical considerations which are: confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary participation were shortly verbalized and the key informants signed the informed consent forms (Babbie, 2011). Resuming the discussion, a different third party interview schedule was used to direct the content of the discussion. The

researcher facilitated the discussion as she was ice breaking, probing and making follow-up questions to ensure that the conversation was well lubricated for the purpose of obtaining valid and relevant data (Hatch, 2002; Babbie, 2010). This focus group discussion lasted about two hours and thirty seven minutes due to the richness of the information that the researcher extracted.

It should be noted that the researcher had an upper-hand advantage because she resides in the same domain, Chiredzi Town. Therefore, navigating her way to social welfare stakeholders and identifying single mothers was a painless exercise. The information obtained from the key informants is crucial for the authentication and substantiation of the data that was collected first hand from the single mothers. It is true that the one wearing the shoes is the one who knows exactly where it hurts, but circumstances surrounding single motherhood are daunting such that objectivity may be lost due to the degree of emotional involvement of these single mothers (Frank, 2012b). The triangulation of the two methods of data collection eliminates any doubt of the validity or reliability of the findings of this current study.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

Validity involves the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration. According to Stoecker (2005), validity is considered important because the objectives of the research should be a representative of what the researcher intends to investigate and reliability is concerned with the consistency and stability of data. This is the ability of the findings to remain identical after being restudied or re-analyzed. According to Rubin and Babbie (2011), reliability

is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied to the same object, would yield unchangeable results each time.

Golafshani (2003) argues that reliability and validity are common terms applied in quantitative paradigms where numbers are widely used to understand various phenomena. Patton (2001), as cited in Golafshani (2003) is however of the view that validity and reliability are concepts to be observed and applied to ensure the analysis of the quality of any study. This then calls for redefinition of the terms 'reliability' and 'validity' to chisel and align them to the qualitative inquiry whose focus is on natural settings. According to Shenton (2004), qualitative researchers have distanced themselves from the positivist paradigms by relabeling reliability and validity. This is mainly because reliability and validity is inapplicable to qualitative studies. Trustworthiness in qualitative research has replaced reliability and validity as used in quantitative studies. One of such scholars who noted this distinction is Guba (1981), cited in Shenton (2004). The proposed substitutes are therefore summarized on table 2 below:

Table 2: A Comparison of terminology according to research approach

| <u>Quantitative Paradigm</u> | <u>Qualitative Paradigm</u> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Internal validity | Credibility |

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| External validity | Transferability/ Applicability |
| Reliability | Dependability/ Confirmability |
| Objectivity | Neutrality/ Consistency |

3.5.1 The Trustworthiness of the Research

Many theories have been put forward by researchers who emphasize on the trustworthiness of their findings. In qualitative methods, many people however question this trustworthiness as this approach does not measure variables or use numbers to draw its conclusions (Pitney and Parker, 2009). Trustworthiness is then an umbrella term that makes a reasonable claim to methodological soundness in qualitative research (Erlandson, 1993), cited by Pitney and Parker (2009). The following terms, which are equivalent to validity and reliability, are explained in detail:

3.5.1.1 Credibility

This can be defined as the plausibility or accuracy of the study's findings (Pitney and Parker, 2009). In other words, this term seeks to check if the researcher has the correct information which can be accredited or recognized by research bodies. To ensure credibility of the findings, long term engagement and examination are mandatory (Shenton, 2004). In the present study, the researcher is well acquainted with the area

as she resides in the domain of the research. Information was also cross checked by the immediate supervisor.

3.5.1.2 Transferability

Guba (1981), cited in Shenton (2004) defines transferability as the applicability of the findings of the study to similar environments. This is the generalization of findings to the whole population from which the sample is derived. In the present research, stakeholders such as governments should be able to formulate national policies basing on the findings made because the findings are not limited to Chiredzi Town. Transferability was ensured through dense description of research participants and the cautious application of the sampling method (Pitney and Parker, 2009).

3.5.1.3 Dependability

According to Stringer (2004), cited in Pitney and Parker (2009), dependability refers to the appropriateness and clarity of the research process to ensure that the findings are reliable. In the present study, dependability was achieved when in-depth interviews were combined with the focus group as a way of substantiating the findings to prove the consistency of the findings (Golafshani, 2003). There is also a detailed design methodology explaining how respondents were selected, how data was gathered and even the process of data analysis. Uniformity of the data obtained from in-depth interviews and the focus group authenticates the findings of this research.

3.5.1.4 Confirmability

Confirmability can be seen as equivalent to the effort of maintaining objectivity in quantitative researches (Tappen, 2011). Confirmability cannot be fully achieved just as objectivity is unattainable in the quantitative approach. This is attributable to the fact that qualitative researchers tend to incorporate their perspectives and reactions instead of neutralizing them (Tappen, 2011). Hence, confirmability is inapplicable to phenomenological and feminist researches (Morse et al., 2002, cited in Tappen, 2011). However, confirmability was augmented through the use of interview schedules and the availability of the transcript which contains exact words from the respondents.

3.5.2 Ascertaining the Trustworthiness of Research Findings

In order to acquit any doubt on the trustworthiness of the findings of this study, the researcher has outlined the strategies that have been implemented to boost its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. According to Guba (1981), cited in, Shenton (2004), qualitative research need also to implement strategies that will ensure that their findings are not biased, hearsays or mere speculations. In this way, the findings can be accredited as adding to the block of knowledge to ensure the evolvement of social theories. These strategies are delineated in table 3 below:

Table 3: Strategies to Ascertain the Trustworthiness of the Present Research

| <u>Measurement</u> | <u>Strategy</u> | <u>Application in the Present Study</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Credibility | Triangulation | A focus group and individual respondents were combined to enrich the findings. |
| | Authority of researcher | Researcher is a qualified social worker with vast knowledge on research methods and interpersonal skills. |
| | Long term engagement | Researcher resides in the town under study and therefore has first hand information about single motherhood in the area. |
| Transferability | Choice of sample | Purposive sampling method which relies on the unbiased judgement of the researcher. |
| | Comparison of sample | Sample reflects the total population. |
| | Dense description | Thorough explication of methodology including supporting literature and exact quotes from focus group discussions and individual interviews. Pilot study also helped to align responses with objectives of study. |
| Dependability | Triangulation | Combined focus group and individual participants' responses substantiated data. |

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|--|
| | Peer change | Research etiquette discussed with supervisor and approved by Higher Degrees. |
| | Code-recode procedure | Accord discussion between researcher and supervisor |
| Confirmability | Confirmability audit | The study is guided by numerous ethics. |
| | Triangulation | A focus group and interviews merged for rich data. |

3.6 Pilot study

A pilot study is a small-scale preliminary study conducted in order to evaluate feasibility, time, cost and anticipated limitations in an attempt to envisage a suitable sample size and to improve the study design prior to performance of a full-scale research (Hulley, 2007). In order to check the trustworthiness of the research and that of the research instrument, a sample of 5 single mothers was interviewed using exactly the same questions that the respondents in the actual research were asked. This also assisted in checking the similitude between the information the researcher is expecting and the actual information given. Necessary amendments were then made beforehand to suit the objectives and purpose of the study, thereby evading wasting time and money in collecting irrelevant data (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, a pilot study saves time, money and also keeps intact the reputation of the researcher, rather than making costly

mistakes. It also fine-tuned the research tool as certain questions were changed and modified prior to the actual research proceedings.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

The dual effects of poverty and single child care aggravate the lives of lone mothers exposing them to social, emotional and economic vulnerability. As such, some solo mothers were overly emotional in respect to sharing the circumstances that surround their lives (Frank, 2012). Interviews opened old wounds as the researcher was delving beneath the conditions that lone mothers are living in. In order to prevent these single mothers from being overwhelmed, the researcher (a qualified and registered social worker who has also majored in psychology) employed her professional skills to maintain objectivity and offered on-the-spot counseling. A non-judgmental attitude, empathy, acceptance and good communication skills also helped the researcher during the interviews. Apart from that, single mothers were free to stop the interview process or terminate altogether if they feel that emotions are taking the toll (Babbie, 2011).

Also, in many cases, people in need expect to be given something for relief if interviewed or approached by philosophers who invade their lives or home settings. They usually take researchers to represent the government or NGOs. As a result, respondents at first glance took the researcher for a potential donor and were confused, holding back and were unwilling to participate in the interview since they perceived that they were not getting anything in return. However, the researcher explicated to the respondents and clarified everything as soon as she got the opportunity to speak, highlighting that the researcher was a student in pursuit of her studies. She also clearly

explained the importance of the research to them and to all stakeholders involved, reflecting that the research is a base of identifying gaps and weaknesses that are hindering their social functioning. Also, emphasizing that their involvement will assist the government in implementing policies that can ameliorate their living standards by alleviating chronic and transient poverty.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis can be seen as the breaking down of voluminous data into categories and groups that can depict meaningful interpretations. Gibbs (2007) strongly believes that analysis in qualitative studies implies a transformation of bulky data into clarified, understandable, insightful, trustworthy and original findings. In the current research, systematic data coding was ideal "...whereby the data are broken down into their component parts and these parts are given labels" (Bryman, 2012: 13). Data was arranged in themes according to the aim of the study and the research questions. According to Creswell (2009), data analysis in a qualitative study involves a twofold approach. The first aspect involves data analysis at the research site during data collection and the second aspect involves data analysis away from the site following a period of data collection. The researcher preferred the latter, whereby the data was gathered and captured onsite and then analyzed offsite for accuracy.

According to Rubin & Babbie (2011), analysis can mean the categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data to obtain answers to research questions. Themes were formulated before-hand leaving room for further generation of themes if need be, depending on the information gathered. Creswell (2009) is of the view that the

process of data analysis and interpretation can best be achieved if data is coded according to its homogeneity and meaningfulness in answering the research questions. Thus, qualitative analysis draws meaningful conclusions by scrutinizing interview transcripts to create perceptive analysis consistent to the original data extracted (Gibbs, 2007).

Coding data is the formal representation of analytical thinking in generating categories and themes. Rapley (2007) as cited in Gibbs (2007) argues that qualitative analysis involves conversation and discourse analysis in that data is not just revealed as matters interviewees talk about. Instead, interpretation includes professional scrutiny and thematic categorizing in ways that brings answers being sort pertaining a phenomenon under study. A coding scheme was applied using codes, which may be in several forms of abbreviations of key words or numbers, thus according to Babbie (2012). In thematic analysis, the task of the research is to identify a limited number of themes which adequately reflect their textual data. Data familiarization is key to thematic analysis in order to cautiously and carefully match data and the pre-formulated themes.

3.9 Time Frame

This study is cross-sectional in nature. This entails that data was collected at one point in time with the advantage of analyzing prevalent attitudes and practices (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, the research stretched from March 2013 to June 2014.

3.10 Application of Ethical Considerations

In order to conduct empirical research, there are protocols that have to be followed. The researcher honored the ethical requirements that secured and protected respondents from exploitation. "...ethics is typically associated with morality, and both deal with matters of right and wrong" (Babbie, 2011: 66). Ethical considerations are therefore bench marks that guide research to promote uniformity and also to protect and not exploit respondents. The following were pivotal to the present study:

- **Voluntary participation by respondents:** This ethical consideration postulates that all respondents must be at liberty to participate in the research and should withdraw at any point when they want to discontinue with the research. This then entails that participants cannot be coerced in any way to be part of the participants because information to be released is personal (Bryman, 2012).
- **The right of participants to informed consent:** In regard to this ethic, all participants have the right to be informed about the logistics of the research in order to make informed decisions (Babbie, 2012). If they are empowered with the right information they can make a decision as to whether or not they want to participate, in line with the voluntary participation ethics.
- **Right to privacy:** This ethical consideration ensures that information released by respondents is used only for academic purposes and not for other forms of publication. Also, pseudonyms should be preferred instead of the real names of the participants as this will make them vulnerable to the general public (Bryman, 2012).

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter can be viewed as the heart of the research because the validity and reliability of the research are founded on the research methodology. Detailed information of the data collection procedure, stretching from the selection of respondents to the analysis of data has been outlined. The validity and reliability of this study in line with the trustworthiness of qualitative researches have been exhaustively explained. It can then be safely said that this is the engine of any research bearing in mind that failure to choose the correct research method, sample, data collection tool and method of data analysis compromise the overall outcome of the research, thereby raising questions on validity and reliability of the findings. So, this chapter calls for cautious attention if the findings of the research are to be credited as adding value to the body of social phenomena. The following chapter seeks to present the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to present the findings on the empirical data collected in the present study. In an effort to assess the effectiveness of the survival strategies employed by single mothers to avert poverty in Chiredzi Town, the researcher conducted 13 in-depth, face-to-face interviews. A focus group discussion was also carried out to augment the trustworthiness of this qualitative study (Guba, 1981, cited in Shenton, 2004). As pointed out in Chapter 3 above, the responses were audio-tapped to allow for play back and data familiarization, a technique which singles out to strengthen qualitative inquiries.

The responses in both in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion were transliterated (transcripts attached as Annexure F). Data was reconciled to already pre-outlined themes leaving room for the emergence of a few sub themes that came out (Babbie, 2012). In this chapter, the researcher took the role of a mere reporter. Hence forth, no attempt was made to include the researcher's perspectives or the views of other researchers. To authenticate the findings of this research, outliers from respondents were used in every theme. In this study however, no extra themes emerged although sub-themes were noted. These themes and findings are delineated below:

4.2 Themes

In accordance with the data obtained, various themes and sub-themes were formulated. This ensured clarity on the findings of this research as depicted in subsequent pages.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Biographical Information

Upon undertaking a detailed inquiry, the study revealed that single motherhood in Chiredzi Town is prevalent in all sexually active age groups. In the current study, single mother's ages ranged from 25 years to 53 years as depicted in the Table 4 below, giving an average age of 37 years. Apart from that, the researcher also found out that matrifocality as a social ill is an upshot of assorted factors such as divorce, children out of marriage, abandonment and widowhood. It is interesting still, to note that more than one factor may contribute to the single motherhood of a woman. For example Single Mother (SM) 9 and SM 13 were firstly widowed and then gave birth to other children or child out of marriages. It has also been found that solo motherhood in Chiredzi Town is mainly as a result of children born out of marriage and widowhood. Divorce is another common causal factor, followed by abandonment.

Table 4: Biographical Information on Single Mothers Interviewed

| Pseudonym | Age | No. Of children | Causes of single motherhood |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| SM (Single Mother) 1 | 34 | 5 | Out-of-wed |
| SM 2 | 37 | 2 | Out-of-wed |
| SM 3 | 33 | 1 | Divorced |
| SM 4 | 43 | 2 | Widowed |
| SM 5 | 50 | 4 | Out-of wed |
| SM 6 | 39 | 1 | Divorced |
| SM 7 | 37 | 2 | Abandoned |
| SM 8 | 31 | 3 | Widowed |
| SM 9 | 53 | 3 | Widow then Out-of-wed |
| SM 10 | 42 | 4 | Widowed |
| SM 11 | 43 | 2 | Out-of-wed |

| | | | |
|---------|----|---|-----------------------|
| SM 12 | 25 | 2 | Widowed |
| SM 13 | 36 | 2 | Widow then out-of-wed |
| Average | 37 | 2 | |

Since the focus group discussion was also carried out, the researcher deemed it necessary to also reveal the characteristics of the focus group panel. With the researcher as the facilitator of the discussion, the panel constituted professionals in this social phenomenon- people directly involved with poverty eradication among lone mothers and their children. This included the district service officer, the child officer and a pastor who is also a superintendent of Village Children’s Home. Table 5 below reveals the vast experience of the panel, ranging from 6 to 12 years in the field in question. The summarized information of these different organizations illustrate the fact that these different stakeholders indeed are committed to alleviating poverty and enhancing the living standards of single mothers and their children.

Table 5: The Biographical Information of the Key Informants

| Pseudonym | Organizations represented | Position held | Period of employment | Brief aim of organization |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| KI (Key Informant) 1 | Government | District Service officer | 6 years | Promote self-reliance and security |
| KI 2 | NGOs | Child Officer | 12 years | Empowering children and families |
| KI 3 | FBOs | Pastor and superintendent | 9 years | Ensure spiritual growth through social engagement |

4.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges Surrounding Single Motherhood

In the present inquiry, the researcher noticed that single motherhood in Chiredzi is an unfortunate predicament and not a conscious choice. As a result, these single mothers live under daunting circumstances. In fact, all the single mothers interviewed pointed out that single motherhood is an inopportune situation that is stressful, to say but the least.

These challenges have been sub-divided into communal experiences and familial challenges as highlighted in the sub themes below.

4.2.2.1 Communal Experiences Surrounding Single Matrifocal Families

Single mothers obviously live among other people to whom they identify with. In this regard, the researcher found out that these communities view single mothers with different lenses to those they view single or married women. Most of the single mothers interviewed lamented that they are rejected, labeled, discriminated against or looked down upon simply because they are raising their children without a male counter-part.

According to the responses captured, these ill-treatments come from the church members, neighbors and even colleagues who have husbands. SM 5 in her response despondently recounts how the community viewed her as she said,

The community rejects you simply because you are a single mother. Whatever you are doing does not look like a good thing. It's nothing no matter how good it is.

Clearly, there might be a need for educational workshops by social workers to address the effects of such ignorant social views. The researcher also learnt that the community which should be a pillar of strength to these single mothers is actually responsible for adding salt to the wounds. Of all the 13 single mothers interviewed, only one said that she lived like any other person in the community. This goes to show the degree of segregation, discrimination and abuse that single mothers receive at the hands of other fellow human beings residing in this fractured planet earth. The communal challenges

associated with single motherhood in Chiredzi Town revolve solely around intense stereotyping, as African humanism (*ubuntu/ unhu*) is slowly disappearing among people. Societal members, especially married women, assume that all single mothers (despite age or the circumstances leading to lone motherhood) are loose and therefore can sleep with anyone because they do not have their own husbands. In short, sole mothers are accused of men snatching and destroying other women's homes. These findings are reinforced by the howling statement of SM 1 outlined below:

Married women think we take their husbands everywhere we go. Even if you get money they are there to criticize. Even if you wear fashionable clothes they think their husbands or other men have bought things for us.

As if criticisms from women are not enough, the research has discovered that men take single mothers as used goods and therefore they cannot refuse their sexual overtures especially if they are offering them money. SM 4 poured her heart out as she was commenting on this unfair judgment passed on single mothers who are just trying to live normal lives like any other person or woman. She said:

One, as a single mother males see you as a sex object and you should just love them because you want their help. Two, people who are married, when they see me walking with a man they think we are taking their husbands or sleeping with everyone.

This testimony puts into perspective the communal experiences of lone mothers in Chiredzi Town. Familial challenges are explored next in the in the following paragraphs.

4.2.2.2 Familial Challenges Faced by Lone Mothers

Some of the single mothers showed their disappointment in their families as they revealed how they were judged and alienated from important decisions just because

they are lone mothers, yet still, not by choice but due to circumstances beyond their control. Troublesome families, as found in the present research can be from the single mothers' own side or from their children's paternal side. Among those interviewed, one single mother spilled out that failing to get married attracts a tag that reads 'failure' in every facet of life. In her own words she (SM5) said,

Whatever you are doing, the community will say you don't have a husband so what good can you do because you have failed to get married. So whatever you do you are a failure.

On the other side of the bridge, the researcher was made to realize that the widow's in-laws have their own way of torment they impose on the daughter-in-law. Instead of binging comfort and assurance, they are actually a pain in the neck. These findings are also supported by the focus group panel which said that they offer counseling to single mothers who face different emotional and psychological torments. SM 12, a widow, recalled how she was accused of killing her own husband by her in-laws. In a somber voice, as if in tears, she narrated,

They can even accuse you of killing your husband. They just find a way of accusing you. Some were saying I had boyfriends and they killed him.

These are the familial challenges that make lone motherhood a disheartening experience. A handful of single mothers also echoed the problems of playing the father role, molding their children as a bi-parent. They revealed that single motherhood also comes with a burden of having to explain to the children where their father is. Another single mother in this regard sadly said that sometimes they lie to their children about the whereabouts of their fathers to spare them pain and confusion. She went on explaining how hard it is for a single mother to explain to children why there is no male father-

figure in the house when they can see their friends and neighbors with their fathers. The next hurdle to be analyzed is central to the economical challenges as faced by single mothers.

4.2.2.3 Economic Challenges

The researcher noticed that of all the challenges faced by sole mothers, the economic challenges are prevalent to all. All the interviewed lone mothers bewailed over the insufficiency of funds to cater for the needs of their children. To be specific, all the single mothers indicated that payment of their children's school fees was not any easy walk in the park, considering the importance of education in securing a better tomorrow. Some solo mothers also pointed out that they struggled to feed their children, pay their rentals and even buy clothes. This challenge, though prevalent in all single mothers, is wrapped up in SM 8's statement as she observes,

Some things we may try but we fail because we are all alone. But a school fee is a problem.

Most single mothers also reflected that the paucity of finances is the genesis of other social, medical and psychological problems such as high blood pressure and distress. According to the findings drawn from the present research, it is the instinctive desire of these resilient mothers to put clothes on their children's backs, put food on the table and secure their children's future that compels them to initiate different mechanisms in an effort to curb poverty. The focus group panel also emphasized on the economical challenges impinging on single mothers. Indeed, they all agreed that their organizations are receiving problems from single mothers on a daily basis that are reflective of the insufficiency of finances. As a result, these key informants agree with one voice that

money problems where single mothers cannot afford medical bills, fees, rentals and food are most prevalent on their door steps. The District Officer said,

Among the most prevalent challenges are food insecurity, problems in payment of school fees...

This reflects the dilemma single mothers find themselves in, with so many children depending on them for physical needs. The findings on the strategies employed by solo mothers in an attempt to avert and alleviate the above challenges are discussed below:

4.2.3 Theme 3: Survival Strategies

It is commonly said that desperate times call for desperate measures (Ditmore, 2011). According to the evidence extracted from the 13 single mothers interviewed, the researcher noticed that there is no one formula of alleviating poverty. This is so due to the emergence of the resourcefulness and strong desire to survive. Most of the single mothers buy and sell items such as clothing, fruits, vegetables and gadgets which they order from South Africa, Harare or on the market.

The focus group also pointed out this fact outlining that single mothers have no time to rest as they will be trying to make ends meet. The focus group panel reflected that some sell clothes while others do different projects for survival. In this regard, one single mother, SM 7 said,

I stay alert to listen where I can get things to sell, things that are on demand at that time. I'm always moving so that I can get stuff for resell.

When asked exactly what she sold, the single mother replied,

I sell a lot of things: tomatoes, anything as long as they can give me money.

A few indicated that they plant vegetable gardens at the back of their rented-houses to save on some money. Three (3) of the respondents also revealed that they sell sex to survive and to feed their children as sole providers. For them, being in absolute poverty as single mothers is hard such that sometimes the options are limited. These women portrayed that choosing between watching children starve to death and selling sex is like jumping from a frying pan to the blazing fire kind of dilemma. It is a sink or float situation where extreme measures should be taken if options run out. In a voice mixed with desperation and sadness, SM 9 echoed, as though asking a question:

Except if I go to the bar, where else can I get it (the sex to get the money)?

Most of the single mothers besides the other survival strategies pointed out that they form groups where they take turns in benefiting from the generated money. Another single mother also made it known to the researcher that she accesses loans from the bank from time to time. There are also a handful solo mothers who said that they depended mostly on their salaries to enhance their livelihood thereby shielding themselves from the arrows of poverty. The researcher- through analyzing the body languages and voice tones of all the single mothers - noted that as much as some of these women take pride in how they seek to fight poverty, a number of these single mothers are desperately looking for the next exit opportunity to quit their survival strategies and employ others that are deemed by the society as 'decent' or rather acceptable. All of the women interviewed who resorted to sex work or prostitution for survival, plainly made known their deep desire to exit prostitution if they were empowered and given a chance to. The continual engagement of these single mothers into prostitution despite their despise of it, just reflects the degree of desperation and

resilience of these women. This sink or swim situation is also noted by Ditmore (2011), who explains that solo mothers sometimes engage in immoral activities simply because their choices are limited.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

As such, the effectiveness of these strategies lies in their ability to empower these sole mothers and their children so that they can alleviate poverty. The overall information gathered from these single mothers shows that most of the single mothers are struggling to make ends meet. In fact, the majority of these single mothers are in absolute poverty. They cannot afford the basic requirements of life like food, accommodation, health facilities and payment of school fees. Therefore, they have clearly said that the strategies they are implementing are incapable of sailing them out of poverty. Below is an outlier of SM 9, she sells sex:

Sufficient?! It's not enough! It can never be enough. It's just that the body is painful since 1994! The flesh comes to the point of giving in. I am tired, I am in pain.

Many of the single mothers did point out that they are getting something. The problem they flashed out is that the profit or rather income generated is so insignificant compared to the expenses that need to be covered. One of the single mothers said that many times they may be raided by the police who take all their stock. Sometimes, vegetables are not bought and they will have to throw them away because they have gone bad and that spells loss. They indicated that sometime getting a US\$1 is a mission, taking into account the poverty datum line of Zimbabwe that is sitting at US\$563,73, according to the ZBC 20:00 NEWS. The sex workers also revealed that

'sleep-overs' may pay US\$10 which cannot cover their daily expenses as their livelihood depends on another person's pocket

The researcher also found out that those with formal employment are living a better life than those who are just joining things in the informal sector. As a result, these few single mothers noticed and appreciated the significant changes that their survival strategies have brought in their lives. They also supplement their salaries with other projects such as poultry, gardening and selling. One such single mother maintained that she is now able to pay her children's school fees, even though things have not stabilized financially. In fact two of these single mothers were boasting maintaining that children of single mothers can actually live better lives than those with both parents if the mother is focused and determined to succeed despite opposing forces. One of them said:

Your children can actually live better than those who do have both active parents. If you are working, it needs you to be organized. What do you want? What are you telling your children about their identity? Organize your life. If you are working you should teach your children to work.

This shows that these survival strategies indeed are empowering and lifting other single mothers out of the merciless hands of dire poverty.

4.2.4.1 Factors Harboring the Effectiveness of Survival Strategies

All the single mothers interviewed showed that there are various factors that choke their efforts, making them almost fruitless. Many of these single mothers are bread winners and are therefore responsible not only for their welfare and that of their children, but their parents and siblings too. These single mothers are left with no other choice but to

endure the blows that come from every direction for the sake of their children's sanity and well-being. SM 11 puts it out this way:

...everyone is looking up to me. My brothers and sisters went to South Africa and they don't send anything back, so I am the closest to them. So if I get something they share there.

Single mothers who buy and sell fruits and vegetations also blamed the economy for their predicaments. As a result, their businesses do not move as they used to. Three of the single mothers selling sex share in this view as they lament that they only get change from their clients which is not enough for their upkeep and survival since they too have families who rely on such income. One such mother said:

I remember there are times when things used to sell but now even those that are employed workers are crying...

The effectiveness of the strategies according to a handful of the single mothers interviewed depends on the strategy itself. Two of the single mothers echoed that the lack of education does exacerbate single motherhood thereby veiling the fruits of these women's labor. This view was supported by the KI 2, a child officer in an NGO. She pointed out that many single mothers have low levels of education because of their dependency on males for economic support. She added that this makes their lives difficult even ensuring the sustainability of the projects that are erected on their behalf by such organizations as Family Aid Care Trust. The key informant reported that some single mothers channel the funds that are meant for projects to personal use and this makes it hard for NGOs to employ statutory interventions. As a professional vested with vast knowledge in this social phenomenon, K1 added:

...but if there are other situations that require money, they divert that money and misuse it and there is little that can be done to help them...

Despite a lack of education, about a quarter of the single mothers cited unreliability of their market as the other factor hindering the effectiveness of the strategies that they are adopting to fight against poverty. These single mothers claimed that there is no way of budgeting the money that they are not sure of in terms of quantity and timing. This concern was raised by a single mother who is employed on contractual term and two ladies that are selling sex for a living. To them, monthly income fluctuates even though expenditure may be constant, because the rentals, food and electricity costs are obvious. This inconsistency according to these single mothers make it impossible for them to plan ahead, hence poverty comes like a thief and knocks them off their feet. Evidently, poverty in Zimbabwe is of a chronic nature as structural failure is perpetuating the prevalence of poverty. The findings also show that these prostituting mothers are overtly aware of the emotional, moral, medical and physical scars that are associated with prostitution. Concerning this matter, one single mother in a remorseful yet advisory tone said:

The important thing is using hands not bodies because we will be spreading the disease(implies HIV). It may also go even to our children. If you are called for a piece job, you might save a person that you might have infected...

All the single mothers pointed out that the gaps that are left uncovered by the insufficient money poses a great challenge to them as far as the payment of their children's school fees is concerned. As a result, these single mothers have unsatisfied wishes that they prefer someone, be it the government, NGOs or FBOs could address on their behalf if social functioning is to be enhanced. A detailed analysis on these deeply buried wishes is given below:

4.2.4.2 Unfulfilled Wishes of Single Mothers

Whenever there is a shortfall between desired needs and satisfied needs, there is bound to be a longing for the meeting of such gaps. The single mothers in their lengthy interview poured out their hearts as they narrated some of the wishes they appealed unto the external stakeholders for help. Most of the single mothers requested the governments, NGOs and FBOs to aid them in paying their children's school fees as this seemed like the weighty burden on their shoulders. On the other hand, some single mothers just needed a financial push to ascertain their adequate take off out of the poverty jungle. These single mothers expressed their heart-felt plea as they are seeking for a way to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty which is like the grave that never has enough. The most stunning thing about most single mothers in Chiredzi town is that they did not want to be at the mercy of the government or NGOs. All they want is to be financially or vocationally empowered so that they can stand on their own to educate their children so they do not suffer the same fate as they did. Their responses plainly showed that they do not have a dependency syndrome. Instead, they are willing to work for their livelihood only with the help of those who can. One single mother flaunts with her capabilities as she says:

We wish to work and have our own money. Even working at someone's home they will give you money to raise children. So working is what we desire: jobs.

The researcher read the deep compassion that these single mothers have for their children. It is like an engine that makes everything okay. All of the single mothers were comfortable in letting the researcher know that they would walk on fire for the wellbeing

of the children. This is obviously an instinctive and protective intuition that is deeply embedded in a mother's heart.

4.2.5 Theme 5: Sources of Assistance

In a scorching day in the middle of the desert, anyone would appreciate the feet that bring a glass of cold water to quench the thirst. In the same way, single mothers in Chiredzi enjoy various types of external assistance. The majority of the single mothers forwarded that they got financial and emotional relief from their own family sides. They accredited their family members for being the unshaken rock in times of need. SM 6 took pride in her family as she said:

...where I was born. They understand my problems so when I'm broke, they understand and help me out...

However, some single mothers, through their narratives, made the researcher realize that their families were also living in poverty. As such, they could not assist even if they wanted to. As a result, they had to delve beneath their stored capacities and fight poverty with all resilience as though their lives depended on it. Norman (2012) supports this view adding that child bearing has the ability to motivate and push mothers beyond their comfort zone. Single mothers who found themselves in such calamitous situations fight with all they have in order to keep afloat and not be swept away by the waves of absolute poverty, misery and failure. One of such single mother, with her head by the side commented:

As I speak right now I'm staying with my mother and I am taking care of her. Even at the beginning I was staying with my auntie's daughter, and I was taking care of her...

This goes to show how acute single mothers have to bend in order to surmount the overwhelming circumstances that come with lone motherhood in a traditional country such as Zimbabwe that upholds the importance of the extended family (Landau & Griffith, 2007). One sole mother also highlighted how her pastor is a comforting hand whenever she feels like breaking down and giving up. On that same note however, there are yet some single mothers that indicated that the church, the house of God was a den of hypocrites where enmity and stereotyping originated from. This particular respondent pointed out that the church for her was a no-go area. In a voice that spelled out 'disappointment' she said:

As for me the church things I don't like them (hahahahahahah- chuckles). Because our thinking is different so I have found nothing from churches (hahahahahaha- chuckles). If you go to those churches you find that there are groups and you do not relate or like each other so there is discrimination so aaaaaah, church maybe the old churches...

This is atrocious and appalling especially considering that the KI from the FBOs preached love, non-judgmental attitude and a conducive environment for spiritual and social wellness. Moreover, a few single mothers highlighted that they were getting aid from Family Aid Care Trust(FACT) international, an NGO which offered free pre-school education to their children. One single mother again mentioned that one of her children in the university had recently received a governmental bursary that covered his tuition levy. Considering that only one person mentioned receiving aid from the government, this is contrary to the information disclosed in the focus group discussion. The Key Informant from the governmental stakeholders mentioned that they have policies and services in place to cater for the needs of the poor especially single mothers and their children. In his words, the district service officer outlined that...

Poverty alleviation programmes and social security measures that seek to hammer poverty. These programmes deal with education and medical help and the holistic social functioning of the disadvantaged.

After reporting on the sources of assistance attainable by sole mothers, the researcher reckoned it necessary to scrutinize specifically the activeness of fathers and paternal families of children that are being raised by lone mothers. A detailed report in this regard is given below.

4.2.5.1 The Role Played by the Paternal Side of Children

As such, the researcher identified a common sub-theme among all single mothers. This was centered on the role played by the paternal side of the children raised by single mothers. Of all the single mothers interviewed, the majority of the responses clearly showed that numerous males are inactive and irresponsible when it comes to the economical, social and overall upkeep of the children. However, many single mothers cried foul over the fact that they are left to ferry the weighty saddle of child care alone on their narrow and shaky shoulders. Those whose husbands have died, aired out that even the remaining family members did not do anything to help. One such 25 year old, widowed single mother recounted her experience with her in-laws saying,

Aaaaah, on my children's family side, there is nothing. Instead of helping, they actually stress me out. They take my children's birth certificate and they were refusing to sign papers so that I can get money because my husband was a soldier.

The above quoted single mother elucidated that she was nonetheless fortunate because her husband had a policy cover that would help with payment of their 2 children. Single mothers that have turned into sex workers, who are unfortunate to conceive children in prostitution, reflected that it is almost an impossible mission firstly

to know who the biological father is and again to make the father support the children. This is mainly because sex workers have multiple sex partners and some of their clients are married. There is also one single mother who eulogized one of her children's fathers, her boyfriend for being responsible and fatherly. She commented that the man did all that he could to ensure the upkeep of his child. She went on to say that the father stuck with her through thick and thin, even when their child was sick even to the point of death. Below is her extract:

...Carol's father tried with school fees, clothing and money. He didn't want his daughter to suffer. He was there until Carol passed away. But the other ones, they don't even know that children want to be seen. So it depends with the man who fathers your child.

All of the single mothers therefore led the researcher to see that their greatest challenge is not raising children per se, alas; it is raising children alone.

4.2.6 Theme 6: The Final Word from Respondents

Even though some single mothers are engaged in non-constructive strategies such as prostitution, it is interesting to report that all single mothers gave positive and constructive advice as their final word. They encouraged each other to work hard engaging in vocational skills in order to improve their living standards. This is well put by one of the single mothers 6 who said:

They should work. There is nothing else I would encourage them. They should work with their own hands.

Other spiritual single mothers advised for divine guidance, strengths and wisdom if single mothers are to head their families in a functional manner. Also, the focus group

gave information which indeed can build up a single mother who is determined to break all the walls of limitations, against all odds.

4.3 Conclusion

The researcher has analyzed the data and presented the findings of the research as per the research questions. Basing on the information outlined above, indeed single motherhood is an ill-fated quandary which is coupled with numerous ups and downs. As much as the causal factors of single motherhood vary, the experiences are more or less the same as if these single mothers live in each other's shadow. Different themes have been identified as well as emerging sub-themes in order to clearly paint out the picture of single mothers' survival strategies and their effectiveness. The closure of this chapter subsequently paves a way for the next chapter which wraps up the conclusions basing on the information obtained from this chapter. Conclusions and summaries are inevitably followed by recommendations to the single mothers, different stakeholders, and the profession of social work as well as future researcher.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 seeks to give meaning to the findings that have been presented in Chapter 4. This chapter therefore encompasses interpretations of the findings, conclusions drawn - as well as recommendations to the stakeholders concerned, government and for future research.

5.2 Discussion of Major Findings

The summary of findings entails giving justifiable meanings to the findings that have been outlined in Chapter 4. Here, the researcher will link the results to the theoretical frameworks (the structural theory and strengths perspective), social work practice and partly extrapolating them to future research and policy amendments. According to Gibbs (2007), in order to draw conclusions, the researcher needs to apply scientific imagination but with scholarly discretion. Hence forth, interpretations and general conclusions are delineated according to the themes and sub-themes previously developed.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Biographical Information

There are a number of interpretations that can be drawn in relation to the findings on the biographical information.

Firstly, an interesting pattern seemed to develop where some single mothers who were widowed at first and later on had children out of wedlock. This may be attributed to the fact that single motherhood is a daunting experience as pointed out by the findings of Keswet & Dapas (2010) and Moyo & Kawewe (2009). As a result, single mothers may have gotten their other children as they tried to remarry or seek sexual satisfaction, considering the speculation that it is difficult for a once married person to abstain from sexual activities than it is for a never married person. Also, they might have been trying to find a father-figure for their children and someone who can support them financially as a boyfriend or husband. According to Sachikonye (2011), 'small houses' (a situation where a woman has a lengthy secret affair with a married man) are usually desperate women who are in financial need, probably to raise their children. Hence in finding financial solace, unplanned pregnancies may be the consequences due to the reluctance of regular sexual partners to use protection.

Apart from that, lone motherhood in Chiredzi has been observed as mainly due to children born out of marriages. According to Kange'the and Mafa (2014), this may be because modernization, westernization and globalization have diluted such moral values as abstinence and faithfulness that were once held with dignity. With an emphasis on women's rights and equality, tolerance and submission are fading away over-emphasizing and promoting women independence and sexual activities which lead to single motherhood. With increased sexuality, matrifocal families may increase because abortion is illegal in Zimbabwe. However, these conclusions are contrary to the findings of Lamb (2010), who argues that divorce is the leading causal factor of single motherhood.

Upon probing deeper into the educational qualifications of these single mothers, most of them had not passed their Ordinary level 'O' level, the basic education that is mandatory if one is going to get employed in Zimbabwe - considering that almost every job in Zimbabwe requires 5 'O' level passes (including Maths, English and Science subjects). As such, most of these lone mothers can hardly secure a dignified job. Even though the average age of the solo mothers is 37 years, an economically active age, illiteracy makes it impossible for most of them to get formal employment thereby resorting to the informal sector.

Even though divorce is arithmetically increasing and sexual activity taking its toll, single mothers in Chiredzi Town are not as a result of choice motherhood as suggested by Morrissette (2007). This may be because Africans, especially Zimbabwean women, still desire to be decently and properly married and to settle down. Christianity may be a molding cream in this regard, since it teaches against promiscuous behavior. Again, Zimbabwe as a nation is resisting some of the western ideas such as homosexuality, abortion and matrifocality. This rivalry between Zimbabwe and the Western countries at might have greatly contributed to the assignment of economic and travel sanctions on Zimbabwe. With the biographical information discussed, the challenges surrounding single motherhood follow.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges Surrounding Single Motherhood

Lone motherhood as a reflection of a structural failure is undeniably a painful experience. This may be linked to the actuality that single motherhood is often unplanned and unforeseen thereby invading and disrupting the normal lives of these

women and children. These findings are in conjunction with the findings of Keswet and Dapas (2010), who forward that solo motherhood is characterized by agonizing and excruciating experiences. The other forms of challenges presenting themselves to single mothers are discussed below.

5.2.2.1 Communal Experiences Surrounding Single Matrifocal Families

Basing on the ecological system, no humans can live as islands because of interdependence and interrelatedness of humanity (Turner, 2005). However, their communal association is inevitably coupled with social problems. To begin with, single mothers are often seen as outcasts. They are labeled and looked down upon because of the African culture that upholds a paternal family system, thereby rejecting matrifocal families (Bose, 2010; Neckerman, 2004). Of course neighbors always have something to say about everything because it is easier for a person to pass judgment on someone else if that particular person has never walked the same path before. Also, whatever we do, it is hard to please everyone.

The findings drawn from respondents also suggested that lone motherhood is closely linked to prostitution and normlessness. The researcher vividly remembers when she was talking with friends about how she was planning to get single mothers to participate in her interview. Most people she talked with advised her go to the bar because every prostitute there is a single mother. This societal view is closely related to the findings of Ditmore (2011), who unearthed that 70% of prostitutes are single mothers who are engaging in transactional sex in an attempt to keep themselves and their children afloat so that they will not sink in the boat of poverty. However, the society might be

overlooking the challenges that these women are facing. These lone mothers are just victims of the structural failure of Zimbabwe and as such, they are doing what they can in order to afford the next meal. Surprisingly, some men who call these lone mother insulting names are the very same clients that buy sex at night.

Moreover, the responses captured from single mothers can also allude to the fact that men have little respect for single mothers as they take them as sex objects, especially those whose children are as a result of births out of marriage. This may be because the African culture paints a picture that being impregnated out of marriage is a sign of loose morals just like a prostitute. In this regard, Kange'the & Mafa (2014) argue that pre-marital sex has lost its stigma leading to an increase in matrifocal families. This stigma against solo mothers is however ungrounded because these single mothers do not impregnate themselves. Men also recognize the desperation that is compelling these single mothers to get married or at least get a male counterpart for affection and financial support. It is also often said that a single mother's competitiveness is far less than that of a woman who has no children. It is disconcerting to note that the communities spend their time taking advantage, rating, labeling and stereotyping these single mothers. No effort is made to applaud them for their bravery, commitment and tenacity as they try to push away the mountain of poverty out of their ways and that of their children.

Even though communities may view or relate to single mothers differently, the above are the conclusions that were drawn from the present study. The conclusions are now narrowed down to familial challenges faced by these lone mothers.

5.2.2.2 Familial Challenges Faced by Lone Mothers

Central to the existence and wellbeing of every human being is the support system of a family. The family marks the commencement of one's life. As such, it only makes sense for this agent of socialization to offer unconditional and pure love and support especially when it is most needed (Bose, 2010). Depending on families, this view may not be shared by everyone.

The findings of the present study led the researcher to conclude that families relate to single mothers in their midst differently. Some are supportive, understanding and caring while others are judgmental, critical and difficult. The researcher strongly believes that this can again be traced back to the belief system of the family as well as the process of socialization. As is the case in Zimbabwe, bucolic families tend to be intolerant when it comes to children born out-of-wed, to an extent of disowning a child who is impregnated out of marriage, findings supported by the conclusions made by The World Bank (2003). Neckerman (2004) also forwards that religious people such as Catholics also share this harsh treatment. However, the researcher believes that families are not designed to be present in celebratory moments only but especially when the going gets tough, when no one else can stick around. That is why they say blood is thicker than water-meaning that no challenge should break the blood relationship.

Also, in many cases, it can be appropriately argued that widowed single mothers face harsh treatments in the hands of their in-laws who may make absurd accusations towards them, such as in-laws accusing their daughter-in law for having a hand in the death of her husband, their son. Maybe this is a way of some parents grieving the loss

of their sons through scape-goating their daughters-in-law or maybe an indication that they did not like the daughters-in-law in the first place— some form of catharsis. It only takes special women with a special ingredient called resilience to get over some of these accusations and mal-treatments (Norman, 2012; Chui & Wilson, 2006; Chapin, 2011). Also, not many people are keen to lending a helping hand especially in difficult times. As such, the in-laws may blame the daughter-in-law with such horrible accusations to evade from helping their grand children.

These familial challenges slim down to personal challenges for single mothers. The researcher deems it apt to conclude that single mothers face difficulties in playing or finding the father-figure for their children. With increased sexuality and decaying moral values, the single mothers might be looking for a serious partner while men will be looking just for a sexual partner, without any commitments or burdens of childcare. As highlighted by Gibbs and Grey (2011), a child is best molded by both the father and the mother just as it takes the both of them to make the baby. As such, trying times should bring families closer to each other because in such moments is when family and friends come in handy to be pillars of strength and support system.

The familial challenges then bring the conclusions to the economic challenges faced by matrifocal families.

5.2.2.3 Economic Challenges

In these capitalistic times where the cash nexus is the order of the day, money is like the lubricant that enables movement of any sort. It can then be generally concluded that the economic challenges are the commonly presenting stumbling blocks faced by lone mothers in Chiredzi Town. This is because unlike two-parent families, financial responsibilities are shared while solo mothers have to carry the burden on their own. Unfortunately, this dire need for financial assistance exposes them to dangerous and vulnerable circumstances such as HIV infections as poverty disempowers them from negotiating safe sex or using condoms.

According to Alao (2012), Zimbabwe's current economic and political precariousness is greatly affecting the job market, and ultimately the income of not just single mothers but the whole population. Clearly, this explains that the structural failure of Zimbabwe is the causal factor of poverty and not personal factors such as laziness. Apart from that, the information presented by single mothers and the focus group led to the conclusion that single mothers struggle to pay their children's school fees, rentals and even affording the basics of life. This might have been brought about because the Hippo Valley Estate and Triangle plantations, (the companies employing the majority of Chiredzi's population) have been greatly affected by the Land Grab policy (an exercise where farms were forcefully taken from white farmers by the Zimbabwean government) leading to many retrenchments and loss of income. Chikuhwa (2008) believes that these policies did more harm than good to the economy of Zimbabwe.

With the bread basket for an average Zimbabwean family pegged at around US\$600 and the average formally employed civil servant is earning an estimated figure of US\$300 (ZBC 20:00 hours NEWS, 2013), a flat 50% deficit gap is obvious. In an effort to try to pull the ends so that they can meet, single mothers suffer psychological and medical challenge such as distress, high blood pressure and anxiety. It is therefore no surprise that single mothers in Chiredzi seem lethargic. However, the inbuilt resilience or tenacity makes these single mothers to rise up against their challenges, like a palm tree that stands up just as the storm dies down.

With the economic and other embargos awaiting in single mothers' paths of life, the discussion now moves to the strategies that lone mothers adopt to enhance their livelihood and that of their children.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Survival Strategies

Single motherhood, as already depicted above, is indeed an agonizing experience. Many women who find themselves in this quandary face many challenges from communal discrimination, familial rejection and economic problems. In an effort to cushion themselves, they implement diverse strategies as discussed below.

It has been corroborated elsewhere in the present study that single mothers employ various mechanisms as a way of immunizing themselves from the effects of poverty. This is supported by the work of Bose (2010), who uncovers that solo mothers employ diverse tactics from vending, seeking employment, buying and selling, prostitution, poultry, gardening and almost anything that can give them money to spend. They do

this maybe to increase their chances of generating more income as they have concluded that most of the strategies they employ do not have any form of guarantee that they will get something.

As far as prostitution is concerned, Saphira and Herbert (2004) argue that prostitution is an extremely risky industry as it is characterized mainly by nights at police cells, forced unprotected sex and denial of payment after service. Despite all these nightmarish circumstances, resilience and desperation trap these solo mothers. Also, prostitution is an attractive job maybe because it requires less training and the demand is always high all year round. There is also no need of a detailed curriculum vitae with three referees, including certificates of the highest qualifications. The most impressive thing noted by the researcher is that these single mothers are flexible to try out anything as long as it can give them money. Lone mothers are therefore versatile and very resourceful. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that it is this resilience that is their biggest weapon or rather their strategy for alleviating poverty.

As it has also been established that these single mothers spread their wings wide enough to South Africa and Zambia where they order their stock for resell, there is therefore no limit to what single mothers can do to provide for themselves and their children. Evidently, a mother can do anything within her means when it comes to her children and their welfare. This goes to show the determination and inventiveness of lone mothers who have a desire to soar even against the wind like an eagle.

However, the coping strategies employed are rather of a small scale level and this is due to lack of income or capital which is necessary for the take-off of bigger projects.

Apart from that, the focus group panel did indicate the lack of financial injection all around Zimbabwe due to political and economic challenges. It can also be argued that the priorities on the budget of Zimbabwe is a little misplaced because citizens' welfare should come first to ensure social functioning at individual and national level. This misplacement of priorities was clearly reflected in the 2014 National Budget presented by the Finance Minister of Zimbabwe (ZBC NEWS @ 20:00 Hrs, 19/12/2013).

Literature has indeed successfully exposed the strategies that are implemented by solo mothers to curb poverty. It is however the intention of the present study to assess if these strategies are triumphant in reducing or preventing poverty at household level as discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Effectiveness of Survival Strategies

In the present study, effectiveness is defined as the ability of the survival strategies to meet the desired goal, which is alleviating poverty. Hence, this helpfulness is rooted in the empowerment of single mothers to surmount the overwhelming effects of poverty. Jensen (2009) differentiates between absolute and relative manifestations that seek to elucidate the extent of human deprivation and lack of survival needs. As far as expediency and appropriateness of the coping strategies is concerned, the following discussion is helpful.

First of all, given the information contained in the present study, the survival strategies are increasing the overall income of single mothers but they are unable to completely eradicate poverty. Even though the living standards of many have improved, they are

still struggling to swim out of the poverty pool. However, the lives of other single mothers have indeed taken the convalescing turn around. As the structural theory postulates (Rodgers-Dillon, 2004; Shizha & Kariwo, 2011), poverty in Zimbabwe is beyond human capabilities but is rather chronically rooted in the policies, structures and legislations of the state. This is why transient and chronic poverty are co-existing.

Another generalization is that solo mothers on formal employment are able to skip absolute poverty, even though they are still trapped in the relative poverty circle. This is because they have a stable source of income which enables them to plan ahead, unlike sex workers or vendors whose income is as unpredictable and irregular. Unfortunately, the low educational levels among single mothers limit their ability to get formal and stable forms of employment as corroborated by the Economic Report on Africa(2005) and The World Bank(2004).

Therefore, it is this adaptiveness, the ability to bounce back and the instinctual fortitude of a mother that keeps these lone mothers walking with their heads up, not necessarily that everything is going on well. They are taking baby steps at a time as they try to walk away from poverty. In fact, Morrissette (2007) contends that these single mothers hang in there for the sake of their children who are their pride and joy.

Now that it has been concluded that the survival strategies are unable to completely curtail poverty despite solo mothers employing copious and diverse mechanisms, the discussion will focus on the hurdles that are hindering effectiveness.

5.2.4.1 Factors Harboring the Effectiveness of Survival Strategies

With the understanding that the poverty alleviation strategies implemented by single mothers are unable to permanently eradicate poverty, the researcher deemed it paramount to analyze the factors cited as harboring the efficiency of such mechanisms.

First of all, it can be safely said that the economy of Zimbabwe is thwarting the efforts that are being made by single mothers. Poverty in Zimbabwe is prevalent as both chronic and seasonal (Jensen, 2009). Hence, the lack of circulation money in Zimbabwe is adversely affecting mainly the business of vendors, sex workers and those in the buying and selling sector, even though the whole nation is experiencing these economic challenges. In this regard, Vicente (2005) believes that structural failure has crippling effects not just on the economy but the citizens as well.

Furthermore, having an extended family that is also poverty stricken is weighing heavily on solo mothers because they will need to divide the hard-earned tiny cake into many, smaller pieces. As a result, instead of getting help from families, some single mothers are actually bread winners for their parents and siblings as well. As such they have no choice since we never have the privilege of choosing families we come from. African humanity taught us to stick with family. This may be the reason why these single mothers are sharing the little they have with their extended families.

The most common stumbling block that is hindering single mothers is lack of education. Although Zimbabwe has a literacy rate of 91.4% (Shizha&Kariwo, 2011), most single mothers do not have advanced level (A' Level) let alone tertiary education that is

required on the job market. This is divergent to the findings of Bumpass (2010) and Kanchense (2008), who forward that many single mothers are acquiring tertiary education claiming their space in the economic arena as a way of securing their future and that of their children's.

Having outlined the embargos which are working against the desires of these solo mothers, the conclusions on the unfulfilled needs of lone mothers follow:

5.2.4.2 Unfulfilled Needs of Single Mothers

Single mothers desire to work like any other person in order to earn their living and that of their children. This however is made difficult by the Zimbabwe's unemployment rate that is currently sitting at over 80% (Makina & Kanyenze, 2010).

In Zimbabwe, single mothers are not crippled by the dependence syndrome. This may be because the government of Zimbabwe adopts the residual model to social welfare. This is where the government only assists an individual when his or her needs are not met by the primary institutions mainly the family and economy market (Zastraw, 2009). Also, there is no much budget that is channeled to social welfare as indicated in the focus group discussion and the financial budget delivered by Minister of Finance, Mr Chinamasa (ZBC NEWS @ 20:00 hrs, 19/12/2013). Hence, Zimbabweans are used to working for their food and not being on the mercy of the government. As such, they just desire capital injections into their projects in order to effectively exit out of the poverty line.

The sources of external assistance are to be discussed next.

5.2.5 Theme 5: Sources of Assistance or Support

Single mothers in Chiredzi Town, Zimbabwe, mainly enjoy the financial and social assistance of their families. This is because Zimbabwe as an African country upholds the family as being central to one's life (Cavendish, 2004). Even though the aid might not be in a huge package, families stand together in sweet and sour moments.

The church also provides spiritual, mental, social and financial aid. However, the church as an organization, depending on believers for its income, is unable to adequately meet all the necessary financial needs of all its single mothers in need. Again, different stages of spiritual maturity result in strife, hypocrisy, judgmental attitudes and ultimately ineffective interventions and also because people share different views in every matter. This conclusion deviates from the findings of Couture (2007), who argues that the church has stepped in to take over the duties that were once the families' responsibilities. When the church becomes a den of hypocrites, judges and slandering people, this may deprive solo mothers of their need for not just spiritual soothing but social and financial too. This is because some solo mothers will end up not going to church fearing to be crucified right in the house of God where love and acceptance should be overflowing.

The NGOs on the other hand do play a major role as maintained in the focus group discussion. The key informants narrated the activities that are being done by NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development. Unfortunately, their psycho-social services and programmes are overwhelmed because of the number of people that are in need, to an extent that it seems as if they are not doing anything at all.

Central to poverty alleviation programmes is the government which is the engine of social welfare (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013). It can however be concluded that governmental agencies leave a lot to be desired considering the alarming numbers of solo mothers who claimed that they are not receiving any assistance from the government, despite their evidence which indicates that indeed some money is being channeled in this sector. This may be attributed to the political upheaval of the country as well as the opaqueness of the present government where rumors of corruption by officials are the order of the day. As a result, the people in actual need get the tiniest of the cake slice.

5.2.5.1 The Role Played by the Paternal Side of Children

In general, the fathers of children raised by single mothers play either an insignificant role or they are not doing anything at all. This is true for children of divorcees, widows and those born out of marriages. This may be because things are generally difficult in Zimbabwe or it is that men by nature are not responsible when it comes to the welfare of their children.

5.2.6 The Final Word from Respondents

Single mothers in Chiredzi town and the interviewed focus group extended their final words. It can then be concluded that they are encouraging each other to work hard and to forego non-constructive survival strategies such as prostitution, especially those who have a better choice and the capabilities to opt for something better. Even though Saphira and Herbert (2004) argues that prostitution like addiction is not easy to exit, the

researcher maintains that with a supportive economic structure (employment), social support (family and friends) and the desire to leave, sole mothers surviving on selling sex can also beat it, just like clean drug addicts. This is supported by the concept of African humanism (*ubuntu/unhu*) where people care for each other by virtue of being humans. Hence forth, even though Zimbabwe's economy is currently unfavorable, with determination and the willpower, matrifocal families can rely on their resilience and available latent resources to enhance their livelihood. Where there is a will, there is a way also. This takes us to the recommendations drawn from this present study.

5.3 General Conclusions

Basing on the discussion above, the researcher makes the following general conclusions according to research questions.

5.3.1 The Challenges that Single Mothers Face.

With all the information that has been given in the previous paragraphs, it can then be generally concluded that being a solo mother is a challenge on its own. Within the families, lone mothers face exclusion and stereotyping. In the communities, single mothers are stripped of their dignity and honor as culture and religious beliefs condemn matrifocal families. Sometimes communities will be acting in ignorance, without knowing the psychological and social problems that even resilient solo mothers face daily. This then calls for social workers to engage in educative workshops, tackling such issues as discrimination, labeling, social rejection, acceptance and tolerance. If lone mothers are supported through group work, their resilient nature and ability to swim where others are

sinking is also strengthened to be flaunted to the world. Literature on social group work suggests that people with similar challenges cope better through continual interaction (Zastraw, 2010).

Unfortunately, the predicaments of single mothers are made worse as they will be playing a dual role of being a two-in-one parent. Childcare, meeting the financial and emotional needs of children is too big a saddle for these women. The burden can therefore only be shared if single mothers are cautious when choosing partners that can be father-figures to their children. As far as sexual partners are concerned, it is wise for single mothers to practice safe sex so that they can avoid unwanted pregnancies and HIV infections.

5.3.2 The Forms of Assistance Available to Single Mothers.

The evidence gathered in this research also leads to the general conclusion that solo mothers obtain assistance from their families, government and NGOs. It is sad to notice that fathers are doing next to nothing as far as the wellbeing of their children is concerned. This realization is worrying as it makes the researcher wonder what the government is doing to pin men to their responsibilities. It may be of great importance for future research to explore more on the factors restricting fathers from contributing to the welfare of their children. Furthermore, this research found out that the assistance available to the single mothers from different stakeholders concerned is so minimal such that the change is trivial. Of course, this may be associated with the challenges Zimbabwe has been facing for the past few years.

However, is it just the economic and structural challenges that are causing poverty among solo mothers? This might not necessarily be so. Future researchers may also investigate the governmental policies that are aimed at averting poverty as well as factors that are causing a divergent relationship between the government and the NGOs. Either way, single mothers should also work hard especially in self-help jobs to increase their income base. Besides, solo mothers can also approach social agencies to present their problems and inquire on the legal route they can take to ensure that the fathers of their children contribute to the up-bringing of the children. As far as social agencies are concerned, referrals should be made where the agency cannot meet the needs of the client. The reception should also be accommodating, reflecting acceptance, warmth and a non-judgmental attitude.

5.3.3 The Effectiveness of Survival Strategies Employed

Evidently, it can also be said that the strategies employed by single mothers are unable to totally avert poverty mainly because of low levels of education, impoverished families as well as the unfavorable economy. These factors obviously impact negatively on the solo mothers, exacerbating their plight resulting in long term damage to their psychosocial functioning. Where poverty is not of one's own making, it is hard for the people to free themselves from the strongholds of poverty unless there is a paradigm shift in the structure of the economy. The 2013 elections and other commitments are corroding the budget that could have been channeled for social development. As such, instead of giving out financial assistance, maybe the government should focus more on a developmental approach to social welfare, where sustainable projects are initiated for

women empowerment (Zastraw, 2009; Patel, 2005). Community work- where the community with the help of the community worker will identify their real needs and then satisfying them using the resources available to them- will be practically applicable. This way cost and effectiveness are both realized.

5.4 Recommendations

Following the information that was extracted in this research, recommendations to different stakeholders are made. The different stakeholders include single mothers, the social workers, social welfare organizations and future researchers. Taking the above into consideration, the following recommendations are therefore made:

5.4.1 Recommendations for Single Mothers

- Social workers through casework and group work methods should assist single mothers to first of all accept their predicament, embrace what they have and then seek needed assistance for the restoration of their identity and self-worth.
- Sole mothers should also work hard, taking initiatives and being resourceful to increase their income base and finding out how to get external assistance from the government and other philanthropic organizations. Instead of waiting for the government to identify them (as the researcher has found out in this present research), they should also visit the Social Welfare, NGOs and FBOs to find out how the assistance that can be beneficial to them.

- Matrifocal families should utilize constructive survival strategies such as self-employment and abandon grey activities such as prostitution and criminal activities because these may have detrimental results for example contraction of HIV/AIDS and attracting a jail sentence respectively.
- Lone mothers especially sex workers with the help of NGOs, public hospitals and clinical social workers should also use contraceptive pills so that they do not have yet unplanned pregnancies as these may only aggravate their situations.
- Single mothers whose ex-partners are still living should seek legal action against the fathers of their children (for example applying for maintenance). Women, specifically single mothers need to stand up and legally compel the fathers of their children to share the portion of weighty responsibilities that come with being a single mother.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Social Work Practice

- Social workers should try to be understanding and not to be judgmental to single mothers who seek assistance from social agencies especially those who may have had their children through selling sex or out-of word. Instead, they should empathize and assist appropriate counseling services.
- When social workers make referrals, it is of vital importance to also contact the referred agency informing them of the referral they would have made. This is crucial in ensuring that the referred agency will expect clients that have been referred to them. In so doing, single mothers will not have to explain themselves

all over again where they are referred to, a process that may be lengthy and tiresome although sometimes necessary.

- Despite individual and family interventions, the social workers should also carry out community integration workshops to educate the community on the effects of such attitudes as scape-goating and stereotyping single mothers, discriminating the minority and rejecting the fatherless and weak.

5.4.3 Recommendations for the Government, NGOs and Relevant Stakeholders

- The government should initiate monitoring and evaluation programmes to evaluate the effectiveness of their poverty alleviation strategies. Social workers engaged in community development and community work can aid the government in this area. This could also reveal if the beneficiaries of such projects are reaching the right targeted population.
- There is a need for a productive partnership between the government, the NGOs, the FBOs and other relevant stakeholder in order to cooperatively diminish and avert poverty prevalence among single mothers and their children.
- The government should revise its policies in order to structure specialized policies that are directed at single mothers and their children. This may be done through participation at grassroots, principles that are central to community development. This way, evaluation and monitoring of progress is made easier.

- The government should engage in more women empowerment projects for the dilution of male dominance, a mentality which pushes women to inferiority positions. Mental emancipation through educational workshops by educators may be the point of departure. The dominance of men in almost all facets of life, although the African culture has accepted it may be responsible for some of the challenges facing single mothers.
- There is need for law reinforcement of policies that are instituted to tie man to their responsibilities (such as child maintenance). The law should also be stricter to such culprits who neglect their responsibilities in order to instill a seed of accountability and duty in the nation, especially men.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Future Research

There seems to be grey areas as far as poverty alleviation policies are concerned. The key informants especially from the government claimed that there are a number of projects and programmes that seek to assist solo mothers. In order to know the actual truth, the researcher proposes a further exploration with the title below:

- An inquiry on the Zimbabwean policies that have been implemented to avert and alleviate structural poverty among matrifocal households.

The social work profession emphasizes on making referrals between organizations. In order to do this effectively, government organizations as well as NGOs ought to be working well to ensure social functioning at grassroots level. As such, the title below is proposed:

- An investigation on the hurdles that are straining the relationship between the government of Zimbabwe and NGOs.

Upon interviewing single mothers, almost all of them lamented on the lack of financial and social support from the fathers of their children. Some of the challenges surrounding matrifocality can be solved by understanding the reasons why the fathers of these children are not active in their children's lives. Further research can be carried out with the title below:

- Investigating the factors hampering the involvement of fathers in their children's lives in matrifocal families. A case of Chiredzi, Zimbabwe.

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ZBC 20:00 hrs NEWS on the 2nd of July 2013.

ZBC NEWS @ 20:00 Hrs, 19/12/2013.

ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

- greetings, ice-breaking comments and statements and self-introduction
- brief background of the topic
- brief explanation of ethical considerations (confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation)
- ask respondents to sign the informed consent form
- seek permission to switch on the audio recorder (which can be switched off at any point in time) before starting the discussion.

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|-----------|-----|--------------------|----------------------------|
| | | | |

Theme 2: Challenges Surrounding Single Motherhood

- How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?
- Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?
- How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother? (follow-up questions will be formulated according to the initial response of the interviewee).

Theme3: Survival Strategies Employed

- As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty? (Follow-up questions will be formulated as per initial response of interviewee).

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

- What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?
- In your opinion, what factors are harboring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?
- In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Theme 5: Sources of Assistance

- What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?
- How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?
- How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)

Theme 6: The Final Word by the Respondents

- How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?
- How would you advise the government to help single mothers and their children?

Thank you for your time, patience and contribution.

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

-greetings, ice-breaking comments and statements and self introduction

-brief background of the topic

- brief explanation of ethical considerations (confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation)

- ask respondents to sign the informed consent form

- seek permission to switch on the audio recorder (which can be switched off at any time if the respondent sees it fit) before starting the discussion.

Theme 1: Personal Information

- Name of organization represented, position held by the participant, mission of the organization in relation to single motherhood and poverty.

Theme 2: Challenges Faced by Single Mothers

- What sort of challenges are brought to your attention by single mothers?
- Of the challenges brought, which of those do you attend in your organization?
- As a professional dealing with such cases, which challenges do you think are most prevalent among single mothers?

Theme 3: Poverty Alleviating Programmes

- How long has your organization been involved in poverty alleviating programmes?
- How do you help single mothers who bring various challenges at your organizations?
- How do you deal with the problems that you cannot handle at your organization?

Theme 4: Effectiveness of Poverty Alleviation Programmes

- Can you comment on the effectiveness of the programmes employed by your organization in an attempt to improve the single mothers' living standards?
- How are you planning to increase the depth and breadth of the assistance you give to single mothers?

Theme 5: The Final Words from Respondents

- What advice can you give single mothers to ensure that the assistance you give them can improve their lives?
- What advice can you give to other stakeholders that deal with the welfare of single mothers and their children?

Thank You All for your time and for your contribution.

ANNEXURE C: RECOMMENDATION LETTER



FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tel: 040-602 2193 Fax: 040-602 2553

20 February, 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR ITAI MAFA (200909691).

On behalf of the above named student, the university kindly request your organization to help our student in her data collection process for the fulfillment of the requirements to accomplish a Masters Degree in Social Sciences. Ms Mafa has undergone the ethical clearance process. The student's research topic reads: **The effectiveness of the survival strategies employed by single mothers in alleviating poverty. The case of Chiredzi Town, Zimbabwe.**

Your help will be greatly appreciated. It will be further appreciated if you could give our student a letter authenticating that you have given her permission to collect data.

Yours sincerely

Sumbulu A. (Mr)

Lecturer and Supervisor.

Cell No: (0027) 082 202 2266;

Email: (ASumbulu@ufh.ac.za)

ANNEXURE D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Reference Number: SUM011SMAF01

Project title: **The effectiveness of survival strategies employed by single mothers in alleviating poverty. The case of Chiredzi town, Zimbabwe**

Nature of Project: Masters

Principal Researcher: Itai Mafa

Supervisor: Mr A Sumbulu

Co-supervisor:

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

ANNEXURE E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

ETHICS ANNEXURE 1

ETHICS RESEARCH CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Please note:

This form is to be completed by the researcher(s) as well as by the interviewee before the commencement of the research. Copies of the signed form must be filed and kept on record

(To be adapted for individual circumstances/needs)

Our University of Fort Hare / Department is asking people from your community / sample / group to answer some questions, which we hope will benefit your community and possibly other communities in the future.

The University of Fort Hare / Department/ organization is conducting research regarding the effectiveness of survival strategies employed by single mothers in alleviating poverty. We are interested in finding out more about the effectiveness of such survival strategies in enhancing lives of single mothers and their children. We are carrying out this research to help the policy makers, government and the department of social development to adjust, reformulate or restructure policies so as to ameliorate the lives of single mothers and their children. *(Adapt for individual projects)*

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.

I will not be recording your name on the interview schedule or audio recorder and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only the researchers will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around (10 to 20) minutes *(this is to be tested through a pilot)*. I will be asking you a questions and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but we ask that you try to

think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers. When we ask questions about the future we are not interested in what you think the best thing would be to do, but what you think would actually happen. (*Adapt for individual circumstances*)

If possible, our organisation would like to come back to this area once we have completed our study to inform you and your community of what the results are and discuss our findings and proposals around the research and what this means for people in this area.

INFORMED CONSENT by Participant

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

ANNEXURE F: TRANSCRIPT

Protocol 1

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 1 | 34 | 5 | Out of wed then Widowed |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: Uuum, many problems are that we are looked down upon. They think we take their husbands everywhere we go. Even if you get money they are there to criticize. Even if you wear fashionable clothes they think their husbands or other men have bought things for us. They treat us like yesterday's garbage in that they think we cannot do anything without men.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: I meet many challenges especially with fees of children. The child may get sick and you will need money. Food and school fees and other things.

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Interviewee: Uuum, the difference is there because you would say this and you will get it. Now I am father and mother. When the father was there I would just say and the father would just do it. If the child is expelled, you know where to find money, to borrow or look for it, it's hard.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty?

Interviewee: I started buying and selling vegetables at Nandi where I saw others doing it. God made my things to be favored and they were selling fast. I wasn't borrowing salt and I could pay rent like others. I would ask God to bless my business and everything was blessed until God

intervened and I was called to come and work at the children's home that's when I left the buying and selling. I also tried doing rounds (stokvel) and it was okay but we stopped because the money was not enough anymore.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: *What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?*

Interviewee: *Aaaaah, when I look at the beginning it was better but now it's becoming hard because I am employed on contractual terms. So sometimes I stop working and I have to find other means to get money.*

Interviewer: *In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *Education is very important. If you are looking for a job, its better when you are educated. It's lighter and pays better unlike when you are not educated, you do heavy jobs with little pay.*

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: *What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?*

Interviewee: *If I face challenges I get help from my family where I am born. My brothers, mother and father. That's where I run to if I have any problem at all. They want me to give them a bar of soap and sugar at the end of month because I need to pay rent here and support my parents. My head spins at the end of month because electricity is juiced these days, aaah you are forced to borrow money and end up owing people money, so it doesn't balance.*

Interviewer: *How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?*

Interviewee: *Aaaah, we just hear that there are packages for widows and orphans but it just ends in hearsays. We just think it will come to us but we don't know where there benefits go.*

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer *How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?*

Interviewee: I would advice other single mothers not to look down upon themselves as if they have been denied by God. They should ask for wisdom from God on how to raise their children because He says orphans and widows are mine, so they should not have self pity. They should also seek advice from those who are doing well to imitate them.

Interviewer: How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?

Interviewee: I wish that if the government could help us with money so we can do projects like other women. If it is money, we could then share as women to live better lives. NGOs should also help us with school fees. The government should also sent their representatives and see the children to make sure that their fees is paid. They should also come into communities and see the children because the money ends up where it's not supposed to be.

Interviewee: Thank you very much mama, we have finished.

Interviewee: Thank you, you are welcome.

.....

Protocol 2

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 2 | 37 | 2 | Children out of wedlock |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: Interviewee: Aaah, obviously for someone who got both children with one man who has never married you, people with think you are stupid or you a prostitute. That's just how people view us.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: Interviewee: Uuum, it's hard. Children come with responsibilities because they need to eat, go to school and I have to do all this on my own, without their father.

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Interviewee: Before I had children I only worried about my own problems. I could go where I want. But with children it is different, very hard now.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty?

Interviewee: I just do anything I can to make ends meet. Anything to feed my children. I am a house maid at the moment, I go to South Africa to order staff to resell when I get a chance. During the holidays I go back to the rural areas to plant cotton. If you sit around nothing can succeed.

Interviewer: What do you resell?

Interviewee: Anything. Anything that has market. Cell phones, blankets, clothes.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?

Interviewee: Who can say that life is okay for them? There is nothing like that. Yes I do get something out of what I am doing but the prices are too high and you can make a loss from reselling. Sometimes it doesn't rain properly so yaah, its hard, we just thank God we are alive.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what factors are harbouring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: Things used to be affordable but now, eish the prices with the US dollar, they are unaffordable. It's no longer raining well, things have just changed.

Interviewer: In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: Education is important, you get a better job. So it's important to think before acting because you cannot know with life.

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?

Interviewee: I want to thank my parents because they live with both my children. They try where they can and I know my children will never sleep hungry as long as my parents are there.

Interviewer: How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?

Interviewee: nothing, we just hear that the government helps but we have not received any help so far. It's just talk that's all.

Interviewer: How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)

Interviewee: School fees. Yooo, the money they want is too much. Fees, uniforms and books. It's too much. If they can help us with that as single mothers it will be better.

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?

Interviewee: To work hard with what they have. It's important to do a lot of things because you don't know which one will succeed. Working hard and accepting the situation as it is.

Interviewer: How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?

Interviewee: They should support us because we need help. We don't want them to give us money but to help us start projects that we can do on our own and send our children to school. They are just eating the money alone, aaaaaah, its stressing.

Interviewee: Thank you for your participation

.....

Protocol 3

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 3 | 33 | 1 | Divorced |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: They don't want to associate with you even in church they side line you because may be they fear you will take their husbands. Eeer. Everything you do you will you are restricted fearing what people will say. You can't even greet the husband when the wife is not there wherever you meet him even if you meet him at the door because they all have the mentality that you will take their husbands.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: Many things are not covered. Children have many requirements. They want to eat and to go to school. The money I get is too little for the needs of children.

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Interviewee: Hooo, it's different because I am doing everything now. When you are two you help each other. I can't afford everything because I will be sacrificing for the child. Some things I just do without because it's hard.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty? (Follow-up questions will be formulated as per initial response of interviewee).

Interviewee: We sometimes buy and sell and do piece jobs whenever we are called but mainly selling

Interviewer: What do you sell?

Interviewee: Clothes and vegetables

Interviewee: *Where do you get them from?*

Interviewee: *Wherever there is something to sell.*

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: *What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?*

Interviewee: *Aaaaaaah, it's not sufficient. It's just to make ends meet but it's not enough at all. Sometimes I fail even to get school fees and pay at the end of the term even food like other children and clothes I struggle*

Interviewer: *In your opinion, what factors harbouring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *In selling there is no much profit because of the economy. Even the dollar you can't even get profit, we just want to get our minds off stressing situations. Sometimes we end up using stock for household uses thereby eating the capital and I have to start again.*

Interviewer: *In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *Education is important because you get a better job. It's hard if you do not have a proper job. Education is very important for a single mother, eeeeer.*

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: *What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?*

Interviewee: *No one, my parents actually look up to me for financial assistance. At the end of the month, they expect me as their child to give them that dollar. It makes it even hard because the money is not even sufficient for me and my children.*

Interviewer: *How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?*

Interviewee: *There is no one. Even the father of the child is not helping at all.*

Interviewer: *How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)*

Interviewee: *If the government could help us to get a better education so that we can take care of our children and have decent jobs, it will be better, eeeeer.*

Interviewer: *Where do you get assistance if you face any challenge?*

Interviewee: *Nowhere. You just have to help yourself. You don't get help anywhere.*

Theme 6: Recommendations

Interviewer *How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?*

Interviewee: *They should use their hands and try to do gardening and selling so that their children will not feel the absence of the father.*

Interviewer: *How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?*

Interviewee: *Aaaah, those that are at Social Welfare, if we could give them our problems so that they could help us in any way they can. Not that we want many things but what can help us to live if its money for projects or raising children, eeeeer.*

Interviewer: *Thank you mama very much*

Interviewee: *It's okay.*

.....

Protocol 4

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 4 | 43 | 2 | Widowed |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: *How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?*

Interviewee: *Challenges. Uuum. One, as a single mother males see you as a sex object and you should just love them because you want their help. Two, people who are married, when*

married women see me walking with a man they think we are taking their husbands or sleeping with everyone. Even the advices they give is always highlight that you are a single mother so they will be asking that how can I not have money meaning that I can always get a boyfriend who will help me out.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: In raising children, when you are alone, food, the school fees, rentals are heavy on me. The desire for the children to go to better schools weighs the burden even more.

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Interviewer: The difference is that when the father was still there all I could do was report to him and things would be taken care of. But now everything is waiting for me.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty? (Follow-up questions will be formulated as per initial response of interviewee).

Interviewee: From time to time, I do poultry and the other thing is living a life with contentment living a life that I you can afford. If I get in OK with your mother and she is pushing a trolley, if I have a basket and I came to the shop to buy matemba (small dried fish) because your mum picks chicken, I don't care that she might laugh at me. Two, seeking advice from people and weigh like the advice MrsMafa has given me, can it build me or not. So its poultry, my salary and I take loans from time to time.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?

Interviewee: Yes, it's better here and there although it's mostly hard. I do have other plans to help out because the money is not enough. But I am challenged in that I do not have the money to put the thoughts into something helpful.

Interviewer: In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: Hahahha (chuckles). Maybe because I go to church, I am just content and grateful to God with the life I am living and I am satisfied with it.

Theme 5: Sources of assistance

Interviewer: What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?

Interviewee: There is no any other help I am getting from my children's paternal side.

Interviewer: How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?

Interviewee: Recently, my child who is at university is the one who is on cadet, he got the assistance from the government. Even the one in form 6, he got assistance when he was form 3 and 4.

Interviewer: How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)

Yah, fees. The truth is where they are going, next year but one, they will all be in university and I'm sure the challenges will be overwhelming.

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?

Interviewee: Well, they should be content with what they have and sacrifice what they can to ensure that their children get education.

Interviewer: How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?

Interviewer: we have come to the end of our interview, thank you very much.

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Protocol 5

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 5 | 50 | 4 | Out of wed |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: The community rejects you simply because you are a single mother. Whatever you are doing does not look like a good thing. It's nothing no matter how good it is. Even if it is good in families. Whatever you are doing, they will say you don't have a husband so what good can you do because you have failed to get married. So whatever you do you are a failure.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: Children are a problem because they need a mother to be both sides, a mother and father. If you mould them without the fatherly discipline with the motherly only you will not win, they will not listen to you. So you should make sure that they respect you with that fear not too much fear so that they can open up to you. The communication should not break down because children will go back there and while doing that explain to them what you do what you do because they may not understand and think you are rude. Some people might actually say your mother is too much. If you continue explaining to the children, they will end up understanding why you do what you do and you don't ask them to do anything. They might say, "Mama lets go to the fields that's where are food come from; Mama let us do poultry because this is where our fees come from." They end up giving you advice on what to do to better your lives. But it now depends on how as a mother you mould and teach them as a mother and father.

Interviewer: What economical challenges do you face in raising your children?

Interviewee: If you are working, you do not face too much overwhelming challenges. Your children can actually live better than those who do have both active parents. If you are working

and it need you to be organized. What do you want?; What are you telling your children about their identity? Organize your life. If you are working you should teach your children to work. The problem with many mothers is that they are selfish when their children work. Children work hard if you reward them. So you should give them heavy breakfast if they deserve it. Some may tell you I want chicken today, if they want eggs give them. If they have worked for it, reward them. They will be motivated to work. After that, you can sit down with them. There are times when you need to engage them. You can say, "You are the learned, take a pen and calculate how much we have spent on eggs and breakfast today, where did we get what we have used? Convert it into monetary value. You will say we have used \$50 just for breakfast. Show them your salary and your expenses so that they can budget so they will understand you will not fight with them. But if you are selfish with what they work for they will see no need to work after all.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty?

Interviewee: I was farming wherever I was I would ask for a piece of land. I also did poultry because I was taught from my childhood that's how I sent my children to school. I also buy and sell staff from South Africa and Botswana. You can also teach children to help out. But do not burden your children with selling when they are at school because they will not concentrate on their school work so you will not win on that. Teach them to sell at home.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?

Interviewee: Uuum, I didn't quite understand the question.

Interviewer: What I mean is that can you comment on the effectiveness of the survival strategies you are employing in combating poverty.

Interviewee: Oooh, ok. Whether it's helping? Yes it's helpful. But to ensure the effectiveness, you need to be organized and plan correctly. If you, mainly want to go to the bar doing many boyfriends, it will mess up everything. You should have your one boyfriend who understands you. If not then you should leave it. Otherwise children may end up dropping out of school because the mother will be giving these boyfriends attention, love and money depriving the children. So this might affect you.

Interviewer: *In your opinion, what factors harbouring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *Some things may not be ineffective because of the extended families that need to be taken care of. My mother and father also need rent and money from me. Where I was raised, they also need me to care for them as appreciation because I cannot just leave them because it will again affect my children.*

Interviewer: *In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *Uuum, what happens is that when you are doing something, check your line that makes profit. I think the important thing is to see if what you are doing is helping. You should not do things because people are doing it. Screen advices. Like now, I have stopped going to Botswana because it was not doing well. You might want to go to market or J'burg only to lose all the money. You will then have to start all over again. I have noticed that men give good advice depending on the boyfriend that you have.*

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: *What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?*

Interviewee: *Yah of cause they might be there but aaaaaaah, raising children I don't think it works. What they would want, as for Charles I raised him well and his grandmother was here because they now admire what the children have become. But they have not contributed anything at all. But aaaaaaaaah, maybe Carol's father tried with school fees, clothing and money. He didn't want his daughter to suffer. He was there until Carol passed away. But the other ones, they don't even know that children want to be seen. So it depends with the man who fathers your child.*

Interviewer: *How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?*

Interviewee: *You should have your people whom you can trust to tell you the truth. There are other people who do not like to see a single mother succeed and they want to see you suffer so they will give you wrong advices. It's better to relate to people with your same problem unlike going to someone with a husband who has never been divorced or widowed.*

Interviewee: As for me the church things I don't like them (hahahahahaha- chuckles). Because our thinking is different so I have found nothing from churches (hahahahahaha-chuckles). If you go to those churches you find that there are groups and you do not relate or like each other so there is discrimination so aaaaaah, church maybe the old churches (hahahahaahah-chuckles).

Interviewer: How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)

Interviewer: For NGOs and government it depends on whether you have a relative on the top position. Like these days they were saying take people who are troubled. At the end of the day it was found that none of the beneficiaries needed help. So aaaaah.

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer: How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?

Interviewee: Aaaaaah why would you want to be helped if you are not disabled (hahhahhah-chuckles). They might help but they are limited. You will be limited your children might not even go to school. So don't mind the government. Learn to do things on your own and teach children to work and don't rely on the government or brother or relative. What if it is not enough? When you are in the line they say it's finished (hahahahahahaah- chuckles).

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your detailed interview.

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Protocol 6

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 6 | 39 | 1 | Divorced |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: *We just stay like any other person.*

Interviewer: *So you have never been isolated, stereotyped or labelled?*

Interviewee: *Aaah I have never encountered it. Many times I don't have time to talk about such things because I will be busy fending for my children. And where I stay, I don't talk a lot with the neighbors so I wouldn't really know what is said about me behind my back.*

Interviewer: *Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?*

Interviewee: *Haaa, money is a problem, we do sell but it's not enough, many times we do not have money. It's not enough. For fees so we are grateful for the free pre-school we get from FACT.*

Interviewer: *How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?*

Interviewee: *Eeeeeeh, there are there. A child may ask where the father is. So if you say he is there. The child will be happy to know that the father works somewhere even when you are lying.*

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: *As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty?*

Interviewee: *We buy and sell that's where we get money for food and rentals. From the 15th that's when we start budgeting little by little.*

Interviewer: *What do you sell?*

Interviewee: *Vegetables and tomatoes and anything that can be sold,*

Interviewer: *Is there something else that you are planning to do to improve your living conditions?*

Interviewee: *We wanted if we could get money to order outside and sell here if we could get the money to start.*

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: *What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?*

Interviewee: *It's just joining it's not enough. We just see that if we sit down what will come out of it. So yah, we are just joining.*

Interviewer: *In your opinion, what factors harbouring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *If the workers could get enough money, everything could go well. Because they can't buy because they do not have money. I remember there are times when things used to sell but now even those that are employed are crying (hahahhaahah-chuckles), they do not have money what about us.*

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: *What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?*

Interviewee: *Aaaaah, where I was born. They understand my problems so when I'm broke, they understand and help me out because when things were okay for me, I used to help them as well.*

Interviewer: *How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?*

Interviewee: *The father of my child does not work so he does not offer any help. There is no any other help we are getting except from FACT.*

Interviewer: *How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)*

Interviewee: *We wish to work and have our own money. Even working at someone's home they will give you money to raise children. So working is what we desire: jobs.*

Interviewer: *That's a good desire, many people just want to be given things without working.*

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer *How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?*

Interviewee: They should work. There is nothing else I would encourage them. They should work with their own hands.

Interviewer: How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?

Interviewee: We would ask them to help us with the children's school fees so that, they don't suffer as we do. With education they can be better.

Interviewer: I will switch off the audio recorder now. Thank you we are done.

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Protocol 7

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 7 | 37 | 2 | Abandonment |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: The problem of having money and the fact that the child wants to know why we are only two and where the father is are some of the challenges I face.

Interviewer: And from the society do you have any problems?

Interviewee: From the society there is nothing bad they say because I live on my own means. So there is nothing bad I have heard about my single motherhood.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: Aaaah, they are many especially when the month is about to end. The rentals and the clothes because the old ones will be almost tone. So money is a problem because everything is waiting me with no one to help. Errrr.

Interviewer: Do you have any emotional or psychological challenges you face as a single mother?

Interviewee: Aaaaah, my mind has no problem living alone because I have told myself that this is the situation. So I stay...

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Interviewee: There is no much difference. What we were with the father present is the same as it is now that he is not. I think God has helped me and made me realise that I should sell what I can.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty?

Interviewee: I stay alert to listen where I can get things to sell, things that are on demand on that time. I'm always moving so that I can get stuff for resell.

Interviewer: What are the things that you sell?

Interviewee: I sell a lot of things tomatoes: anything as long as they can give me money.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?

Interviewee: Aaaaaaah, we are just doing but it's not enough.

Interviewer: Where are you having shortfalls?

Interviewee: Rent.

Interviewee: Eeeeh, I would want to do poultry or piggery anything better than being a vendor.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what factors harbouring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: There is no money to those who sell. In fact no one has money comparing with last year, people had money.

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: *What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?*

Interviewee: *There is nothing, even the father of the father is not helping at all.*

Interviewer: *How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?*

Interviewee: *There is nothing at all.*

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer: *How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?*

Interviewee: *They should work with their own hands. Only then can they survive.*

Interviewer: *How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?*

Interviewee: *I would want them to put a programme concerned with only singles. They can give them money or projects so that they can live better lives. Something and anything to help out. We are doing this for our children not for ourselves. To children if it's possible, they can pay for them or get into schools and discount children that are raised by single mother, eeeeeer.*

Interviewer: *Thank you very much. We have finished.*

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Protocol 8

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 8 | 31 | 3 | Widow |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: *How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?*

Interviewee: *The way they see me as I live?*

Interviewer: Yes as a single mother in a community which upholds a traditional family

Interviewee: Aaah you might meet with others asking you how you live. Like if you look good they will ask how do you get nice clothes, uuuuum

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: Aaaah we face many challenges because children need many things they see from their children. Some things we may try but we fail because we are all alone. But school fees is a problem. A child may see as if the mother is failing but we try we try that if our children would do this and be that. We get stress because we might be trying to do this but the money will not be enough

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty? (Follow-up questions will be formulated as per initial response of interviewee).

Interviewee: To fight poverty, I took the passport to do cross border. We buy and sell mazambia (wrapping clothes) and other things to survive. There are many things we wish to do if only there was enough money to start. Opening a shop or even a public place where I could sell my things as long as there is money.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?

Interviewee: It's so-so. It's just joining to try and join things. Not just sitting around doing nothing. But the problem is that everything is just waiting for me. There has been a big difference since I started going to Zambia. Now I can afford to buy their uniforms and pay their school fees. Before then I could go the whole month without any money. But now I can tell the school when I can pay up

Interviewer: *In your opinion, what factors harbouring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *Eeeeer there are there. I was raised by my step mother you know how it is, she never motivated me to do anything positive. Maybe if I was raised by my mother, she would have encouraged me to love school. I would have something of my own. To be honest, the country is okay but we don't have starting capital. Those with capital are making it within 6 months.*

Interviewer: *Are there any familial factors that are worsening your financial capacities?*

Interviewee: *They do not ask me for anything because they know. If I have a problem they actually assist me because they know my situation.*

Interviewer: *In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: *What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?*

Interviewee: *There is nothing at all I'm getting for the father side. They know that mama is the source of everything they need. Only my family can help me with my 3 children. We help each other with money and emotional needs.*

Interviewer: *How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?*

Interviewee: *I am only getting help from FACT. They help with the crèche for my child, nothing else.*

Interviewer: *How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)*

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer: *How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?*

Interviewee: *What I can give them is that they should work hard with their own hands so that they can suffer a little bit (hahahahaahahah chuckles).*

Interviewee: *Suffering a little bit? (hahahaha- chuckles)*

Interviewer: *How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?*

Interviewee: *Uuum, I wish they could help us with money to aid my business. Then the school fees for children.*

Interviewer: *Thank you mama for you participation in this research.*

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Protocol 9

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 9 | 53 | 3 (2 passed on to make them 5) | Widowed then Out of wed |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: *How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?*

Interviewee: *The challenges in which way?*

Interviewee: *Our society as Africans strongly believes in the traditional family with the father and mother then children. So how do they perceive you since you do not have a husband?*

Interviewee: *They obviously say we are the husband snatchers. There is nothing else to do. That's how I have been raising my children since 1994. Some of the children come from trying to raise others.*

Interviewer: *Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?*

Interviewee: *Aaaaah, There is nothing. We just try to join borrowing but it's not enough, uuum. We try to sell we broke and we lose everything. The police might also raid and confiscate everything. We only pay back through the one way. So we end up looking for money with a man who is not your own. You end up doing things that you don't want to do. But because you need*

to feed the children every day. The other one is a grandchild from my daughter who is also a prostitute. Even my own children, raised through that and 2 of them died because there was no money treatment. I finished all the properties I bought with this same kind of job. Selling even the buckets.

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother? (follow-up questions will be formulated according to the initial response of the interviewee).

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty? (Follow-up questions will be formulated as per initial response of interviewee).

Interviewee: Except if I go to the bar, where else can I get it? If I don't get it I don't. I can't do anything or find more money. Sometimes I don't even have money to order. I might get like US\$10 a night but children need to eat in the morning afternoon and night. Sometimes I end up coming with only US\$2 and I have to do rounds with others so that I can save up for month end rentals. Water bills and everything. We are just trying. I divorced with my husband when the children were still young. Eeeeer. How could I go to Jo'burg, who would I left my children with. Even my brothers or families can't help as well. Long ago selling sex used to pay but now, it's hard you fail to get US\$50 for rent or even to survive. It's hard these days. Prostitution used to pay...

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: Can you comment on the effectiveness of your survival strategies if it's sufficient.

Interviewee: Sufficient?! It's not enough! It can never be enough. It's just that the body is painful since 1994! The flesh comes to the point of giving in. I am tired, I am in pain. Just imagine how many men I get a day. But when I think how my children will think of a mother who goes to bar, sometimes I don't go I just sleep because the body will be painful.

Interviewer: So how much do you get per night?

Interviewee: Aaaaaagh, it depends on what you do. Does he sleep over, does he come in and go? There is no much money. They person who might sleep over and pay a lot give you US\$10 or US\$15.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what factors harbouring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: Aaaaagh at the moment no because my parents have passed on. My father had 2 wives, and I had to help them. When I left my husband I was 25 years old which means I was still energetic and I could try to help but now I cry to see how helpless I have become. When children are not working, it's hard. My other children have grown and the other one is staying with the other one, she also a prostitute. I no longer do it in public because my children are grown and they should not see, I can't do it publicly. The other one is married. So if only she could get write her exams and pass even as she is married. Otherwise it's hard. It's hard.

Interviewer: In your situation, that would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: For now, there are many I wish to do things I still have strength for are little though. My heart is painful, if I could get money, I would wish to buy and sell whatever I can. I have a daughter, she is a prostitute also now. If I could get money and we could order I gave her money to take a passport, its out and she has it now, and give back the owner the money. She will take care of me when I am sick. With her prostitution, she knows I need medication. Right now I have these diseases (raising three fingers). 2 days I went to the doctor.

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?

Interviewee: No. I don't get anything from the fathers of my children. Except my 2 dead children the father took care of his children until the children died. (interruption from the neighbours)

Interviewer: How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)

Interviewee: Aaaaah, in the business of selling sex, there is nothing better that can be done because it's not good. People may get money but they also get diseases. HIV is spreading. So I wouldn't say if it was done better. But if the country could be restructured, everything would be okay. Long ago, in Zimbabwe jobs were easy, you would work for a white person. Now blacks are many. I might go and work but you might be given \$50, so as blacks, we treat each other unfairly.

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?

Interviewee: As for me, the advice I may give might not be what I am doing but it may be applicable to them. Some are doing things because of laziness. If you have capital or someone who can help you do something. If your body is strong go even to domestic wok, I did it while raising my 2 children and it helped. I did it together with selling sex and it was covering. The important thing is using hands not bodies because we will be spreading the disease. It may also go even to our children. If you are called for a piece job, you might save a person that you might have infected. I have a daughter who changed out of bitterness. She was married well but I tell her not to exchange men saying today it's Jackson. Not to have a crew. You should have one person to tell when you are sick unlike having a group of people binging packets of pain killers. She was born in 1992, if she is with one person, she will be taken care of and I might also rest my body. The other one tied acting she was good in Chiredzi drama, have you ever seen it?

Interviewer: No I haven't.

Interviewee: ... but we never saw where the money went to, but she tried.

Interviewer: How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?

Interviewee: The help that I would want is to build something with the little that I have been assisted. If it be poultry, or mealies or clothers to order. As long as i don't borrow from anyone. Because I might borrow money and buy chicks. What if they die? The person will still want their money.

Interviewer: Uuum, thank you, we are done.

Protocol 10

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 10 | 42 | 4 | Widowed |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: They look down upon me because of the way I raise my children.

Interviewer: How do they look down upon you?

Interviewee: The way we raise our children, aaaaah. They despise the way we look for money so many of them do not approve of it.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: Uuum, there are the common ones of having little money and many responsibilities. It's just joining to make sure that I send my child to school... (interrupted by the interviewee's phone that rings. I ask her to answer it).

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty? (Follow-up questions will be formulated as per initial response of interviewee).

Interviewee: Uuum, at the moment, there are times like last year I sold buckets but now I am just going to the bar.

Interviewer: Why did you stop selling buckets?

Interviewee: Aaaah, challenges came and I used all the money even for start (hahahahah-chuckles).

Interviewer: How long have you been going to the bar?

Interviewee: Uuum, it has been long, I will say since 2000 and 2005. Yah.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: *What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?*

Interviewee: *Aaaah we are just joining because you can't just sit watching children and say I don't have. As long as we are alive otherwise I can't say anything is okay.*

Interviewer: *In your opinion, what factors harboring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *I have my mother and father who are also looking up to me if I get something I should help them as well. Like this if you sell to those who sell, like this time, the money is not enough. Money makes all things to go well.*

Interviewer: *In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *If I could get money, maybe I could change my life style and sell so I can be better. I could order anything that others are doing like clothes.*

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: *What type of help are you getting and who is assisting you in raising your children?*

Interviewee: *Aaaaaaah, there is no assistance I am getting from my family, government or NGOs. Not for me or my children. I always talk to my friend, she is like my auntie. We are in the same business so that's where I go in case I face any problems.*

Interviewer: *How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)*

Interviewee: *I would wish for them to help with children who go to school. And even me for food this year there is drought and the parents also need my assistance everything is waiting for me.*

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer: *How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?*

Interviewee: *Aaaah, the advice I might give (hahahahaah) as I am depends on the person and who they are. As for us and the way we survive it's just that we have nothing else to do. But*

those who can should do other options. This our job we are doing is not good but the single mothers if they can should do all they can to work and survive.

Interviewer: I really appreciate your participation, thank you. I wish you all success.

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Protocol 11

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 11 | 43 | 2 | Out of wed |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: Aaaah those who see us..., we are always in conflict with those who are married because they say we take their husbands when they are at the bar. We break their homes so...we are also trying to survive.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: Food and school fees and clothing (noise from the background). I will be thinking that if I could get money and sell things instead of just waiting to sell your body. Sometimes the body huts and children want money for food and school fees so it will be difficult.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty? (Follow-up questions will be formulated as per initial response of interviewee).

Interviewee: I don't get any money unless someone at the bar says "hi" (hahahahaha-chuckles). There is nothing. I have tried selling things but everything fell apart, I failed.

Interviewer: How did you fail in your selling?

Interviewee: School fees and schooling. You cover using money for stock and then you fail to recover it.

Interviewer: How long have you been selling sex?

Interviewee: I have about 12 years

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?

Interviewee: Life was better when I was still at my parents' house before I started going to the bar. It's so hard. Going to bar is because there is nothing to do. If you are given money for dink at the bar you have to save that. When the school fees is due, you know hunger is there because the money is not enough at all. It's not working at all because the body is painful. So with time obviously the body will give in and that will be and end of me and my children.

Interviewer: So how much do you get per day?

Interviewee: Aaaaah, as for per day, it depends because you can go for a week without having a client. So when you get money you but things in bulky so that when you don't get clients there is mealie-meal and salt, you will just look for vegetables.

Interviewer: So there is no guarantee in selling sex?

Interviewee: Aaaaah, there is none because you are just waiting for someone to give you money. What if you don't get him? If you don't get anyone who greets you, there is nothing.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what factors harboring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: That money I get...I don't stay with my children here because it won't balance, they stay with my mother so that if I get money for mealie-meal, they can share there. My father is not there, he passed on. So everyone is looking up to me. My brothers and sisters went to SA and they don't send anything back, so I am the closest to them. So if I get something they share there.

Interviewer: Do you think the economic state of Zimbabwe is affects you as a single mother?

Interviewee: Eeeer yaaaa, there is no money. Our clients are also saying that they don't have money. Everyone has credits so if the clients don't have money we lose. We only get the change from which they will be drinking and we take that home. It's hard.

Interviewer: In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: I wish I could also get a passport and go to South Africa and sell like others. Selling blankets, clothes like others.

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: What type of help are you getting from the paternal side of your children?

Interviewee: There is nothing at all. Everything is just waiting for me.

Interviewer: How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?

Interviewee: There is nothing I am getting from the government, FBOs or anything. Even the children I just pay in small amounts and if I don't have, they will just be chased out of the school until I can get the money. If I go to money lenders they charge high interests and they end up taking all the things in the house.

Interviewer: Have you tried making rounds (stokvel) as women?

Interviewee: That's what we have tried doing from time to time but sometimes we fail to raise even the money. We do rounds of US\$2 per day. Sometimes we fail to raise it we just jump and continue when we have money.

Interviewer: How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)

Interviewee: I wish if it was possible they would help us with the school fees and food. If they could pay their school fees, uniforms because it's the most challenging expenses. With everything waiting for us. If we were selling it was better unlike just waiting for someone to greet you, it's just hard.

Interviewer: So have you tried applying for maintenance at the court of law?

Interviewee: I have tried but I can't even get hold of the father.

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?

Interviewee: Uum, that if only we could come together and do a project that can help us. Again we should work hard.

Interviewer: So would you give up selling sex if you were given the opportunity to?

Interviewee: Aaah I would. I would leave. For a person, a woman I would look for just one man instead of just taking everyone because you don't have money. Even if they have not bathed or even if they are dirty, you just take because you want their money not minding even their status.

Interviewer: May your plans be fruitful. Thank you very much, I am switching off the recorder now.

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Protocol 12

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 12 | 25 | 2 | Widowed |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?

Interviewee: The community think you can love anyone because your husband is dead. Your sisters-in-law also think that their husbands will take you as their second wife. Or, if you come home late, they think you were looking for men. No one can respect you, they just say aaah, what does she know. They can even accuse you of killing your husband. They just find a way of accusing you. Some were saying she had boyfriends and they killed him. Some also said she knew that her husband was not coming back.

Interviewer: Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?

Interviewee: Now I can't say I am facing any challenges because my parents are providing for me. But while I was still there, they had started saying what are you going to eat here because I depended on my husband for money. They would even say "where are you going to get sugar or food?" People do not want to help people if they are not benefiting from it. I don't know if it's because they want to make life hard for other people or what. As a single mother you always ask yourself why me and you will be wondering where you will get food. That's why I had to leave my husband's family because at least now I am just mourning without having to worry about food.

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Interviewee: The difference is that you would plan things with the husband. After payee, the husband would give you money so now if I don't make plans or get it from my mother, there is nothing.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty? (Follow-up questions will be formulated as per initial response of interviewee).

Interviewee: The strategies I thought of is going back to school to get employed even though I was doing poultry to get some money.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: Can you comment on the effectiveness of such a strategy in fighting poverty?

Interviewee: Yaaah, going to school works. Because if you get a job your children can live better than other children with both parents.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what factors harboring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?

Interviewee: Aaaaaah, except that if you look down upon yourself even at school you may be staying with other people, relatives who may think you want to finish their food. You just have to be focused and know what you want to do in life.

Interviewer: Any familial factors that are making it hard for you to survive as a single mother?

Interviewee: Because my father and mother are there, there is nothing that is still burdening me because my father is still working. He buys clothes and food except when I just feel like helping out as well. So I am blessed to have a supportive family.

If jobs were easy to find. Because the jobs are hard to find (background noise). Corruption is too much. You can't get a job at the nursing schools or teachers colleges because there is too much competition. You get interviewed, 1000 people, so it's hard to get accepted unless you know someone there.

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: What type of help are you getting from the paternal side of your children?

Interviewee: Aaaaah, on my children's family side, there is nothing. Instead of helping, they actually stress me out. They take my children's birth certificate and they were refusing to sign papers so that I can get money because my husband was a soldier. My mother and father and brothers are the ones helping me. My father is now their father figure. I'm lucky I have them.

Interviewer: How is the external assistance helping you fight poverty as you raise your children?

Interviewee: Aaaaah, there is nothing except my family. I was only promised to get money from the insurance company when my children go to secondary, what my husband left as insurance.

Interviewer: How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)

Interviewee: If only the government could help us with school fees for the children up to the end that would be better because fees is expensive. If I could get money, I would want to extend my education so that I can get a better job. That way, I won't have to be in dire poverty.

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer: How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?

Interviewee: *What I would tell single mothers is to leave many boyfriends because they might die for a dollar. They should get back to school and get something of their own. They will not have to look for boyfriends just to get a dollar because they will have it as well.*

Interviewer: *How would you advice the government, FBOs and NGOs to help single mothers and their children?*

Interviewee: *Especially the government, they should search for children of single mothers and take care of them the mother might dumb children and the children suffer mostly while the mother can employ other means like going to towns and sell sex, so children suffer mostly.*

Interviewer: *Thank you very much. Our interview has come to an end. I wish you all the best in your survival strategies.*

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Protocol 13

Theme 1: Biographical Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Number of children | Cause of single motherhood |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| SM 13 | 36 | 2 | Widowed / out of wed |

Theme 2: Challenges surrounding single motherhood

Interviewer: *How does the community look at you as a single mother raising her children alone and how does it make you feel?*

Interviewee: *Uum, it's hard. In an area you are living for people to take you seriously. Every time, for you to greet a man and say, "Good morning; afternoon; good evening." They will just why would she greet my husband and ask her about her day, maybe they are seeing each other. Eeeer.*

Interviewer: *Which challenges do you face in raising children on your own (social, economic, psychological)?*

Interviewee: *The challenges that I meet as for me. If I look at the school fees. The heart will be bleeding because I wish to go to school because I didn't have the opportunity to go to school. So we are always in the headmaster's office begging him to let my child attend school. I might*

promise him that on Wednesday. So if on Wednesday I don't get it, I have to go back again and explain. As for rent even and food, I won't even talk about it. For the household things I will just leave it because no one will see through my house (hahahahah-chuckles). Many times I have gone to my land to ask her to bear with me because I will be unable to pay rent on time.

Interviewer: Any emotional challenges you face as a single mother?

Interviewee: BP. BP. I have once gone on comma and I have eaten milk with water to try to bring it down. If I say I have stress I will be lying but BP. It's a big problem for me.

Interviewer: How different is your life now comparing with your life before becoming a single mother?

Interviewee: There is a big difference. Salt, salt getting finished in your house. I didn't know that salt can be finished in the house. Salt as bitter as it is (hahahaha-chuckles). Before I mention anything, children and the other food even salt I started seeing its importance.

Theme3: Survival strategies employed

Interviewer: As a single mother, how are you fighting poverty?

Interviewee: What I do is selling and doing a vegetable garden. Going up and down, South Africa, Harare to get stock. I have my market place where I sell.

Interviewer: What will you be selling?

Interviewee: Clothes, chicken cuts, anything that I can get to sell.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of survival strategies

Interviewer: What changes have you noticed since you implemented the strategies you mentioned?

Interviewee: It's not getting well. Nothing is moving; since my husband died nothing is the same again. There is a big difference, nothing.

Interviewer: How long have you been doing that?

Interviewee: Since 2003. That's about 10 years

Interviewer: *In your opinion, what factors harbouring (or gaps that you are failing to cover) the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *I meet many challenges. As I speak right now I'm staying with my mother and I am taking care of her. Even at the beginning I was staying with my auntie's daughter, and I was taking care of her until she went where she went also.*

Interviewer: *Any economical challenges that are affecting you as a single mother who is selling?*

Interviewee: *Aaaaaagr, what can affect our selling it's that we don't have a proper place to sell. The place where we are selling is temporary. Time and time they tell us to move and on those times, it means we will not be selling and our business will be affected.*

Interviewer: *In your situation, what would you do differently given the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of your survival strategies?*

Interviewee: *Yes, there are there. I can do poultry for eggs or meat even rabbits I can keep them, I am good at it. But to do all that I need money which I don't have. It's not balancing well.*

Theme 5: Sources of help

Interviewer: *What type of help are you getting from the paternal side of your children?*

Interviewee: *Aaah there is nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing not even a cent. I once sent my son, the first born Courage in 2004 to his auntie who is a teacher. I wanted her to help with books for grade 2. The reply she gave just showed me that it's a no go area. She said, "My children that I have are enough for me".*

Interviewer: *so where do you get assistance because we know that no one can live as an island?*

Interviewee: *Where I ran to, is there. I have my landlord, I run there to make her understand because many of the challenges I face include failing to get money. And my pastor, I go there and he helps me in prayer, eeeeeer.*

Interviewer: *What sort of assistance are you getting from the NGOs, FBOs and government if any?*

Interviewee: No, I am not getting anything from anyone. I do my things and pay my school fees on my own though it is hard.

Interviewer: How would you wish to be helped by the government, NGO, or FBOs (gaps in your life you need assistance?)

Interviewee: What I wish could be helped is the school fees for my child. To find someone who will pay my child's school fees because it is the most difficult thing.

Theme 6: Final word from respondents

Interviewer How would you encourage other single mothers to fight poverty?

Interviewee: Single mothers like me. The advice I may give us that, just do and go with others. What is being sold? Is it a season for sweet potatoes, tomatoes, vegetables? Just do what you can to look after your children.

Interviewer: How would you advice the government to help single mothers and their children?

Interviewee: Iii, what I wish is for the government... I wish with a question; do they know that there are widows who are struggling like we are doing? If they know can they take at least one of our children and pay their school fees. Whatever they can do will be better. If they look for a gap and fill it in for us, that will be better even if it is temporary.

Interviewer: I want to thank you so much for your time and understanding. Our interview is over.

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Protocol 14

Transcript for the focus group discussion

Theme 1: Biographical information

| Pseudonym | Organizations represented | Position held | Period of employment | Brief aim of organization |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>KI (Key Informant) 1</i> | Government | District Service officer | 6 years | Promote self reliance and security |

| | | | | |
|------|------|---------------------------|----------|---|
| | | | | |
| KI 2 | NGOs | Child officer | 12 years | Empowering children and families |
| KI 3 | FBOs | Pastor and superintendent | 9 years | Ensure spiritual growth through social engagement |

Theme 2: Challenges faced by single mothers

Researcher: *What sorts of challenges are brought to your attention by single mothers?*

KI 2: *There are many. The biggest ones include widowed women who are troubled by their husbands' relatives who take away their properties. Others do not have shelter because they are HIV positive. People neglect and discriminate against those who are HIV positive. Some of them may not have money for rent because maybe they go to the bar and spent all their money. There are also some who fail to buy medication for their children.*

KI 1: *Our organization as representatives of the government encounter receive many challenges from single mothers. Among the most prevalent challenges are food insecurity, problems in payment of school fees, lack of medical fees, juvenile delinquency and children in conflict with the law.*

KI 3: *Uuum, as a pastor and also the superintendent at the organization, single mothers especially those who fellowship under my leadership have many challenges. As outlined earlier by my other colleagues, many of the challenges involve lack of money for fees, rent and maybe in times of emergencies. They also come for prayer, counselling and guidance in all matters of life, thank you.*

Theme 3: Poverty alleviating programmes

Researcher: *How do you help single mothers who bring various challenges at you organizations especially in relation to the feminization of poverty concept?*

KI 1: *The department of social welfare offers Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) and Assistance medical Treatments Orders (AMTO). Poverty alleviation programmes and social security measures that seek to hammer poverty. These programmes deal with education and medical help and the holistic social functioning of the disadvantaged. Also, eeeer, there is what*

is called a maintenance allowance. This is when \$20 is given each month to a person who has been approved or who has passed the assessment process. The payout is for a year and the recipients have to reapply every year to reassess if they still qualify for the allowance. This is basically how social welfare is engaged with the poor such as solo mothers.

KI 2: Some of the single mothers are not educated. Most of them are not educated and they depend on their husbands. Some become single mothers by being abandoned as you know that most women in Zimbabwe don't have formal employment. So like I said we engage them in projects that will help them like poultry and we also pay school fees for their children .we look at the children in totality. We pay for their fees, uniforms and books. We also put children in groups, those living with HIV get weekly lessons on how to live with the disease. Those whose mothers are living with HIV, we teach them on hygiene so that they do not contract the virus, for example using jik and gloves where necessary. There is also a crèche here which promotes basic education. We also offer HIV services and advice. That's how we help children. We have also seen that doing projects with children takes off their time. Instead of focusing on their school work, they will be doing these projects. So we teach children to help their mothers with domestic work as their mothers will be doing projects that bring money home. We have seen that we can't help them on every issue. So we have taken the biggest of their problems. Those who are living with HIV/AIDS we put them on a programme called Home Based Care where they can get free medication and free consultation. Some of the things are that we teach them about HIV so that they do not continue to go to the bars. We also offer free HIV counselling and testing. We than put them in groups where we equip them with skills for sustainable development.

KI 3: I would say that the church together with the children's home support single mothers through projects such as poultry, vegetable gardens and those who are willing to go back to school are linked to our overseas sponsors who assists them. Schooling in this case also involves empowerment courses such as teaching, hairdressing and tailoring. Fund raising events are also carried out as a way of raising money to boost these projects.

Researcher: How do you deal with the problems that you cannot handle at your organization?

KI 2: We deal with many organizations like PLAN International. It gets more so other single mothers obtain their funds from there through referrals. We also have organizations like PUTCO which specializes in farming, so they give them seeds for food. We also have PAWO they teach on hygiene. They build tanks, and help in drilling boreholes.

KI 1: As my other colleague has pointed out, we use what we call the referral system. Systems. There is also collaborations and linkages between social welfare and BEAM, UNICEF and also a coordination of food mitigation programmes for example through drought relief. We also have connections with the Child Protection department who deals with children. In fact, we work with the District Child Protection Committee as a team.

KI 3: Yes, the case is the same even in our organization. We just make sure that we have done all we can to be of help.

Researcher: What are the gaps that do you notice as an organization?

KI 3: Uuum, I think it all comes back to lack of finances to establish big projects that can really make a difference in these women's lives. Also, the support system is not there to continuously help these lone mothers, especially their children. Everyone is busy doing their own thing.

KI 2: The gap which is there is that women who face challenges run to South Africa. As an organization, we are still doing small income generating programmes. If we could do bigger things like building dams so that projects can be initiated. Chiredzi is a prone drought area so if those gaps could be filled. If we are doing budgets by September it will be hard because there will be need for supplementary irrigation.

KI 1: As the government and obviously the biggest stakeholder, there is need of more funding and resources for policy implementation. More funding because social welfare is concerned with only channeling resources to people. Disability and special schools should also be built to accommodate many children.

Theme 4: Effectiveness of poverty alleviation programmes

Researcher: Can you comment of the effectiveness of the strategies that single mothers employ themselves.

KI 1: It is true that single mothers are doing all they can to survive. They are starting small businesses and doing gardening at the back of their yards. There are others also who are doing negative means such as prostitution and selling their livelihood means.

KI 2: Single mothers are also trying their best to ensure that there is food. They sell tomatoes, vegetables, sweet potatoes. They wake up very early to do their work at the markets. But there are also other troublesome single mothers (hahahahah-chuckles).

KI 3: *Things may not be perfectly fine, but we believe that they are in a better position than they were before they implemented these different strategies. That's the whole point, isn't it?*

Interviewer: *So can you say their strategies are really working?*

KI 2: *They are better now, they used to stay in squatter camps but now they have moved back to formal houses because they can now afford to pay rent. Some of the children we also started with have finished school and are better now. Even though poverty cannot be completely alleviated, they are not in absolute poverty now.*

Researcher: *Can you comment on the challenges that are hindering progress of the programmes employed by your organization in an attempt to improve the single mothers' living standards?*

KI 1: *The government priorities. Like this year, the money was all put on elections and campaigning. The economic problems and everything seems politicized even the distribution of services. So the services may not get to single mothers because of campaigning and politically motivated distributions.*

KI 2: *Our organization, the challenges that we are facing is that donors are few. People are too many compared to the donations we receive. Again these single mothers, we give them capital to start small businesses or to do rounds with others, but if there are other situations that require money, they divert that money and misuse it and there is little that can be done to help them doing the income generating programmes. Otherwise many people are being helped a lot.*

KI 3: *Yah, as already said, the nation is economically and politically unstable. So funds and donors become unreliable as well. This affects the way the needy are helped.*

Interviewer: *In your opinion, what factors do you think influence the effectiveness of these survival strategies?*

KI 2: *If the economy would stabilize so that people don't go far to order their stock. If things stabilize politically and economically. If politics become stable, single mothers will do their things properly because there might be hatred generated by different political views.*

Interviewer: *So the dollarization that everyone is complaining about does not affect your organizations?*

KI 2: *liii, yes the dollarization once affected us but there was a time when it was working in our favor due to the exchange rate because many of our donors are international (interruption from someone).*

Researcher: *How are you planning to increase the depth and breadth of the assistance you give to single mothers?*

KI1: *The social welfare is currently reviewing the Maintenance Harmonised Cash Transfer. It has been proposed that the needy will have to collect the money next to their homes. Initially, they had to come to our offices and we found out that all the money is lost in transport fares. Also because the money was sometimes deposited into bank accounts, bank charges would eat away the part of the transfer. So this will make life easier for them because our representatives will take the money to the people.*

KI 2: *Our children we have noticed that they are failing because they have a lot of psycho-social issues that they are dealing with. So we have initiated a programme that ensures that the children who fail can engage in skills development like carpentry, bakery, building. So the group we have started with has benefitted a lot. There is also motor mechanics and hairdressing. This is what we have added to help them. We are also planning to build these schools here to save costs. That way they can attend school from their homes. Some of these children if we empower them, they can also help their single mothers because they will be employed.*

KI 3: *The single mothers in my congregation have recently started buying groceries in bulk to cut on costs and save. Also, a new donor has been approached who promised to increase the number of women who benefit from school bursaries.*

Theme 5: Final word from respondents

Researcher: *What advice can you give single mothers to ensure that the assistance you give them can improve their lives?*

KI 2: *Right now as single mothers, we cannot tell them what to do. Instead we say they should come up with what they want to do because they will say it's our project. All we can do is to tell them the pros and cons of their ideas because the projects are theirs. But what we would wish is for single mothers do individual income generating projects. They are more profitable than group projects because if one member misuses funds, that's the end of it. They should also do associations where they raise money together and share (stokvel). If they do that they will be*

supporting each other. We have groups who have done that, the other one bought a car, the other one extended her house. So individuals are better. The advice we give them nowadays is that they should leave the bars because they will die and leave their children. They should work. Also they should use condoms and practice safe sex instead of risking their lives.

KI 1: *it is important for single mothers to start Social Protection Programmes. They should start projects that promote self reliance not to live on hand to mouth. Again they should also participate in food-for-work programmes where they can be involved in road construction, filling gullies and deep tanks in order to improve their lives instead of just sitting around and complaining.*

KI 3: *As much as praying makes all things okay, the single mothers should also work hard to ensure that God has something to bless them with.*

Researcher: *I want to deeply thank you all for your time, insightful input and dedication to the lives of those in need especially single mothers. Our discussion ends here, thank you all once again.*