

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



TOPIC: Effectiveness of Social Support Systems in preventing Child Abuse and Neglect. A case study of Mabvuku.

BY

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A dissertation submitted to Bindura University of Science Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Social Work, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Social Work.

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APPROVAL FORM

I certify that I have supervised Natasha R Mwinga for this research titled: **Effectiveness of Social Support Systems in preventing Child Abuse and neglect. A case study of Mabvuku** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Social Work and recommends that it proceeds for examination.

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The department board of examiners is satisfied that this dissertation report meets the examination requirements and I recommend to the Bindura University to accept a research project by Natasha R Mwinga titled: **Effectiveness of Social Support Systems in preventing Child Abuse and Neglect. A case study of Mabvuku** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor Honors Degree in Social Work.

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DECLARATION RELEASE FORM

I, Natasha R Mwinga studying Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Social Work, being aware of the facts that plagiarism is a serious academic offence and that falsifying information is a breach of ethics in Social Work research, truthfully declare that:

1. The dissertation titled, ‘**Effectiveness of Social Support Systems in preventing child abuse and neglect. A case study of Mabvuku**’ is a result of my own work.
2. The research was conducted following the research ethic and Social work ethics.
3. The university can use this dissertation for academic purposes.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to my amazing and supportive mother. Her love, effort and support strengthened me throughout this journey. May the Almighty God abundantly bless you mama.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my Project Supervisor, Mr Chidyausiku for his guidance, commitment and the push. Without his guidance this dissertation would have not been a success. I would also like to extend my appreciation to my family and academic friends for their time, support, patience, encouragement and sacrifice in assisting me. Above all, I would like to acknowledge the Almighty God for giving me strength to pull through this journey.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to see how effective social support mechanisms are at protecting children. The study was prompted by an increase in the number of child abuse cases in the region. This raised concerns about the social support systems' efforts to reduce child abuse and neglect. This research used qualitative methods and a case study to gain a better understanding of why child abuse cases in Mabvuku are on the rise despite the presence of social support systems in the community. Twenty people took part in the survey, including local school heads and teachers, as well as parents and guardians in the community. The researcher used open-ended questions in interviews and focus group discussions to gather data from the participants, allowing them to explain what they really understand about social support systems and child abuse and neglect. According to the responses, the researcher discovered that the primary roles and responsibilities of social support systems include identifying child abuse cases and assessing the needs of vulnerable children, referring cases, advising the community, and raising awareness about child protection issues. The study also discovered that social support systems face a number of challenges that impede and undermine effective child protection processes. The study also reveals that these issues are to blame for the continued rise in child abuse cases. In light of this, the researcher outlined participant perspectives on actions that should be considered to address problems at the family and community levels so that children are effectively protected against abuse and its negative effects. The study also recommends several strategies that can improve the service provision towards child abuse in the community.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACRC	African Charter on the Rights of Child.
AIDS	Acquired-immuno deficiency syndrome.
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse.
CSO	Civil Society Organization.
HIV	Human-Immuno Virus.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization.
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals.
UNCRC	United Nations on the Convention of the Rights of the Child.
WHO	World Health Organization.

Table of Contents

APPROVAL FORM	i
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the study.	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.	2
1.3 Aim of the study.	3
1.4 Research Objectives	3
1.5 Research Questions	3
1.6 Assumptions of the study	3
1.7 Significance of the study	3
1.8 Limitations of the study	5
1.9 Delimitations	5
1.10 Research Ethics	6
1.10.1 Informed Consent.	6
1.10.2 Self-determination	6
1.10.3 Confidentiality	7

1.10.4 No Harm.	7
1.10.5 Voluntary Participation.	7
1.11 Definition of key terms.	7
1.12 Chapter Outline	8
1.13 Chapter Summary	9
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.0 Introduction.	10
2.1 Theoretical Framework: Ecological Systems theory.	10
2.2 Global Overview on Social Support Systems and Child Abuse and Neglect.	12
2.3 Regional Overview on Social Support Systems and Child Abuse and Neglect.	14
2.4 Local Overview on Social Support Systems and Child Abuse and Neglect.	16
2.5 National Orphan Care Policy (1999): Six-tier Safety Net System.	19
2.5.1 Relevance of the Six-tier Safety Net System to the Study.	19
2.6 Challenges facing Social Support Systems.	20
2.6.1 Poverty.	20
2.6.2 Domestic violence.	21
2.6.3 Cultural factors.	22
2.6.4 Religion.	23
2.6.5 Lack of incentives.	23
2.6.6 Poor enactment of existing policies.	24

2.7 Strategies to Enhance Effective Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.	24
2.7.1 Income and economic strengthening.	25
2.7.2 Education.	26
2.7.3 Monitoring and evaluation.	27
2.7.4 Home Visits.	27
2.8 Chapter Summary.	28
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	29
3.0 Introduction	29
3.1 Methodology	29
3.2 Research Design.	29
3.3 Study Setting.	29
3.4 Target Population.	30
3.5 Sampling.	30
3.5.1 Sampling Procedure.	31
3.5.2 Sampling Technique.	31
3.5.3 Sampling Criteria.	31
3.6 Data Collection Process.	32
3.6.1 Data Collection Tools.	32
3.6.2 Data Presentation and Analysis.	33
3.7 Chapter Summary	34

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	35
4.0 Introduction.....	35
4.1 Qualitative Data Presentation.....	35
4.2 Demographics.....	35
4.3 The main functions and obligations of the family and school as social support systems.....	36
4.3.1 Identifying abuse cases and assessing needs of vulnerable children	36
4.3.2 Referring cases	37
4.3.3 Raise awareness on child protection issues.....	38
4.3.4 Providing psycho-social support in child protection.....	39
4.4 Services provided by the family and school in preventing child abuse and neglect.....	40
4.4.1 Family support meetings.	40
4.4.2 School based programs.....	42
4.5 Challenges faced by the family and the school.	42
4.5.1 Poverty	43
4.5.2 Cultural and religious factors	45
4.5.3 Lack of incentives.....	46
4.5.4 Domestic Violence.....	47
4.6.1 Education.....	48
4.6.2 Income and economic strengthening.....	49
4.6.3 Monitoring and evaluation.....	50

4.7 Chapter summary	51
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	52
5.0 Introduction.....	52
5.1 Summary.....	52
5.1.1 Main functions and obligations of the family and school.	52
5.1.2 Nature of services provided by the family and school to prevent child abuse and neglect. ..	54
5.1.3 Strategies that can enhance effective child protection.....	55
5.2 Conclusions.....	56
5.3 Recommendations:.....	56
5.4 Chapter Summary.....	57
REFERENCES:	58
APPENDICES	63
APPENDIX 1: Bindura University Release Form.	63
APPENDIX 2: Approval Letter.....	64
APPENDIX 3: Consent Form.....	65
APPENDIX 4: In-depth interview guide for formal social support systems (school).....	66
APPENDIX 5: In-depth interview guide for informal social support systems (family).	67

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.

1.0 Introduction.

This chapter comprises of an introduction in which the main idea of the study, the effectiveness of social support systems in preventing child abuse, is presented. This chapter also includes the study's background, the problem statement, the study's justification, and the study's aims and objectives. A summary will be provided at the end of the chapter.

1.1 Background of the study.

Child protection has become a major concern in most developing countries, where child abuse and neglect are on the rise. Child abuse is still prevalent in Zimbabwe, with negative consequences for the child's well-being. Each and every Zimbabwean citizen bears responsibility for child protection. The Children's Protection Adoption Act, the Guardianship of Minors Act, the Maintenance Act, the Education Act, the Tertiary Instrument 72 of 1997, Labor Relations, Employment of Children, and the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act all place a premium on child protection in Zimbabwe. However, according to WHO (2000), children have received increased protection under national and international law in the last 25 years, but they continue to be abused in increasing numbers. Children from all walks of life are subjected to physical, sexual, and psychological violence, abuse, and exploitation. Because of the negative health and developmental consequences for children and society, this is a growing concern.

Home should be a child's first line of defense and protection, but stressors such as poverty, political and economic instability, and patriarchal cultural and religious beliefs are undermining that defense. Media coverage indicates an increase of abuse, neglect and violence against children. It is abundantly clear that risk factors for violence, abuse, and neglect are on the rise for children in

the high-density suburb due to economic instability. Many households in the Mabvuku area are struggling to cope with the concerns over health, food security, financial instability at personal and community levels being some of the main drivers behind child abuse and neglect in Zimbabwe. According to UNICEF (2008), close to 300 million children worldwide aged 2–17 years regularly experience abuse. This is supported by the Save the Children 2018 report which states that approximately 8,000 reports of abuse were received in 2018 in Zimbabwe, 39% were about sexual abuse, followed by neglect 25%, physical abuse 22%, emotional abuse 12% and bullying 2%. The fact that all types of abuse are commonly reported demonstrates the country's relatively widespread presence. As a result, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of social support systems as front-liners in child protection in Zimbabwe, specifically in Mabvuku.

1.2 Statement of the problem.

The main directive of social support systems on children is to protect their welfare however, there seems to be an alteration from meeting the set goals. There has been an increase of reported cases of child abuse and neglect in form of sexual, physical abuse, emotional neglect amongst others although some are not being reported. There has also been an increase of school dropouts, child headed families, increased risky sexual activity amongst the adolescents, increase in juvenile delinquency and also criminal activities. Lastly, the number of children out of school, running away from home and sometimes marrying early in order to escape the abuse and an indication of persistent pattern of behavior that violates basic societal norms and rules has also been noted to be on the rise. However, this has contradicted on the mandate and goal to protect the child from any harm, hence, the need to assess the effectiveness of the Social support systems in safeguarding children's welfare in Mabvuku suburb.

1.3 Aim of the study.

To evaluate the effectiveness of social support systems as a child protection tool.

1.4 Research Objectives.

- a) To identify the main functions and obligations of social support systems.
- b) To explore the nature of services provided by different support systems towards child abuse and neglect.
- c) To recommend strategies that can heighten effective child protection processes.

1.5 Research Questions.

- a) What are the main functions of social support systems?
- b) What are the services provided by different social support systems?
- c) What can be done to enhance the effectiveness of social support systems?

1.6 Assumptions of the study.

The study is predicated on the assumption that child protection is a shared responsibility and that interactions between various social support systems ensure that the child is protected from negative experiences.

1.7 Significance of the study.

This study provides a systematic and comprehensive insight into the state of services provided by several social support systems in safeguarding the welfare of the children. Given the scarcity of previous research on social support systems it is of paramount importance to add more knowledge to the social support systems knowledge base. As a result, a more comprehensive study of the

effectiveness of social support systems in preventing child abuse and neglect is required. Previous research has overlooked the significance of informal social support networks in protecting children from abuse, neglect, and maltreatment. Social support systems include the family, schools, churches, peer groups amongst others. Every year, many girls and boys die in Mabvuku as a result of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Vulnerable children who survive into adulthood face significant disadvantages, with many experiencing developmental delays, gaps in their education, and mental and physical health issues as a result of their maltreatment. As a result, many Mabvuku youths are turning to substance abuse, developing violent behaviors, and engaging in high-risk sexual behaviors, among other things. This raises concerns about what protection systems, particularly social support systems, are doing for children. The stigma, discrimination, and diminished life chances faced by abused, exploited, and neglected children exacerbates the situation (Roby, 2011). As a result, this study is important because it addresses gaps in social support systems and proposes intervention methods to reduce the prevalence of child abuse and neglect.

According to Kaplan and Jones (2013), child abuse and neglect have a negative impact on societies' ability to achieve a variety of broader development goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This demonstrates how intended stakeholders are failing to fulfill their responsibilities in child protection. When the social support systems are functioning properly, the children's lives and well-being will be greatly enhanced. As a result, there will be less incidents of child abuse, and children will be more mindful of their rights and confident in speaking up against child abuse.

In addition to the significance of the study, its significance also extends to the following stakeholders:

To the researcher: The study raises the researcher's awareness on the effectiveness of the social support systems in Child protection. The study also broadens the researchers' theoretical and conceptual understanding of the social support systems. The study does not only improve the researchers' understanding and knowledge but also enriches her analytical and inquiry skills.

To the respondents: The study has potential to raise awareness and critique the effectiveness of the social support systems in child protection. The study will enlighten the different social support systems on their shortfalls and suggest ways they can improve on their functions and mandate in child protection.

1.8 Limitations of the study.

Limitations are the confounding factors that the researcher cannot control. These factors pose restrictions on the study methods and conclusions. The information required by the researcher may be sensitive and personal, hence some the respondents may be hesitant to respond. Thus, the researcher realized the need to really explain the ethic of confidentiality so the respondents understood that they their information will not be disclosed. Some of the participants can opt out of the research and could not continue participating. This is so because they may feel that their religious and cultural beliefs may be threatened by the study hence, they may choose to be silent.

1.9 Delimitations.

This refers to the boundaries set for the study. That is the various considerations or qualifiers which facilitate or inhibit the researcher in undertaking the study and the parameters of what could not be covered in the study. The study will be conducted and confined to Mabvuku suburb in metropolitan Harare. Mabvuku suburb is grouped into two that is old mabvuku and new mabvuku.

It also comprises of Chizhanje which is formerly a hostel for railway workers. Henceforth, the study will be limited to those parameters.

1.10 Research Ethics.

The study incorporates ethics throughout the study. Ethics are guidelines that demand adherence by the researcher to protect participants' right (Pope and Mays, 2000). Ethical considerations compel researchers to understand what is right and wrong, and to direct their study in a way that does not infringe on others' rights. The relationship between researchers and the people they study is the focus of research ethics. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), research participants are not passive beings who just serve the purpose of giving a researcher the data she needs, but rather they are an indispensable part of the research. The researcher took into account issues of informed consent, self-determination, confidentiality, no harm and voluntary participation.

1.10.1 Informed Consent.

This means it is their right to be informed on the purpose of the research, that it is not compulsory to participate, also the respondents ought to know how the information will be stored and that their reservations or queries regarding the research protocol are very important. Hence informed consent is used as a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate. This ensures respects for the participants.

1.10.2 Self-determination.

The rights to self-determination remain inviolable. Thus, the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of participants will be a primary ethical concern in this research. This researcher is to ensure that all human rights are maintained and no research activity will infringe them.

1.10.3 Confidentiality.

Confidentiality and anonymity were also prioritized in this study. This refers to security of informants. Hence, in the study use of fake/pseudo names and code system to ensure anonymity was done. This stipulates the keeping the identities of research participants unknown and precaution is taken in ensuring that no names of participants are revealed. The researcher assures participants that their information would not be disclosed to anyone else and would not be disclosed or published unless by voluntary consent from the participants.

1.10.4 No Harm.

This principle is the process whereby the researcher seeks to protect and safeguard participants against all forms of harm that may negatively affect them. This includes both physical and emotional harm. The researcher assures the participants that no harm would befall them either during or after the research has been conducted. The researcher takes into account the respondents' diverse cultural beliefs in the research so as to avoid causing harm or infringing the rights, norms and values of participants.

1.10.5 Voluntary Participation.

According to Smith (2003) this entails the freewill of participants in deciding whether they want to partake of the research or not, without using intimidation or force. The research informs the participants if they were willing to partake in the study and informed them that they were free to withdraw from the research if they no longer feel comfortable to give out information.

1.11 Definition of key terms.

Key words: social support systems, child abuse and neglect.

- **Child:** A child is any person below the age of eighteen.

- **Social support systems:** Social support system refers to the persons, agencies and organisations with which a person has contact with direct or indirectly. These systems provide social support in the form of physical or practical assistance, emotional and physiological assistance, attitude transmission.
- **Child abuse:** Child abuse is defined as any act or behaviour that results in serious physical, emotional or psychological harm to the child. There are different types of child abuse which includes:
 - i. Physical abuse which refers to any non-accidental physical injury to the child.
 - ii. Emotional abuse entails persistent emotional maltreatment of the child which cause harm to the psychological and emotional stability resulting in substantial change in behaviour.
 - iii. Sexual abuse refers to violation of the sexual rights of the child and can also be called sexual exploitation.
- **Neglect:** Neglect refers to failure on the part of the parents, guardian or caregiver to provide proper care for the child.

1.12 Chapter Outline

1.12.1 Chapter 1: Introduction and background.

This chapter comprises of the introduction whereby the main concept of the study and background of the study are brought out. This chapter also includes the statement of the problem, justification of the study, the aims and objectives of the study. The chapter will close up with a summary

1.12.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will comprise of the literature review of the study and will begin with an introduction. The theoretical framework will be found in this chapter with specifics to the systems' theory

exploring how different social support systems work together in protecting the child against abuse. The chapter will then end with a summary of the review.

1.12.3 Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on the research method which is the qualitative research method. The outline will include an introduction of the chapter followed by the research design. The target population followed by the sampling procedure will also be given by the researcher. The researcher will also include the research instruments, analysis and presentation of data, reliability and validity of the study and also the chapter summary.

1.12.4 Chapter 4: Data presentation and analysis

In this chapter, research findings will be displayed. The researcher will present the findings and discuss the data. The demographic profile of the respondents will also be presented. The chapter will also highlight on the effectiveness of social support systems and lastly the chapter summary.

1.12.5 Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter will highlight the summary of major findings of the study and conclusions about those findings. It will also highlight the researcher's recommendations and suggested areas that need further research.

1.13 Chapter Summary

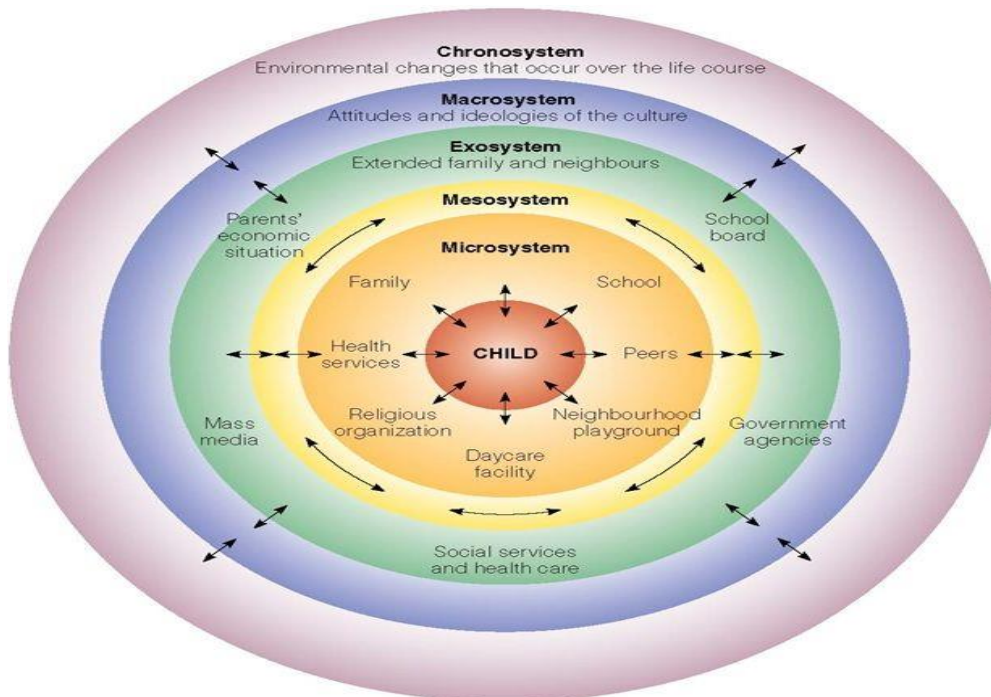
The chapter managed to outline the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the aims of the study, objectives and assumptions of the research. It further brought out the justification of the study, limitations and delimitations, the definition of key terms, chapter outline and a summary. The following chapter will bring out the literature review of the research

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction.

Social support systems with special mention to the family and the school have both positive and negative impacts on child abuse and neglect. They either are protectors or perpetrators of abuse on children and this is due to several stressors that threaten the functioning of the system. Studies from the international, regional and local levels reveal how the family and school are both perpetrators and protectors against abuse on children. These systems face challenges that inhibit child development directly or indirectly hence the need to suggest mechanisms that can protect the children against all forms of violence.

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Ecological Systems theory.



This research is premised on the ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner. The systems theory is a theory that aims at explaining the dynamic relationships that exists and interdependence between components of the system. Bronfenbrenner (1979), notes that the systems theory offers a framework through which the researcher examines individual's relationships within communities and the wider society. It identifies five environmental systems with which an individual interacts. That is, all parts of a system feed into the common goal of the whole system, well summarized by the adage 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.' The ecological model suggest that child abuse and neglect occur as a result of the wide range of interactions that a child has with the surrounding institutions, family and friends at all ecological levels. The ecological framework therefore assists in identifying and mapping different protective and risk factors at each level which leads to effective intervention in safeguarding the children against abuse and maltreatment in the Mabvuku suburb. For example, a parent's behavior or attitude towards the child is influenced by their financial and economic situation. If the family is financially struggling, cases of neglect arises as they will be out looking for means of survival. The ecological theory brings out how cultural beliefs are a risk factor in child abuse and neglect. This is so because culture influences the family and community's perception on child abuse for instance beating the child with whips, belts or anything as form of punishment. Culture does not only influence people's perception but also laws and policies.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory views social support systems as a protective factor in child abuse and neglect. The theory posits that social support systems such as the school and the family work together to promote child protection and prevent child abuse and maltreatment although they are facing many challenges that compromises the quality of the prevention efforts towards child abuse and neglect. This is in line with Lai and Lin (2017) who introduced the concept

of the cybernetic systems theory, which refers to the control and communication that occurs in a machine as similar to how social support systems work in a community and how their interaction prevents child abuse. The ecological theory therefore allows the researcher to identify the interaction between victims of abuse and social support systems and also examines crucial points for intervention to strengthen the relationship between the two.

2.2 Global Overview on Social Support Systems and Child Abuse and Neglect.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 1999), explains that child abuse constitutes, ‘all forms of physical, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility.’ Child abuse and neglect has become an issue of great concern worldwide that is deeply rooted in the social, cultural and economic practices. This is evidenced by the increasing amount of literature concerning this problem. The abuse of children has taken form of trampling upon their fundamental rights enshrined in the UNCRC. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1986), introduces the fundamental principle that the protection of children against all forms of abuse is the responsibility of everyone surrounding them.

According to researchers, cultural perspectives on child rearing can vary to such an extent that finding an agreement on abusive behaviors can be difficult. Families in the global north, for example, see corporal punishment as cruel to children, while those in the global south see it as a means of correcting the boy. As a result, the definition of what is considered child abuse differs with the culture and environment. Studies show that, nearly 3 in 4 children or 300 million children aged 2-4 years globally regularly suffer physical punishment or psychological violence at the hands of their parents and guardians and according to WHO (2018) report every year homicide

deaths in children under 18 years of age are likely due to child maltreatment that they have suffered from their families. In western countries, preventing child abuse is regarded as high priority and each and every person has a responsibility to protect the children. Different laws, policies and conventions have been implemented to address this issue for instance with regards to the rights of children such as United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Bodies such as the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations are also formulated to ensure the protection of children against all forms of violence for instance it states the prohibition of degrading treatment or punishments that extends to corporal punishment. Some of these conventions act as a blueprint for the implementation of similar policies that protects the children against all forms of abuse in African countries.

Literature identifies schools as vital institutions for the identification of child abuse and also interventions in suspected cases of neglect. Indicators often include hunger, inadequate clothing, poor hygiene or persistent lateness. Detecting changes in child's behavior or educational milestones helps in intervening against child abuse and neglect. According to Stevens and Laing (2015), it is for this reason that schools are pivotal sites for identification of child abuse and intervention. Studies indicates that schools in the global north seems to be effective social support systems as they play a crucial role in in identifying cases of abuse and neglect. This is so because they are committed to their work mainly because they get paid well and receive incentives unlike in Africa in particular Zimbabwe where there are series of strikes by the teachers on the issue of incentives. This therefore weakens the school as a social support system as it fails to identify the cases of abuse and neglect. It is important to note that there is little literature that identifies the weaknesses of the schools in the prevention of child abuse in the global north countries.

2.3 Regional Overview on Social Support Systems and Child Abuse and Neglect.

Globally an estimated 95 million children experience abuse annually, with the highest rates reported in the WHO African region. The abuse of children breaches the rights of children that are in the African Charter on the Rights of Children (ACRC, 1990). Studies indicate that many families act oblivious of the fact that they are abusing the children and they conduct corporal punishment as a means of correcting the child from what he or she has done wrong thus physical punishment is seen as a method of child-rearing. This is commonly practiced in many regions such as south west Ethiopia where the parents lack knowledge and understanding of what entails child abuse. Studies in Africa however fail to properly define the distinction between child abuse and child discipline. Efforts by the African governments to end physical abuse in schools have included issuance of a directive ordering teachers not to use corporal punishment but however due to lack of monitoring on the adherence of non-corporal punishment, physical abuse still persist.

Researches show that child marriages are mostly common in Africa mostly West African and some parts of southern Africa especially Mozambique. This is due to the extreme poverty in these countries where families may see it fit to marry off their child in exchange of food or as form of paying their debts. Studies show that Mozambique has one of the highest rates of child marriages in the world affecting one girl child in every two which is one of the violations against the children's rights. According to UNICEF (2019), 53% of girls in Mozambique are married before 18 years of age and 17% are married before the age of 15. Most of these marriages are called '*de facto*' unions which are done by families as a way of strengthening relations between two families. Thus, studies portray the family are not playing its role as a support system, instead of protecting the children they are putting them at a more vulnerable position. Violence characterizes these marriages and from the Mozambique demographic health survey in 2018, 48% of women married

before the age of 18 increased in reporting spousal violence. Researches have however ignored the smaller part of family system that is not perpetuating child abuse and neglect even in such dire economic conditions. The factors that researches ignore such as resilience can also assist in intervention against child abuse and neglect.

Nearly two thirds of the population in Africa live in extreme poverty, on \$US1.90 or less a day (UNDP, 2019). Millions of people in the East and Southern- Africa face chronic food insecurity owing to the serious of droughts that occurred such as in Ethiopia and Malawi who suffered a series of droughts since the year 2000. Studies show that many children are involved in child labor as means for survival. Many guardians are leaving their homes countries to other countries in search for greener pastures neglecting the children. Families fail to understand that what the children need is psychosocial support from them thus their presence positively aids to the prevention of child abuse. It is believed that African rates of abuse likely surpass everywhere due to the patriarchal nature of the societies. This type of society has been seen to foster child sexual abuse in Africa where men take advantage of the girl child and child fail to report owing to the fact that the person is her guardian. Worldwide up to 50% of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16 and researches prove that the first sexual of 30% of the children is forced and unwanted.

Schools in Africa have been considered as one of the effective social support systems in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. National legal and policy frameworks have been adopted following the ratification of the UNCRC that uphold the children's rights and protect them from all forms of abuse and neglect. However, some African countries are failing to prevent the cases of child abuse in schools. For instance, the Ghana and Malawi studies revealed several cases of teachers having sexual activities with girls in their school and of the school and district education

authorities taking very little, if any, action to deal with them. According to UNICEF (2018) report, while corporal punishment has been prohibited in Ghana's schools per a directive from the Ghana Educational Service, the practice still exists. This is so because of the existing laws that allows justifiable and reasonable corporal punishment of a child (Children's Act 13:2). The Ghanaian Criminal Offences Act also allows the use of blow or other force against a child under the age of 16 years by a parent, guardian for disobedience as long as it is reasonable in kind and degree. Studies therefore show that due to certain laws in African, some countries lag behind in terms of progress in protection of the child against abuse. There is however limited research that focuses on legal provisions as the foundation for child abuse and neglect.

2.4 Local Overview on Social Support Systems and Child Abuse and Neglect.

Zimbabwe is largely a society embodied by the philosophy of '*ubuntu*' hence protection of the child in a community is considered a universal responsibility. That is each and every individual, agency; institution has a responsibility of protecting the child against all forms of abuse. The Zimbabwean constitution defines a child as any person under the age of eighteen. According to Mushunje (2006), traditionally children have been viewed as central to society, hence their protection has been rendered an issue of particular concern to the whole community. This can be traced back to the pre-colonial era where another neighbor would protect and ensure that her neighbors' child is safe. Social support system has been taken to mean the safety nets that are directly or indirectly available for everyone. These include persons, agencies or organizations that provide social support which may be emotional, appraisal or informational. Social support has been hypothesized to be one of the protective factors that act as a buffer for the risk of child abuse and of the consequences of child abuse.

Traditionally, Zimbabweans have taken pride in protecting the vulnerable groups against all forms of violence including the children. The Zimbabwean community to date view child protection as a universal concern basing on the *ubuntu* beliefs. The role of the community in child protection has even been recognized by the government's policy framework that is shown in line with international bodies relating to issues of child protection like the UNCRC. The National Orphan Care Policy of 1999 highlighted the six-tier system which explains that a child in Zimbabwe is cared for by six key players namely nuclear family, extended family, community care, formal foster care, adoption and institutional care.

Studies reveal that, although Zimbabwe has put in place arguably one of the best social protection systems in Africa, there are a multitude of challenges negatively affecting child social protection schemes (Masuka, Banda, Mabvurira, Frank, 2012). There have been many reports in Zimbabwe in the media regarding the high occurrences of child abuse cases all over the country in homes and schools. This is as a result of the unstable economic environment affecting the communities. These unstable economic conditions have led to the compromising of parenting and are now associated with disrupted social relationships. Some families, community members are being bribed so that they do not report the perpetrator to the police and the police are bribed so that the case do not proceed.

Kambarami (2006), argues that the family is the brewery of patriarchal norms and values. This is an important assertion when focusing on child maltreatment. The family should be the haven for the protection of children yet statistics show that violence experienced by children below the age of eighteen is perpetrated by partners with whom they are closely related to (Mashiri 2013). The family, unfortunately, is the arena where most child maltreatment happens yet parents and close relatives should play an integral role in child protection. A UNICEF and ZimStat study (2011),

indicates that double orphaned female children are at a higher risk of being sexually abused. They experience social and economic difficulties and have burdensome domestic responsibilities. Traditionally, orphans in Zimbabwe are to be taken care of by the extended family. However, many scholars argue that extended families are also failing to absorb children in need of care due to continued exponential increase in poverty in Africa's sub-Saharan region. This is shown by the high incidences of child headed families in the high-density suburbs which is one of the factors increasing the children's vulnerability.

In Zimbabwe, very few known studies have examined in detail the problem of child sexual abuse perpetrated by members of the immediate family. Mutandwa (2012), states that child sexual abuse in Zimbabwe has been very difficult to curtail because children are abused by people whom they know and this perpetuates the custom of silence because the crimes are rarely reported. In some cases, children are coerced by other members of the family to withdraw the cases they would have reported to the police in order to protect family members who might have perpetrated the abuse. This is also done as a way of protecting the name of the family hence many families considers their status quo in a society at the expense of the child's rights. Families in Zimbabwe have also been portrayed as a socializing agent that socializes children into religious beliefs that perpetuate sexual abuse of children. A study by Chitereka (2010) on child sexual abuse points out that, just like in several African countries, customs, superstitions and spiritual beliefs play a considerable part in the exposure of children to sexual abuse particularly in families, for instance, the belief that one can be cured of HIV/AIDS by being intimate with a minor or the tradition of girl child betrothal as a means of avenging angry ancestral spirits. This has been vivid in the Zimbabwean society where many children are victims of cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs. Efforts to combat this issue have been made in Zimbabwe through the constitution and Children's Act which recognizes

the extent of abuse associated with religious and spiritual beliefs. It is however important to note that this is only theoretical and children are still being abused in the name of culture and religion.

2.5 National Orphan Care Policy (1999): Six-tier Safety Net System.

The policy situates that the effective child care environment should start with biological family and end with institutionalization. These six tiers are presented in an order of priority starting with the biological family, extended family, community, foster care, adoption and institutionalization. In traditional African society, children are considered vulnerable, but they could get help from the extended family and the community (Mushunje, 2006). According to Mugumbate and Chereni, (2019), phrases like ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ emerged from traditional African society which is a clear sign that child protection is considered a common responsibility from time immemorial. Henceforth, in the event that the immediate family is no longer there, the child has readily available safety nets that are related to the nuclear family and the community. The notion of Ubuntu has remained a central belief of Zimbabwean culture up to this day (Mushunje, 2006), but forces of corruption and recurring economic difficulties have all combined to diminish the value of Ubuntu and some values embodied in the notion of *ubuntu* have been eroded. According to Hendry (2006), with the adaptation of western cultural values, there is now a value system shaped by individualism where boundaries between the immediate family and extended families have been created. This has led to the failure of the six tier systems. In other terms, the decline of *ubuntu* has diminished the value of extended family and the community in the six-tier system.

2.5.1 Relevance of the Six-tier Safety Net System to the Study.

The six-tier system proves to be relevant to this study because it spells out the duties of the family in child protection against all forms of abuse that is providing awareness in every sector on children’s rights. The Six-tier system indicates the family as the first port of call in providing the

needs and protecting the child from any form of child abuse and exploitation. The system also helps in highlighting how the system is failing to complete its core mandate of protecting the child which is seen through the high incidences of abuse by both the immediate and extended family. The system suggests that the extended family should be capacitated in order to fulfill their role in the event that the nuclear family is no longer available. This act as a strategy to ensure effective prevention of child abuse by the families. It is important to note that the government of Zimbabwe has made efforts to cater for the families through harmonized cash transfers but the implementation has been poor due to issues such as budgetary constraints.

2.6 Challenges facing Social Support Systems.

Social support systems face several challenges that affect their roles in preventing child abuse and neglect in the community. These challenges include poverty, domestic violence, cultural and religious factors, lack of incentives and poor enactment of policies which will be discussed below:

2.6.1 Poverty.

Poverty contributes to the unfortunate situation of abuse on children in Zimbabwe. With Zimbabwe having high levels of formal unemployment, men experience a crisis of masculinity and use abuse as a way of reasserting their lost power and unemployed men also spend a lot of time at home. There are many parents who due to poverty make the girl child engage in sex with rich people so that their monetary needs can be met. Even sometimes without forcing them to engage in sexual activities parents also turn a blind eye to their children's sexual relationships with adults to simply receive financial support (Magwa and Ingwani 2014). Padare (2014) noted that poverty is believed to be forcing young women and girls into transactional sex as a livelihood option and a lot of intergenerational relationships. Without adequate care and support, many children are exposed to exploitative child labor and abuse.

Hit by poverty that resulted from a series of drought and inflation, Zimbabwean's people are struggling to make ends meet. Many people in the high-density suburbs are living below the poverty datum line. Masuka (2012), posits that poverty in Zimbabwe has reached unprecedented levels with 70% of children living in abject poverty. This had increased the children's vulnerability to such an extent that some are resorting to child labor. Many children in Mabvuku are spending their day selling food stuffs so that they can earn a living. The families however are turning a blind ear to such actions believing that the children are assisting them in making ends meet. This however has affected the education of the children as they spent more time at the markets or in the streets selling goods to earn income. Therefore, children living in poverty experience deprivation of basic commodities and others end up being involved in child prostitution and exploitative child labor. Poverty has become one of the stressors of the family that is it has led to frustrations on a parent which apparently are released on the children. The children are therefore suffering for situations that they cannot control and they are becoming victims of physical violence. Single parent households are substantially more likely to have incomes below the poverty line thus lower income and the increased stress on the sore family responsibilities is considered as one of the risk factors of child abuse and neglect. It is important to note that, some poor people do not abuse their children but when poverty is associated with depression, substance abuse and stress it increases the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

2.6.2 Domestic violence.

Domestic violence indirectly and directly leads to child abuse. According to Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (2015), 30% to 60% where spouse abuse takes place child maltreatment also occurs. Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors including physical, sexual and psychological attacks as well as economic coercion that

adults use against their partners. This violence leads to abuse of children in the sense that children may be physical injured when acts of violence occur in their presence or they suffer from serious emotional abuse as a result of living in an environment where domestic violence is most prevalent. Domestic violence is therefore one of the factors that leads to child abuse and affects the family as a social support system in prevention of child abuse. Some domestic violence often extends to children where both the mother and children and physically beaten by the male counterparts. Children therefore suffer in the hands of their protectors and there is little that could be done. In the Zimbabwe, some women do not report cases of domestic violence due to cultural beliefs. This also makes the cases of child abuse to go unnoticed. Children do not also report these acts of violence because they develop fear for their guardians.

2.6.3 Cultural factors.

The definition of abuse differs with cultures and from society to society. Culture determines the effective implementation of policies that safeguard the children (Chireshe, Chireshe and Mudhovozi, 2009). Some families may fail to accept the laws that stipulate what to be done on their children. For instance, the banning corporal punishment is not embraced by all as many families continue to physically punish their children as a way of instilling discipline in them. Many families in mabvuku that are of the Nyau origin from Mozambique still practice some harmful practices which include (Kuripa Ngozi) appeasing spirits where a girl child is given to the offended family and offences may include murder. Therefore, culture predisposes children to sexual abuse and physical abuse. Sometimes the girl child is married off to an older person putting them at a risk of contracting STIs and HIV/AIDS. This leads to the abuse of children due to the cultural beliefs embedded in a family. It is important to note that such cultural beliefs are deeply rooted in people and they do not see what is wrong with their practices. Henceforth cases of abuse continue

to rise because people do not see anything wrong with what they believe in. In as much as there is the child protection act that prohibits practice of the harmful actions toward children, the people do not follow the stipulation and the cases of abuse are still on the rise due to cultural beliefs.

2.6.4 Religion.

There are several religious practices that predispose children to sexual abuse. Certain religious denomination such as Johanne Marange perpetuates sexual abuse in the name of religion. Children in this church are married off to an older person at a younger age under the age of 18. Young girls are forced to drop out of schools and be wives to the males. The religion does not allow the girl to leave the husband and go to school. The families are not considering the plight of their children but rather following their own selfish interests. The leaders of the church also predispose children to sexual abuse by saying they had a dream in which the child is the wife of the leader. The child is then forced to live everything and pursue marriage at a tender age. Children are exposed to various STIs because the church does not allow the use of contraceptives. Chireshe, Chireshe and Mudhovozi (2009), argue that many cases of abuse in Zimbabwe are perpetuated and justified in the name of religion and culture. This leads to the rise in the cases of child marriages and sexual abuse in the marriage.

2.6.5 Lack of incentives.

Many developing countries are facing serious economic and +fiscal constraints and are therefore unable to augment direct salary incentives. Lavy (2012), notes that larger teacher incentives lead to standardized learning programs and also improves the attendance of the teachers at schools. However, due to the dire economic conditions in Zimbabwe the government is failing to pay enough money to the teachers. This had led to a series of strikes with teachers crying for increase in their allowances. The school in Zimbabwe plays a crucial role in identifying the cases of abuse

and neglect that occurs at home. Therefore, due to the strikes, the teachers are no longer available to monitor the activities of the children and they cannot identify any forms of neglect. The education system in Zimbabwe has faced numerous strikes, worker apathy, work stoppages and sit-ins by teachers who demanded better salaries. Therefore, this has led to many unreported child abuse cases.

2.6.6 Poor enactment of existing policies.

Although Zimbabwe have a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework safeguarding the children against all forms of violence and abuse the children are still disadvantaged. Child sexual abused has been trivialized by the courts seen by how child sex predators get away with just community service instead of non-deterrent sentences. This contradicts with the Criminal Law Act with criminalize child sexual abuse and supports deterrent sentences for the perpetrators. Children continue to suffer traumatic incidents of sexual abuse implementation of the polices and laws is tampered with. There are a lot of cases that are reported to the local police stations but are not recorded. This is because the responsible officers are bribed by the perpetrators so that they case may not proceed. If a teacher is caught on the wrong side of the law, the headmaster and the police work together to cover the story and maintain the reputation of the school. Henceforth the protectors of the law are the ones that are hindering effective application of it.

2.7 Strategies to Enhance Effective Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

There are several strategies that can be employed to enhance effective prevention of child abuse and neglect. These include income and economic strengthening, education, monitoring and evaluation as to be discussed below.

2.7.1 Income and economic strengthening.

This can only be done through cash transfers, projects and micro-financing. One of the reasons why there is an increase in child abuse cases is frustrations that erupt from income and economic constraints in the family. Children often suffer in the hands of their guardians because of failure to cope with stressors of life. To prevent child abuse and neglect, we should deal with the root causes. Henceforth cash transfers should be given to the people and projects implemented such as poultry amongst others. Cash transfers work in preventing early child marriages as it increases attendance of the girl child in schools and promote better care of the children. It is important to note that some projects formulated should consider gender roles so that both guardians will have a source of income. Child prevention strategies should have an anti-poverty focus because poverty largely exacerbates child abuse and neglect. Therefore, this strengthens the family's livelihood and enhance child and social protection and reduces economic need to marry off young girls at a tender age. It is however important to note that, in Zimbabwe efforts to provide cash transfers are being made through the harmonized cash transfer program but due to limited resources the program is means tested where the cash is given to the most deserving populations. This program does not therefore cater for everyone who need the assistance. One can also argue those that fail to qualify for the program are the ones that grow to perpetuate abuse on children due to the magnitude of the economic conditions.

As a result, initiatives that strengthen the household income should be long lasting such as projects and vocational training. Vocational training leads to empowerment and enhance social protection and families will be in a position to restore, improve and maintain their income. Income support interventions aim at preventing further fall in poverty which is one of the drivers of child labor, child prostitution, child neglect amongst others. CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) should also

consider providing families with emergency funds or aid when they face different shocks that may emanate from disasters either man-made or natural.

2.7.2 Education.

The aim of education on child abuse and neglect is to raise awareness on the children, families, schools and community at large. According to Brooks (2011), educating the community should be on what is considered child abuse and neglect and on restrictive and harmful social norms, educating the children on their rights. This improves their knowledge on sexual abuse and how to protect themselves against it. Collaborative effort is crucial in educating the relevant people in safeguarding the child. Hence the community should join hands in creating a safe environment for the child. Education is a key tool that should be used in ensuring effective prevention of child abuse. Most of the cases of child abuse occur due to lack of knowledge of the victims and also the perpetrators. Some children do not report the cases of abuse due to the fear of what can be done by the perpetrator if he knows that the child has reported. According to Lowenthal (2001), different stakeholders such as social workers should make it a point to educate the children on their rights and how protected they are with the law. This becomes vital in that several cases of abuse will be reported to the responsible offices and intervention methods are implemented to avoid further harm of abuse on children. Educational programs are therefore key to equipping children with skills for detecting and avoid the risk of abuse, seeking help and reporting the abuse.

Education should also be given to the perpetrators. Most perpetrators do not know that they are instigating abuse. For instance, most people do not know the difference between child discipline and physical abuse and the issues to do with what is regarded as child labor. Many guardians predispose children to many forms of abuse due to lack of knowledge (Shumba, 2001). Thus, different stakeholders should make it a point to teach and educate families and communities on

what is considered child abuse. This should be done through public awareness activities with the purpose of raising community awareness of child abuse and neglect as a chronic public issue. Social workers play a vital role as educators. One of the tools that can be used is the media where communities are able to promote, support for healthy parenting practices, child safety skills and steps for reporting suspected cases of abuse and neglect.

2.7.3 Monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation should be done on the existing policies. Implementation and enforcement of laws that ban violent punishment of children by parents, teachers or other caregivers for instance corporal punishment should be monitored. It imperative to note that, some families and schools do not adhere to the stipulations of the laws because they believe physical punishment is necessary for child discipline. It was found that some cases do not progress well at the police level and they are later ignored or neglected. In such cases it is therefore important for the police Victim Friendly Unit to expand follow up programs on these issues. The victim friendly system also has to monitor the activities of the child, during and after court proceedings so that children do not change testimonials in court owing to intimidation from the perpetrator or in a bid of wanting to protect the perpetrator.

2.7.4 Home Visits.

Given the rampant increase of cases of child sexual abuse, it is therefore important for government social workers to conduct home visits periodically as a way of assessing the welfare of children in their families. Home visits can have positive effects on families by influencing good parenting practices thus most intervention programs attempt to alter parenting skills and reduce conflict in the home. This assists in combatting cases of physical abuse and also neglect. Home visits will therefore give professionals the opportunity to know the underlying causes of the problem and

address familial issues such as good parenting, strengthening the relationship of parents with their children, as well as socio-economic crises that families will be dealing with. It will also motivate families to seek professional help services when problems arise.

2.8 Chapter Summary.

This chapter focused on the literature review bringing out the factors affecting the family and the school as social support systems in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The ecological systems theory was brought out in this chapter bringing out the risk and protective factors of child abuse and neglect.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research study and the research design, which are the two types of methods used. The chapter also discusses the sampling procedure and criteria, as well as the data collection techniques used. The method of data presentation and analysis to be used in the research study will also be presented.

3.1 Methodology

According to Patton (2005), methodology simply refers to how researchers construct their problem and objectives, as well as how they present their findings based on the data collected during the study period. The paper synthesizes findings from a qualitative study evaluating the effectiveness of various social support systems in protecting children from abuse and neglect.

3.2 Research Design.

The research design used in this study is a case study. A case study, according to Chiromo (2006), is an in-depth analysis of an individual, group, occurrence, event, or community that provides a detailed narrative of the case under inquiry. A case study resonates well with the qualitative methodology used in this research to assess the effectiveness of social support systems in preventing child abuse and neglect. In this case, the Mabvuku suburb was used as a case study. The use of a case study allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the research problem, in this case the factors that impede the effectiveness of social support systems in child protection.

3.3 Study Setting.

The environment in which the study will be conducted is referred to as the study setting. The research will be carried out in Mabvuku, a high-density suburb of Harare. It is divided into two

categories that is Old Mabvuku and New Mabvuku. It also includes Chizhanje, a former dormitory suburb of hostels located near Old Mabvuku and nominally part of Mabvuku. The Mabvuku suburb has an unusually high concentration of predominantly Muslim Malawians and Mozambicans. As a result, the Mabvuku suburb is made up of people of various religious beliefs. The study therefore seeks to explore how the families and schools as social support systems effectively tackle the issue of child abuse and child protection given the different religious and cultural beliefs that the residents uphold. Poverty related ills such as early child marriages, high risky sexual behaviors, child abuse and neglect are dominant in this district.

3.4 Target Population.

A target population, according to Stake (2005), is a clearly defined group of persons or a community who share one or more characteristics. Furthermore, according to Chiromo (2006), population refers to all individual units, objects, or events that are included in the research study. As a result, it is critical to define the study's population because it assists the researcher in selecting a sample for the study. The target population consists of households that have or may have had a case of abuse, as well as survivors of abuse. The teachers and principals are also part of the population being studied.

3.5 Sampling.

In general, sampling is the process of selecting a representative or small proportion or subset of a population. The study used two types of sampling techniques: convenience sampling and purposeful sampling. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (1997), sampling saves time because just a few individuals are engaged, it makes data collection more manageable, and it allows for the collection of more specific information.

3.5.1 Sampling Procedure.

A sample, according to Ogula (2005), is a subset of the target population that the researcher intends to examine and generalize about the entire population. According to Chiromo (2006), a sample is a smaller group or subset of the population chosen from the overall population. In essence, a sample is drawn from the larger study population and used to estimate the total population within the required limits. There are two types of sampling procedures that is probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The researcher used a non-probability sampling procedure for this study.

3.5.2 Sampling Technique.

Purposive sampling is used in this study, which refers to the deliberate selection of individuals or situations that are likely to lead to a better knowledge of the phenomenon of interest (Creshwell, 2012). Purposive sampling will be used by the researcher since it is the most appropriate method for selecting a sample from a small geographic area. As a result, purposive sampling enables the researcher to select knowledgeable, data-rich participants in the proposed study, allowing for the collection of relevant data from knowledgeable individuals. Participants may include local school principals and teachers, among others. As a result, purposive sampling enables the researcher to select resourceful participants who are well versed in the study area, reducing data volumes by having key and most valuable data. . Purposive sampling derives its name from the deliberate selection of specific participants because you know what you need in the sample. The study also makes use of convenience sampling, which focused on those who are closest.

3.5.3 Sampling Criteria.

Sampling criteria are the criteria used when selecting a sample for the study, which can be based on age or gender, among other things. The criteria for this study included all children aged 10 to

17 and their perceptions of the role of social support systems. Because they are all victims of abuse, both girls and boys are included in the sample. The sample also included guardians between the ages of 30 and 55. Families caring for orphans, as well as children living with stepparents, are also included in the study

3.6 Data Collection Process.

Data collection is the systematic process of gathering and measuring information from various sources in order to obtain a complete and accurate picture of an area of interest (Rouse, 2016). It examines the methods used to collect information from respondents, such as interviews and focus group discussions. Letters from the university and the district under study were utilized to collect data. This reassured respondents that the information gathered will be used solely for academic purposes. Primary data was gathered from the original source of information, which included school teachers or orphans cared for by relatives, as well as survivors of child abuse.

3. 6.1 Data Collection Tools.

The instruments used to collect data from research participants are referred to as data collection tools. The study used an interview guide to best deduce and extract information through semi-structured interviews, which allowed respondents to air their perceptions freely, allowing the researcher to elicit rich data from the respondents. Focus group discussions were used to assist the student, as well as a pre-set interview guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions or topics to be covered during the interview. According to Corsaro and Fingerson (2003), open-ended questions are subject to change during the interview, allowing researchers to deduce how participants perceive their world view. . Furthermore, Creswell (2012) claims that a qualitative approach allows the researcher to make knowledge claims based on constructivist perspectives in which individual experiences have multiple meanings. As a result, the open-ended questions

allowed the collection of enriched data for deductive purposes on the challenges that social support systems face in their efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect.

3.6.2 Data Presentation and Analysis.

Depending on the type of research design used by the researcher, data can be presented in a variety of formats. Data presentation, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), is the organization of data into tables, graphs, or charts so that logical and statistical conclusions can be drawn from the collected measurements. Non-statistical tools were employed in this study when presenting data that is relevant to qualitative research. To present data received from respondents, field notes, interview transcripts, and all focus group discussion comments were used. For example, in interview transcripts, the data obtained in this study was kept in paper copies. The data in this study was investigated inductively, with the major focus being on studying previously examined phenomena from a different perspective, resulting in new perspectives emerging from the phenomena studied. Data analysis can be defined as the process of making sense of research participants' perspectives and opinions of situations, as well as corresponding patterns, themes, categories, and regular similarities (Pope and Mays, 2000). The discipline and rigor of qualitative data analysis are dependent on presenting solid descriptive data in such a way that others who read the results can understand and draw their own conclusions. As a result, the collected data was analyzed in three steps, which are as follows:

Organizing Data.

This determined the information gathered through data collection techniques and the research strategy. The researcher attempted to comprehend the collected data, which consisted of the words and ideas expressed by the respondents. As a result, the researcher made it a point to jot down important information given during the interviews.

Analyzing Data.

The researcher examined pertinent aspects in order to reduce and simplify the organized data. Because qualitative research is verbal, important information was combined throughout interviews. As a result, the researcher analyzed relevant aspects while focusing on the study's questions. This assisted in identifying key findings and developing codes to categorize the information.

Interpreting Data.

This entails explaining the findings and answering why questions. As a result, the researcher assigned significance to specific results and incorporated patterns into an analytic framework. This included drawing conclusions from the research and making recommendations for social support systems.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter included the research design, target population, data collection methods, such as focus group discussions and interview schedule guides, as well as sample size and sampling methodologies, their benefits and drawbacks. It also included the data gathering methods, data presentation, and study analysis, as well as a summary. The presentation and analysis of data will be the subject of the following chapter

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the efficiency of social support systems in preventing child abuse and neglect in Mabvuku area, with a special focus on the family and the school. The information was gathered from local teachers and residents, and the findings were examined in reference to the literature. In essence, the chapter answered the study's broad research objective, which was to assess the effectiveness of social support systems in protecting children from abuse and neglect.

4.1 Qualitative Data Presentation

The study's goal was to investigate the effectiveness of social support systems (family and school) in preventing child abuse and neglect. Interviews were conducted to gather information about their roles and the challenges they face. Fifteen male and female parents or guardians were interviewed, as well as five key informants (one from a government school, another from a private school, and three teachers). The respondents were able to provide critical information, and the various themes that emerged from it are presented and discussed further below.

4.2 Demographics

Table 4.2 Response rate

Respondents	Instruments	Intended	Actual
Key Informants	Interviews	5	5
Female guardians	Interviews/ FGDs	11	11

Male guardians	Interviews/FGDs	4	4
Total		20	20

Table 4.2 above shows the number of people who were respondents during the research process. The researcher managed to get responses from all intended participants.

4.3 The main functions and obligations of the family and school as social support systems.

The study looked into the primary roles and responsibilities of the family and school as social support systems. According to the study, the following are the primary functions and obligations of social support systems:

4.3.1 Identifying abuse cases and assessing needs of vulnerable children

Many respondents emphasized that identifying cases of child abuse and assessing the needs of vulnerable children is one of the primary responsibilities of social support systems, whether formal or informal. Many respondents mentioned how to identify a case of child abuse. According to one of the respondents:

‘Ukaona mwana aine mavanga mumuviri wake anotaridza kurohwa kwakanyanyisisa zvinotaridza kuti ari kushungurudzwa. Ukaona mwanasikana achitya kuva pedyo nevanhu rume zvogona kutaridza kuti mwana iyeye ari kubatwa chibaharo kana kuti akabatwa chibhara kare.’ (Bruises, which show excessive beatings and physical abuse, are one of the signs of child abuse. If a girl child develops fear of her male counterparts, she may have been sexually abused.)

This is also supported by one key participant who notes that:

'Child abuse and neglect can be identified through the physical appearance of the child such as bruises on the body. Punctuality, a decline in the participation of the child at school, social withdrawal can also be indicators of child abuse at home.'

According to Nhundu and Shumba (2001), different support systems at every level of society play a critical role in identifying cases of abuse and assessing the needs of vulnerable children. This aids in the assessment of needs so that the child can be helped and protected, such as registering the child for beam or drought relief programs. As a result, this demonstrates how various individuals, groups, and institutions work together to protect children. However, some families in the community are unaware of their role in identifying cases of abuse in the family because they are misinformed, based on the idea that family life is private and secret, and that the family should handle their affairs on their own. According to Muronda (2009), the role of identifying child abuse cases in child-headed families is not being upheld because the leader of the family is a child on its own who requires guidance.

4.3.2 Referring cases

The study also looked into whether case referring is part of the social support systems' role and obligation in the community. If a case of child abuse is discovered, everyone should be aware of who should assist whom and when. Many respondents stated that when they become aware of a child abuse case, they refer the child to the relevant authorities so that the child can receive appropriate care. One of the respondents said:

'if I am aware of a case of child abuse, I would report the case to the police and if the child is in need of immediate assistance such as in the case of rape or sexual abuse, I would refer her to the hospital where she would be helped with immediate effect.'

This is supported by one of the key informants who says:

'It is our role to refer or direct child abuse victims to the responsible authorities so that they can get the help that they need and deserve. We usually refer child abuse cases in schools' and communities to the child welfare department.'

70% said they knew where to refer abuse cases and how to refer them in the right order. It's important to note, however, that some people are aware of where they can report incidents of abuse, but they don't know where to start so they can follow the proper protocol. As Padare (2014) points out, this has an impact on the provision of services to children. As a result, understanding this role is critical in child protection and may go a long way toward improving the performance of social support systems in the communities they serve. According to a UNICEF report from 2008, it is critical to educate children and their guardians about the legal channels through which they can seek help if they are victims of abuse. As a result, many cases of abuse are identified and addressed in a timely manner. This is supported by the UNFPA (2012), which states that if people are aware of who can help them, the incidence of child abuse decreases.

4.3.3 Raise awareness on child protection issues

Raising awareness about child protection issues is one of the roles and responsibilities of social support systems. This is done to make people aware when acts of abuse are being perpetrated. Teachers are primarily responsible for raising awareness in schools, while community leaders are responsible for raising awareness in the community. One of the key respondents mentioned:

'Many people in society, including children, are unaware of the child protection issues that are at stake. They are unaware of their rights; how harmful and oppressive some religious

and cultural practices are; and how they unknowingly commit child abuse. Children in schools are fortunate in that they can learn about their rights; however, those who are unable to attend school due to financial constraints are unaware of their rights. As a result, we intend to raise awareness on child protection issues through awareness campaigns and the distribution of pamphlets in all areas so that people are fully informed about child abuse.'

According to Brooks (2011), community leaders educate the public on what constitutes child abuse and neglect, as well as on restrictive and harmful social norms, while also educating children on their rights. This is critical in protecting the children from any factors that may surround them and put them at risk of abuse. As a result, people are more aware of children's rights and how to protect them. Local Zimbabwean schools have been instilling knowledge in their students about child abuse issues and their rights, so that they are aware of what is going on around them. Gudyanga (2014) concurs, praising teachers for their role in instilling knowledge in children so that they are aware of their rights and where to report cases of abuse. However, some people are unaware of this information because it contradicts their religious and cultural beliefs.

4.3.4 Providing psycho-social support in child protection

Respondents emphasized the role of social support systems as advisors, providing psychological and social support in child protection. Guardians are educated and advised on the importance of psychosocial support in child protection by qualified personnel (educators) so that they know what to do in the event of a child abuse case. Guardians must therefore play an important role in providing social support to children through counseling and other programs that strengthen their coping mechanisms. According to one of the respondents:

'Many children feel safe talking with someone close to them that can either be their mother, father, sibling or teacher.'

This is also supported by one of the key informants who pointed out that:

'Children often open up to us when we ask if they are being abused at home because they feel safe at school. Because many cases of child sexual abuse result in suicide, we offer psycho-social support and refer the case when it is discovered.'

According to Stewart (2005), parental support groups where they are taught how to protect their children from abuse can effectively improve psycho-social support in child protection. This knowledge may have an impact on the family's ability to carry out their role and mandate in the communities they serve. According to Bavolek and Hodnett (2012), parent programs are implemented by schools in order to educate them on how to prevent and avoid child abuse and neglect. This suggests that the school, as a social support system, plays an important role in preventing child abuse and neglect by educating other systems with which the child has a close relationship. This is in line with systems theory, which clearly states how various systems surrounding children can contribute to their well-being.

4.4 Services provided by the family and school in preventing child abuse and neglect.

As a core service, social support systems educate the community about children's rights, sexual reproductive rights, and child protection laws and policies. These services are provided in two ways and in two different settings, as explained below:

4.4.1 Family support meetings.

The majority of respondents stated that the family plays an important role in educating children and other family members about child abuse issues. There are no formal meetings held in families

when it comes to educating children or relatives because it can be done at any time. One of the respondents admits to how they educate their children, saying:

'it is our role to nurture and teach our children on issues of abuse because we are the ones that live with them. As a mother I usually talk more with my daughter because we understand each other better and there are things that her father cannot tell her about.'

This was also supported by one young mother who said:

'Growing up we would always know that when we visit our grandmother ndipo patinodzidziswa zvese zvinoitika muupenyu (that's when we are taught about everything that happens in life) and what to watch out for.'

One of the key informants notes that:

'parents have a fundamental right to raise their children as they see fit and society always presumes that parents will act in their children's best interest. As a result, parents make it a point to educate their children on the concept of abuse amongst other aspects.'

This demonstrates that the family, as a social support system, provides education as a core service in order to provide children with the knowledge that they will require in the future, as supported by Chitereka (2010). It is also important to note that the family, as the immediate support system, recognizes its role in properly nurturing children and protecting them from the risks of abuse. According to Tshabalala and Khosa (2014), the family's duty as a support system is commendable to a greater extent because it demonstrates its level of awareness of the various forms of abuse. This is evidenced by several efforts to protect children from all forms of abuse. It is also worth noting that different families in the community go out of their way to educate children on issues of abuse, even if they are unrelated. . As a result, different ethnic groups in the community work

together to prevent child abuse and neglect. However, some family members may be reluctant to educate their children due to gender issues. For example, a father may refuse to educate his daughter about child sexual abuse or sexual rights because it is considered inappropriate.

4.4.2 School based programs.

The school is regarded as the focal point from which all educational programs are generated and from which they provide direct and indirect support to the community. As a result, all educators, not just classroom teachers, but also other school personnel involved in serving the child, are contributing to community education. One of the key participants mentioned:

'Schools offer educational services through their educational syllabus and public awareness programs. Schools also aim to increase public sensitivity on child abuse and maltreatment.'

Another respondent noted that:

'The protection of children is not only an individual issue, but a community concern as well. Hence us educators as an integral part of the community we lead and be involved in community efforts to combat child maltreatment through offering our educational services.'

4.5 Challenges faced by the family and the school.

The study findings reveal that social support systems face many challenges that comprise their efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect. These challenges include:

4.5.1 Poverty

Most of the female parents highlighted how the economic conditions have made children vulnerable which exposes them to the risk of abuse. During the focus group discussions most of these parents indicated how them and others in the area are economically disadvantaged surviving on the hand-to-mouth basis and resultantly putting the children at a high risk of abuse. One of the respondents said that:

'Kushaya mari ndiro rimwe dambudziko riri kusanganikwa nevabereki munharaunda ino. Chido tinacho sevabereki asi kana pasina mari yekuti mwana aende kuchikoro tinenge tava kungoita zvekuti tiwane kurarama'. (One of the problems that we are facing as parents is lack of enough money. As parents we really want all of our children to go to school but because of financial challenges we resort to do anything so that we can survive.)

Another respondent said that:

'Vabereki vevazukuru vangu ava vakaenda kudiaspora asi havan kudzoka. Kunotsvaga raramo nekuti munyika muno zvinhu hazvisisina kumira mushe. Saka ndakasara ndichichengeta vana ava ndichiona kuti vaenda here kuchikoro. Mari vanotumira havo kuti ndivatengere zvinenge zvichidiwa Asi nekuda kwemakore angu handichakwanise kuti ndirambe ndichivariritira nemazvo' (my children went to the diaspora looking for greener pastures and left me with their children my grandchildren and they did not come back to date. They do send money for the upkeep of the children but because of my age I can't properly take care of them as they are still young.)

The key informant during the interviews also pointed out that due to the poor economic conditions in Zimbabwe many parents are crossing the borders in search for greener pastures leaving the children vulnerable and at risk of abuse. One of the respondents said that:

'The general economic crisis in Zimbabwe has led to high levels of migration of parents to the diaspora leaving the children in the care of grandparents who are now of age. The children are left to grow up on their own as they do not have anyone to monitor their actions and guide them.'

This was also supported by another key informant who pointed out that:

'There are many parents who due to poverty are making the girl child engage in sex with rich people so that their monetary needs can be met. Even sometimes without forcing them to engage in sexual activities parents also turn a blind eye to their children's sexual relationships with adults to simply receive financial support.'

The situation was also brought to light by Magwa and Ingwani (2014) who notes that poverty in Zimbabwe has reached unprecedented levels and many children both male and female are being involved in high risky sexual behaviors for financial support. This is so because the children are at most times left alone or with the elderly. On the social facet of development, child sexual abuse is a driving factor of maternal mortality amongst the girl children. This is supported by Masuka (2012), who notes that hit by poverty that resulted from a series of drought and inflation, Zimbabwean's people are struggling to make ends meet and are relocating to the diaspora for greener pastures leaving the children unattended. However, the situation is sad in Zimbabwe as many parents are considering living their children with other relatives whilst they go and work in other country which puts the child at a high risk of maltreatment and neglect as indicated by Padare

(2014). Henceforth instead of the extended family protecting the child from neglect, they are reported to be perpetrators.

4.5.2 Cultural and religious factors

Cultural and religious beliefs are also one of the factors that perpetuates child abuse in families. Many families indicated how their way of living are shaped by their cultural and religious beliefs. For instance, how families believe that beating the child up for mischief is considered right basing on the reason that the child is theirs. One of the respondents says:

'inini mwana anenge aita zvisirizvo ndinorova nekuti ndokuti anzwisise. Vangu vana vanoziwa kuti vakaita zvinopesana nezvandinenge ndavaudza ndinorova. Ukatoita zvekutaura nemuromo havanzwe saka zvinotoda shamhu chaiyo kuranga munhu.' (when a child does something that's not according to what, I want, I beat him/her up. Even my kids know that if they act against my rules, I beat them up. These children do not understand if you reprimand them using the mouth so beating them works well so that they understand.)

Another respondent said:

'Isusu kumba kwedu tinoenda kuchurch yeJohanne Masowe yeMarange and takangokurira muchurch imomo tichiziva kuti kana munhu wechirume akataura kuna Bishop kuti aratidzwa ndiri mukadzi wake ndizvo zvinobva zvatoitika nekuti Mwari watinotenda kwaari anenge ataura. Inini ndaroorwa ndiine makore 17 ndapedza kunyora o' level uye ndainoita mukadzi wechina pamurume wangu. Izvi hazvisi zvinhu zvandaikwanisa kupikisana nazvo kunyangwe zvazvo ndiine zvimwe zvandanga ndakadzidziswawo kuchikoro nekuti ndizvo zvatakakura tichiudzwa.' (at our family, we attend the Johanne Masowe of the Marange sect and we grew up knowing that if a male leader or any male

counterparts claims to have a vision marrying you that's what will happen because the God we believe in supports it. I was married to be fourth wife when I was 17 years of age and I had just finished writing my O'level examinations. I couldn't disagree with the arrangement although I knew that it was a violation basing from what I had learnt at school.)

Chireshe (2012), propose how child abuse is understood and explained differently due to culture and religion. Hence forth what the Zimbabwean law considers child abuse is not child abuse in the Johanne Marange sect. As a result, children have become prisoners of their own culture and religion which has led to an increase in early child marriages and sexual child abuse cases as supported by (Chireshe, Chireshe and Mudhovozi, 2009). It is however important to note that although there are policies and laws that considers some religious and cultural practices as unlawful, little is being done to completely put an end to these harmful religious and cultural practices and apprehend the leaders to such an extent that many forms of abuse are being perpetuated and justified in the name of religion and culture.

4.5.3 Lack of incentives

Most key informants pointed out that lack of incentives given to the teachers has led to neglect in schools. Some teachers even vent out their frustrations on the school children resulting in excess beating of the child. One of the key informants:

'due to the dire economic conditions in Zimbabwe the government is failing to pay enough money to the teachers. This had led to a series of strikes with teachers crying for increase in their allowances and to those that are coming to class, special attention is being given to children who are paying extra amount for extra lessons. As a result, other children are neglected and teachers fail to notice traces of abuse in other children. Vamwe

vanotopedzera hasha dzavo pavana vechikoro.’ (other teachers will vent all their frustrations on the children.)

Bronfenbrenner (1979), supports the above by explaining how an individual’s life is affected by the wider society. Lack of finances in the nation has negatively affected the teachers who play a vital role in identifying child abuse and neglect in the school setting. Lavy (2012), notes that teacher incentives lead to standardized learning programs which also includes programs to do with child abuse and neglect. As result children get to know about their rights and when to say no to abuse. However, teachers are forced to attend school without the incentives that they want which leads to poor commitment to teaching and a decrease in the learning standards.

4.5.4 Domestic Violence.

The participants have been aware of the link between domestic violence and child abuse. They expressed how children are not the intended targets of violence but are affected from witnessing the acts of violence in the family. These children are affected in the same way as those physically or sexually abused. One of the respondents pointed out that:

‘many acts of abuse that go unnoticed and unreported in our community are related to domestic violence. This is so because no one knows what really happens in one’s family and the victims of abuse will not disclose that they are being abused.’

One of the key informants supported this view and said:

‘Since domestic violence is a series of assaultive and coercive behaviors that may occur more frequently, the children will eventually be caught in between the violence. In the community there are many cases of domestic violence which indicates how the children are at a

vulnerable position of being psychologically and emotionally abused through witnessing these acts.'

This has been supported by UNICEF (2018) report which stipulates that behind closed doors some of the biggest victims of domestic violence are the smallest. This shows that children are largely affected by domestic violence which affects their psychological well-being. It is important to note that children that are predisposed to violence in the home are denied their right to a safe and stable environment as stipulated by the UNCRC. This is also supported by Mashiri (2013), who posits that gender-based violence has been one of the factors that leads to the abuse of the children from time immemorial. It is however important to note that children in these environments are not assisted as they should because the society views the family life as a private life hence, they do not get involved in matters that do not concern them. This shows the level of ignorance in the community towards domestic violence and child abuse which puts the child in a vulnerable state.

4.6 Strategies to enhance effective child protection.

Many respondents reveal several strategies that can be implemented with the aim of reducing the incidences of child abuse cases in the Mabvuku community. These strategies are to be discussed below.

4.6.1 Education

Most participants pointed out that education is one of the most important tools to enhance child protection against child abuse. This is so because many families are not aware of what is considered child abuse as a whole. As a result, many people abuse children unknowingly. One of the respondents when asked what is child abuse said:

'Child abuse kushungurudzwa kwevana.' (harassment of the children)

One of the key respondents indicated that:

'The aim of education on child abuse and neglect is to raise awareness on the children, families, schools and community at large so that they understand that child protection against abuse of any form is a social responsibility.'

Brooks (2011), posits that educating the community should be on what is considered child abuse and neglect and on restrictive and harmful social norms, educating the children on their rights. This is to improve the children's knowledge on abuse and how to protect themselves against it. From the focus group discussions many parents defined child abuse as sexual abuse and neglect and only a few included physical abuses. As a result, many are practicing physical abuse but they are unaware. According to the UNICEF (2008), education act as a tool in raising awareness in the community people so that they know what to and when. In Zimbabwe commendable work is being done through awareness campaigns, pamphlets to make people aware of what child abuse is and how to protect the children from further harm.

4.6.2 Income and economic strengthening

One of the main reasons behind the increase in the cases of child abuse that most respondents pointed out had to do with poverty, lack of income. Henceforth most participants suggested the point of strengthening their income and economy through cash transfers, projects, micro-financing and vocational training. One of the respondents pointed out that:

'tinogona kutanga kurima magadheni tichitengesa muriwo, madomasi zvigotivandudzira kuwana mari asi zvinenge zvichida tawana nzvimbo yakati kurei nekuti munzvimbo dzatinogara dzakamanikidzana.' (if we are given a bigger place or space for gardening,

we can start growing tomatoes and vegetables and sell them so that we can have a source of income).

Another respondent says:

'dai taikwanisawo kuwana mikana yekuwana mari inoita titange maprojects ehuku dzemuriwo kana dzemazai zvaikwanisika kutibatsirawo.' (we can get a source of income if we manage to get the opportunity and chance to get funding for poultry project).

This supported by Mashumba, Midzi, Ndlovu and Maradzika (2009), who depicts that child prevention strategies should have an anti-poverty focus because poverty largely exacerbates child abuse and neglect. Therefore, income and economic strengthening should mainly focus on poverty reduction that is strengthening the family's livelihood. According to the UNICEF (2008), report, the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe has worsened the child abuse issue. This is even vivid to date as many families are struggling to make ends meet leading to the increase in child exploitation, child labor and neglect. It is however important to note that, in Zimbabwe efforts to provide cash transfers are being made through the harmonized cash transfer program but due to limited resources the program is means tested where the cash is given to the most deserving populations. However due to high levels of corruption, the most deserving populations are not the ones that are benefitting hence people continue to wallow in poverty living the children vulnerable and at risk.

4.6.3 Monitoring and evaluation

During the key informant respondent's interviews, one of the key respondents stated that monitoring and evaluation should be constantly done the reported cases of abuse so that the child is protected now and thereafter. One key respondent says:

'Efforts to monitor cases of child abuse have been made through the use of Community Child-Care Workers (CCWs) which has been effective. However different stakeholders in the community should come together and make collaborative effort in identifying, reporting, monitoring and evaluating the child abuse cases so that they know what they are dealing with.'

Monitoring and evaluation should be done constantly and through different ways such as home visits with different people. Payne (2000), supports that collaborative team work is crucial in reaching the main consensus of protecting each and every child. Monitoring and evaluation through home visits is crucial in understanding the underlying causes of the problem and address familial issues such as good parenting, strengthening the relationship of parents with their children, as well as socio-economic crises that families will be dealing with. UNICEF (2010), proposes that the government should adapt a systems approach to child protection where each and every system or institution is involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programs that aim to protect the children from any harm. However, the situation in Zimbabwe is worrisome as other stakeholders that may be part of the monitoring and evaluation team will struggle with transportation to monitor places with cases of child abuse that may be far from each other. In such scenarios, CCWs have been helping but however limited to their own vicinity.

4.7 Chapter summary

The chapter has served to present and analyze the findings drawn from the families and school as social support systems on their role and obligations, the challenges they face. The chapter further presented and discussed findings on strategies to enhance effective child protection system. In essence, the chapter has laid for chapter five which follows where a summary of findings is given, conclusions are made and recommendations are drawn.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the detailed summary of the findings drawn from the respondents during the interviews in the study. The chapter will also focus on the conclusion based on the findings drawn and the research objectives. Lastly, it will focus on the recommendations in relation to study and future research areas.

5.1 Summary

The study yielded a high response rate which validates the research findings as well as justifying the reliability of the study. The research findings from the collected data were used to come up with a summary of each objective in order to give a general understanding of the research. The study aimed at answering the following research objectives:

- a) To identify the main functions and obligations of social support systems.
- b) To explore the nature of services provided by different support systems towards child abuse and neglect.
- c) To recommend strategies that can heighten effective child protection processes.

5.1.1 Main functions and obligations of the family and school.

Child abuse and neglect has been a cause for concern from a local, regional and global perspective. The research findings revealed that social support systems play different roles and are obliged to prevent child abuse and neglect. Child abuse in Zimbabwe remains pervasive, with adverse outcomes for the well-being of the child. In Zimbabwe the child protection responsibility lies in each and every citizen of Zimbabwe. Social support system whether formal or informal provides a sense of belonging, security and also provides a buffer against adverse life events. Social support

systems therefore aim to protect the children against abuse and alleviate the effects of abuse on children. The study found out that the family and schools play a role of identifying child abuse cases and assessing the need of vulnerable children. In essence, they play a critical role in raising awareness in the communities, referring cases and playing an advisory role in providing psychosocial support.

a. Identifying cases and assessing needs of vulnerable children.

Social support systems play a vital role in identifying child abuse cases and assess the needs of vulnerable children. Teachers and guardians spend more time in daily contact with the child and they can directly observe potential changes in the child's appearance, behavior and progress that may be signs of abuse and neglect. It is generally acknowledged that the identified and reported cases of child abuse are only a small representation of the actual cases. This alerts the teachers to be cognizant of child abuse risk factors such as domestic violence, poor parenting skills and stimulate parents to seek preventive help.

b. Providing psycho-social support in child protection

Child abuse often has a negative effect on the psychosocial wellbeing of the children. Social support system therefore advises the community on the importance of psychosocial support to the victims of abuse. Psychosocial support helps maintain a range of family and community-based care and support in a case of abuse and prevents immediate or long term psychosocial or mental disorders that may develop.

c. Raise awareness on child protection issues

Raising awareness on child protections issues is one of the roles that social support systems have. Guardians and school authorities raise awareness on both the children and families by sharing

information through lectures, awareness campaigns, sharing of pamphlets and discussing child protection issues during family time. As a result, everyone is aware of what entails child abuse enhancing preventive measures.

d. Referring cases.

Social support systems play a crucial role in referring abuse cases to the responsible authorities so that the child can get help immediately. This is done upon identification of a child abuse case. They also use monitor the child and identify risk factors, making referrals to health services and reporting to child protection where necessary.

5.1.2 Nature of services provided by the family and school to prevent child abuse and neglect.

The research study revealed that the family and the school as social support systems provide one core service which is done in different settings in different ways. Education is the core service that is provided to combat child abuse and neglect. Efforts to provide education by both support systems are evident enough from the findings of the study. The education in the family can be provided by different people such as the parents or even aunts depending on their beliefs. Some parents may not even take it upon themselves to equip the child about issues of abuse due to gender. This therefore shows that the natures of services provided by the family are affected by several issues such as gender and beliefs as mentioned above. If the immediate parents or guardians are not available, the extended family takes it upon them to teach the children and others on child abuse as supported by Bronfenbrenner's systems theory. The study also indicated that schools provide educational services that are effective in combating child abuse and neglect. This is so because the school has been indicated to be the focal point for all educational programs. An educator that is all personnel that is involved with the children educate the children through the classroom lessons and awareness campaigns. This leads to sensitization of the public on child

abuse and neglect. The educational services provided at the schools in Mabvuku are however affected by the teacher's financial woes which disrupt the learning process as they will not be attending the classroom lessons. As a result, they will not be anyone to identify the cases of abuse and properly assess the needs of the vulnerable children. The services are also affected by natural disasters such as COVID-19 where there is limited interaction between the educators and the children. As a result, children are put at a more risk of being abused as they are now close to their perpetrators in case where the perpetrator is a close family member or a neighbor. Hence children no longer have a place where they can escape to for security due to these natural disasters.

5.1.3 Strategies that can enhance effective child protection.

The research findings indicated that social support systems face different challenges which hinder effective protection of the children from child abuse. These include poverty, cultural and religious factors, domestic violence, poor enactment of policies and lack of incentives or motivation. There are several strategies that can be used to improve effective child protection processes which includes education. Education has been seen as a tool to raise awareness on child protection against abuse. Many of the problems facing social support systems are because people are not aware of what is considered child abuse. As a result, incidence of child abuse cases continues to rise as people are perpetrators unknowingly. Therefore, education helps in preventing the occurrence of child abuse and neglect. Another strategy that can be employed to improve child protection against abuse is income and economic strengthening. This helps to combat poverty which is one of the major risk factors of child abuse. This can be done by giving families cash transfers, funding for projects amongst others. Child protection against child abuse can also be improved through monitoring and evaluation of the child protection processes. Different stakeholders should monitor child abuse cases so that they know the progress and understand the underlying causes of abuse

and formulate solutions. This can be done through regular home visits to those families with a reported case of abuse so that they ensure that the environment is safe and secure for the child to live in.

5.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, basing on the findings of the study social support systems play an efficient role in preventing child abuse and neglect. This is because the family and the school play a vital role in identifying child abuse cases and assessing the needs of the vulnerable children, referring cases to the responsible authorities, playing an advisory role on psychosocial support and raising awareness in communities. Although there are several challenges that these systems are facing, the study reached a conclusion that social support systems strive to prevent the increase of child abuse cases which is indicated by the level of awareness about the concept in the community.

5.3 Recommendations:

To the government.

- The government must ensure effective monitoring of child abuse cases so that perpetrators are hold accountable for their actions even if the person is a family member introduce.
- The government should improve on giving households cash transfers and introduce income generating projects that may help trim down the poverty as it is one of the main reasons why child abuse is on the rise.
- It is vital that teachers are trained on the identification and management of child abuse which will help them to identify different change of behavior in children that are being abused at home.

To the Non-governmental organizations.

- Different NGOs should empower communities so that they conduct surveillance and identify children that are being abused.
- Monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects meant to stop or prevent child in the community should be done to see whether the strategies are achieving the intended goals.

To the community.

- There is need to continue sensitization in the local communities on child protection issues thus raising awareness, interpreting the laws and policies that govern child protection against abuse.
- It is evident from the findings from the research that dysfunctional family systems create environments for the perpetration of child sexual abuse. Henceforth local community child care workers should be allocated to conduct home visits and see the underlying risk factors.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the summary of the research findings and the conclusions that resulted from the research study. The chapter also focused on recommendations to improve the position of social support systems in preventing child abuse and neglect. These recommendations target the government, the civil society organization and the local community at large.

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APPENDICES: APPENDIX 1

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



P. Bag 1020
BINDURA, Zimbabwe
Tel: 263 - 71 - 7531-6, 7621-4
Fax: 263 - 71 - 7534
socialwork@buse.ac.zw

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date 28/01/21

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO UNDER TAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to advise that MUSICA NATACHA R Registration No.

B. 1749196 is a BACHELOR OF SCIENCE HONOURS

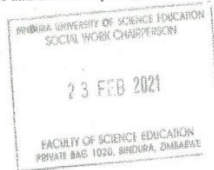
DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK student at Bindura University of Science Education who is conducting a research project.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study and where possible conduct interviews as part of the data collection process.

Yours faithfully

Maushe

Mr F. Maushe
CHAIRPERSON - DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



APPENDIX 2: Approval Letter.



HUMAN CAPITAL DEPARTMENT
TOWN HOUSE, HARARE, ZIMBABWE
POST OFFICE BOX 990
TELEPHONE 752979 / 753000

EMAIL: hcd@hararecity.co.zw
ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE HUMAN CAPITAL DIRECTOR

20 Chingwenzi
New Mabvuku
Harare

0782 771 032

19 March 2021

The Acting Human Capital Director
City of Harare
P.O BOX 1680
Harare

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH: NATASHA MWINGA

This letter serves as authority for Natasha Mwinga to undertake a research survey on the topic: **"EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT"**.

The City of Harare has no financial obligation and neither shall it render any further assistance in the conduct of the research. The researcher is however requested to avail a soft and hard copy of the research to the undersigned so that residents of Harare can benefit out of it. The research should not be used for any other purpose other than the study purpose specified.

Yours faithfully


B. MATENGARUFU
ACTING HUMAN CAPITAL DIRECTOR

Harare to achieve a WORLD CLASS CITY STATUS by 2025

APPENDIX 3: Consent Form.

By signing this document, I am giving consent to be interviewed by the researcher. I understand that I will be part of the research study that is focusing on the **EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT** in Mabvuku community. I understand that I have been selected to be part of the study because I am in the group of adult people who interacts with children under the age of 18 in Mabvuku where the researcher is conducting the research in. I was informed that the participation would be entirely voluntary and that am free to withdraw at any time. I have been informed that the answers I will give will not show my name.

I will also not be identified in the final research report. I also understand that results can be given to me if I ask for them and that Miss N Mwinga is the person to contact if I have questions about my rights as a participant.

Participant's Name..... Researcher's Name.....

Participant's signature.....Researcher's signature.....

Date..... Date.....

APPENDIX 4: In-depth interview guide for formal social support systems (school).

Demographic information.

Please Tick correct box (yes)

Age: Below 30 years 31-50 years Above 50 years

Academic qualification:

None Secondary level A' Level College Certificate/Diploma

Other specify

QUESTIONS.

1. What do you feel are your social responsibilities on child abuse?
2. What are the main functions of social support systems?
3. What are the services provided by different social support systems?
4. What factors put children at risk for more or one type of abuse or neglect?
5. How can we better identify families or children at risk to guide prevention efforts?
6. What are the challenges being faced by social support systems in child protection?
7. What can be done to enhance the effectiveness of social support systems?

APPENDIX 5: In-depth interview guide for informal social support systems (family).

Demographic information.

Please Tick correct box (yes)

Age: Below 30 years 31-50 years Above 50 years

Academic qualification:

None Secondary level A' Level College Certificate/Diploma

Other specify

QUESTIONS.

1. What is considered child abuse and neglect
2. What would you do if child abuse is involved in your family.
3. Do you feel safe that your child/ sibling is at school, at a daycare center or with a babysitter?
4. What do you do if you suspect an occurrence of child abuse?
5. What are the challenges being faced by social support systems in child protection?
 - a) Cultural factors
 - b) Financial factors
6. What strategies can be implemented to enhance child protection services