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An Exploration of the Academic Performance of Children Living in Child-headed Families in Marondera , District, .Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe.

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**A Research Project Submitted to Bindura University of Science Education in
Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Honours Bachelor of Science Education
Degree in**

Chemistry

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Approval Form

The undersigned certify that they supervised, read and recommended to Bindura University of Science Education for acceptance a research project entitled, “**An Exploration of the Academic Performance of Children Living in Child-headed Families in Marondera District, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe**”.

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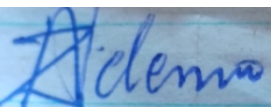
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Dedications:

I dedicate this project to my husband Fungai Mutemaringa and my children Wayne .D. Mutemaringa, Shellin.W. Mutemaringa, Shyllin. W. Mutemaringa, my father Wiston Chafa and my mother Mukai Tunha.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the impact of living in child-headed families on the academic performance of children at Nagle House, Marondera. Child-headed families, where children take on the role of household heads due to the absence or loss of parents, face unique challenges that may affect children's educational outcomes. Through a mixed-methods approach, this study examines the factors influencing academic performance, explores the experiences and perspectives of children living in child-headed families, and provides recommendations for interventions to support their educational success. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of the educational needs of children in vulnerable family structures and inform strategies for improving their academic performance.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In many communities around the world, the traditional family structure is undergoing significant changes due to various socio-economic factors. One such change is the emergence of child-headed families, where children take on the role of household heads due to the absence or loss of parents. These children face unique challenges and responsibilities, assuming roles typically reserved for adults at a tender age. Consequently, their educational outcomes and academic performance are at risk of being adversely affected. This chapter assessed the impact on academic performance for children living in child-headed families at Nagle House in Marondera District. This is a community that has experienced a significant increase in child-headed families over the past decade. This phenomenon is primarily attributed to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, poverty, and other social issues that have resulted in parental mortality or abandonment. The educational success of children living in child-headed families is of utmost importance, as it has a direct impact on their future prospects and the overall development of the community. This chapter looked at the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives and research questions are going to be explored. Expected limitations and delimitations, ethical considerations and proposed time table as well as budget for the research. Research methodologies are going to be explored. The research will be guided by the functionalist profounder and Bronfenbrenners' ecological systems theory.

1.2. Background to the study

The growth of families being led by children is being witnessed very much both internationally and nationally (Phillips 2021; Mthethwa, 2019). Child headed households (CHH) are a reality that cannot be ignored. Bequelle (2017) describes a CHH as a household headed by one of the children who are recognized as being responsible for providing leadership and sustenance of the household.

The Department of Social Development (2015) defines CHH as occurring when: a parent or primary caregiver of a household is terminally ill or has died; there is no adult family member available to provide care for the children in the household; and a child has assumed the role of a primary caregiver in respect of a child or children in the household in terms of providing food, clothing and psychological support.

This comprehensive definition seems to address concerns raised by different authors around the age of children in CHH (Meintjies *et al.*, 2020), the presence of sick adults who cannot care for the children (Chilangwa 2018), and the permanent absence of parents or adult caregivers Bequelle 2017; Plan Finland 2016. Martinus (2019) defines child headed households as those in which there is absence or permanent or incapacity of the adult caregiver which has necessitated the taking over of responsibilities by children.

In traditional African societies the child headed household was assumed to be non-existent since orphans would easily and naturally be looked after within the households of their extended families (Foster et al, 2022; Naicker and Tsenhase 2018). In this set up, the extended family acted as a social safety net for vulnerable children. The responsibility of caring for orphans has become a major problem due to insufficiency which is undermining the extended family's ability to cope with orphans (Foster *et al.*, 2022). The child headed household has appeared as a context of child development due to the disintegrating extended family as a safety net. In this household, older children are usually forced to take up adult responsibilities of care and support for younger siblings and defenceless elders with little or no support from the extended family and government when they themselves still need adult support and guidance. It appears as if the socio-economic of this household does not foster cultural experiences which enhance academic performance.

Data from 21 sub-Saharan countries, ranging between the years 1991 – 2020, reveals that in many countries, orphan hood is widespread, the numbers varying considerably per country. In this study, the author has used the definition of an orphan as a person younger than 18, whose parents are incapacitated to take care of their children. The main causes of Child headed families (CHF) in sub-Saharan Africa are: HIV/AIDS conflicts, divorce and natural disasters. In 2019, 9.1 million children in this region were orphaned, in addition to which an estimated 47 million children had lost one parent. The majority of children having lost one or both parents fall into the age group 12 – 17 years; in the category 0 – 5 years of age (Beegle *et al.*, 2018UNAIDS 2020b). Less than 10% of children had lost one or both parents. It is estimated that 2, 3 million children today in South Africa are orphaned mainly due to HIV/AIDS.As a result most child-headed household exist. In sub-Saharan Africa HIV/AIDS is considered to be the primary catalyst for children being deprived of a family environment, resulting in the need for alternative care. Parents' ability to protect and care for their children will already diminish during the period before death, leaving children to provide for themselves and in most cases to care for the chronically ill parent(s). Although one or both parents might still be alive, these children too are in need of alternative care as in this situation, they do not receive adequate parental care; the author accordingly regards children who fall into this category as 'without parental care', despite the presence of one or more adults in the household.

The confounding rise in the number of orphans due to HIV/AIDS has left many children in child-headed households according to Chidziva, (2016). Most research on child-headed households in South Africa reveals that there are as a result of HIV/AIDS. However there is a danger of assuming that all child-headed households exist only because of the HIV and AIDS phenomenon. In her study it was revealed that although HIV/AIDS is a major factor leading to the establishment of child-headed households, there are also other factors such as migrant labour, failure of the extended family to absorb orphaned children, urbanization, poverty and being abandoned by parents that lead to the existence of such homes.

Society commands that children are to be raised in a family, nuclear or extended, with adults in these families providing for the physical, psychological, social and

emotional needs of the children ensuring that their rights are recognized Awino, (2016). In Africa it was found that eight percent of children were living in child-headed households and needed care, especially young children. The composition, structure and function of a household may change drastically and dramatically as a result of death, disease, unemployment, displacement or war, resulting in child-headed households.

Smart (2022) stated that in the 2022 International Labour Organization (ILO) in household review it was reported that almost 22% of all children below fifteen years of age in the household included in the survey had lost a parent. At the time of reportage in 2022, about 7% of children under the age of eighteen years were indicated as caregivers with girls being more likely to fulfil this role than boys Smart, (2022).

It was consequently natural that if parents died due to accidents or HIV/AIDS the relatives would take over the responsibility of looking after the children of the deceased. Presently the extended families remain the principal orphan-care for orphans seem to have reached the maximum elasticity of absorption UN Report (2022). Children are also left without an adult caregiver on account of road accidents, mental disability of parents, and chronically ill. When children are also left behind by one or both parents due to economic hardships, that is, when they migrate to other countries it also leads to the emergence of CHF Bakker, Elings-Pels and Reis, (2019). All these factors have led to a decrease in the proportion of the adult population in the families.

Research by (Phillips 2021) in South Africa in a South African General Household headed by a child, (Ian Breda 2020) cites a research in South Africa by Chiastilite (2018) where it was found out that 7270 of the 2.1 million households in Gauteng were child headed. In Zimbabwe there are over 5000 children headed families. An average of 100 000 children are living without parental care and supervision (Zhangazha 2020; UNICEF, 2018). This background has drastically affected the education sector as well since the family plays a pivotal role in the development of children.

Vaughn, Boss, Schumm, (2016) argued that poverty among children from child headed families affects their mental and physical well-being and scholastic experience since they do not have the required material to fulfil the objectives of school. Clark (2018) agreed with Crosby, (2015), Latham, (2018), Lethale, (2018) and Nesengani (2020) when commenting that, children from child headed families have to contend with challenging physical conditions at home such as an absence of desks to complete their homework and overcrowded rooms make it impossible to study. It is against this background that the research sought to investigate the effects on academic performance of children living in child headed families.

Van Breda (2020) argued that although balancing the demands of managing household with schoolwork is quite challenging, some children manage well and achieve academic success, especially those in higher grades, but most challenge on O-LEVEL and infant grades. In a study in the Free State by Shilubana and Kok (2015), they found that factors associated with academic success were, studying hard and commitment to work, strong values and moral character, accepting their situation and striving to achieve and a network of adults who check up on the children's schoolwork as well as teachers who understood the child's situation and offer to assist. This idea was supported by Leatham, (2020) who argued that most children relied on teachers for support. Children should regard their teachers as surrogate parents or role models and seek advice and practical assistance from them. It is against this background that the researcher intends to find out the impact on academic performance of children living in child headed families for O-LEVEL children.

Uganda is a signatory of both local and international child protection protocols and has further shown its great commitment to child welfare through various agencies put up to implement child welfare-related issues. Yet with all this, children in Uganda continue to be abused and their rights violated. More to that, children are in the face of poverty, domestic violence, wars and conflicts, divorce and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) scourge that has left families in disarray with high rates of child neglect and orphan hood. The extended family that used to take in Orphans and other Vulnerable Children (OVC) has been stretched by the increasing number of children and their needs but also the escalating rates of poverty. As a result, some

children find themselves responsible for looking not only after themselves but also their siblings. They have formed Child-Headed Households (CHHs) where they have to cope with the adversities in their daily lives in order to survive.

Findings revealed that children as family heads have several abilities and strengths that cannot be overlooked. Children also revealed the positive and negative coping mechanisms. Children further pointed out the resources available to them that have enabled them to cope. According to Good therapy (2021), coping mechanisms refer to strategies people frequently employ when faced with stress and/or trauma to enable them to take care of such adversities. Coping mechanisms in the context of this study referred to the different strategies children as family heads use to take care of the several adversities they encounter.

Functionalists' profunder Emily Duncan and Talcott Parsons in socialization mentioned the significance of the family as an institution. The profunder of functionalist perspective argued that the family should perform its role for a functional society. The family as the micro system referred here is what the researcher can call the normal family with the father mother and children. Child headed family is also another type of family but not even desired by anyone. This type of family exists because of forced circumstances beyond human control such as death and divorce and and also neglect. If the family founders who are the parents have irreconcilable differences divorce is inevitable. Death in Zimbabwe is caused by a number of issues and HIV and AIDS is the major contributor, and road accidents (Zimstates, 2019). There are other scholars who even deny the existence of the so called child headed families such as Tutu (2018). Tutu argues that no one is living in an Island and he based his argument on the African philosophy of existence which says "I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am". This philosophy simply means we live by others and for others. Helping each other is the core of every member of the society. This however, has got a very big challenge since most African families cannot be able to provide enough for themselves, therefore, find it difficult to help extended families. Klerk (2020) also postulated that in Uganda and Somalia orphans are due to war and this challenge continued in the 21st century. This therefore led to the existence of child headed families whether scholars try to hide it or not.

The UNICEF (2018) in its end of year report said that there are about 200 million orphans in the Sub-Saharan Africa in which Zimbabwe is included and about 14 million orphans are as a result of HIV and AIDS, one of the main causes of the loss of parental care is the death of one or both parents. These households are a result of challenges such as divorce, domestic violence, and parental deaths (mainly due to HIV and AIDS). Since Zimbabwean families are traditionally extended, the increase in the number of orphans puts pressure on relatives who have to fend for additional children. Child-headed household arrangements seem to represent a new coping mechanism for orphans in Zimbabwe. Community-based organizations (CBOs) also help extended families to carry the burden of orphans.

An average of about 100 000 children in Zimbabwe are living as orphans and without parental care (Zhangazha, 2020). The oldest sibling is the one taking care of others. Some parents who have migrated to other countries to seek employment no longer value the importance of guardianship. They leave children to take care of themselves, since they will be using technology to communicate with them and also use it to send money in the fastest possible way to their children (Mpofu, 2020). Communities with a high rate of HIV/AIDS infection have for many years experienced a rapid increase in the number of children becoming orphaned. Therefore regions and countries with high levels of HIV/AIDS will continue to have an increasing higher number of double orphans as the pandemic advances. Teachers fail to understand the situation they are in. Teachers, for example, tend to punish these children for being late and for not finishing their homework without considering the reason for such behaviour. As a result of the social exclusion, feelings of esteem strongly related to competence which leads to greater motivation and involvement in school are thwarted thereby affecting academic performance.

A study in Zimbabwe by Kurebwa and Kurebwa (2014) reveal programme such as food for work programme that is also paramount in the coping of the most vulnerable categories in the community. These refer to programme by government and non-governmental organizations where the poor people, especially women and children, work on community development projects such as “construction and maintenance of infrastructures, such as roads, irrigation structures, and dams” and are in turn paid in form of handouts and food. The study notes that these have been

integral as strategies for surviving especially in rural societies. These programs have further helped in terms of provision of “basic nutritional requirements” and have also helped in the access to health and education (Kurebwa & Kurebwa, 2014). Such results guided to consider the exploration of if any programme not only for food but other aspects exist among CHF.

Formerly in Zimbabwe community members and extended families absorbed the burden of orphans. The prevailing sociocultural values made it natural that orphaned children should primarily be cared for within their extended families. Community settings such as institutionalized care were presumed not to be good for children as it increased the stigma of the child. It was therefore natural that if parents were killed due to accidents or HIV/AIDS the relatives would take over the responsibility of looking after siblings.

In addition, the care in many of these orphanages tends to be of poor quality for the emotional life of the children. Presently, the extended families remain the principal orphan care units but due to the greatly increased number of orphans, in some regions the families’ abilities to care for orphans seem to have reached the maximum elasticity of absorption UN report (2022). The majority of studies of orphans in Sub Saharan Africa have focused on physical and socio economic factors, such as access to education, food shelter and clothing, factors which are observable and therefore easier to address. As a result, psycho-social and developmental needs are warranted especially in resource-poor countries. To date, only a few studies have examined the psycho-social dimensions of orphanhood in Zimbabwe.

The exceptional situation of the young, who have to take over as the breadwinners of their families after their parents death long before they are physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared to do so, is hardly discussed. Nambi (2022) carried out a study on the psycho-social effects among orphans in Reikai District (Uganda). Since their study was mainly funded by the International Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) World Vision (WV), their study population consisted of orphans receiving education sponsorship from WV, which meant that most of the children were attending school. They found that depressive thoughts and feelings

such as sadness, anger and guilt were present in the children at the time of bereavement. They also argued that as the individual child, over time, accepts the loss, the negative emotions are expected to disappear.

Atwine *et al.*, (2015) have compared psychological distress among orphans and non-orphans in the rural Bushenyi District in Uganda. According to their findings, orphans who had lost one or both parents ran greater risks than non-orphans of having higher levels of anxiety, depression and anger. However, this result may have been influenced by rather leading questions, such as “Do you think your life will be bad?” They also argue that depression scores are higher in orphans living in smaller vs. larger households. Musisi, Kinyanda and Nakigudde (2015) argue that orphans in Rakai district reported more dissatisfaction with life, and were more emotionally needy and isolated, than non-orphans. Their study however focused on children in school only and does not report whether the orphans lived on their own or in other families. This study investigates the performance of orphans in primary schools and how they cope with their school work while at the same time providing the siblings with social and psychological support.

Furthermore, children from child headed families experience social exclusion that will definitely affect their social life hence is vital for an O-LEVEL child to develop holistically. For example, in a Rwandan study (Boris, Thurman, Snider, Spencer and Broen, 2020) children indicated that they felt “rejected by the community”. In addition Thurman, Snider, Boris, Kalisa, Nyirazinyoye and Brown, (2018) indicated that communities treated these children differently because they are child-headed households.

Chiastolite’s (2018) research in South Africa revealed that one of the reasons that led societies to distance these vulnerable children's the growth in their number which puts a burden on the coping strategies of families or societies at large. Chiastolite further added that many extended families find it extremely difficult to cope financially when planning to accommodate these children thereby leaving them with no choice other than setting up their family without a father, mother or any adult to cater for their needs.

McIntyre (2022)) argued that child headed households have a feeling of not being wanted, which ends up preventing their natural development as well as their schooling. This was confirmed by Evans and Schaumberg (2019) who argue that the situation of children from child headed families may affect the psychological wellbeing of a child and leave an indelible mark on their scholastic experience.”

Malinga (2022) revealed that the difficulties of caring for children in the child-headed household tend to fall on girl children, resulting in psychological problems. The female children carry most of the care responsibilities for siblings and sometimes sick parents. This results in depression leading to withdrawal, sadness, isolation, moodiness which affects or contributes to behavioural problems which negatively affect their scholastic experience. Ramsden (2022) agreed with Chiastolite (2018) when predicting that by 2015, there will be an escalation of child headed families is a growing trend and it needs more attention to come up with ways to reduce stress and trauma for the victims.

The study by ABT Associates Incorporated (2017) on child headed household revealed that some learners are withdrawn from school because other children mock them. Furthermore, peers and educators exacerbate psychological trauma through stigmatization. Some children conveyed that they live on their own due to parental sickness; some disclosed that their parents live in hospices whereas some are bedridden. Recently, in (2020), a deadly disease was pronounced (COVID-19) and the researcher finds it worthy to investigate more on the impact on academics of children living in CHF for young children considering the economic situation nationally and internationally. The increased death roll increased the number of child headed families. Moreover, the family as a hub of motivation and behaviour control becomes less significant for its purposes on academic performance and behaviour control. This necessitates the need for research on the effects of living in child-headed families for young children. Many researchers like Phillips, (2021; Zangazha, (2020), UNICEF, (2018) have tried to research into the matter but their findings are either out-dated and not applicable to the Zimbabwean situation and some like Foster et al, 2022; Naicker and Tsenhase, 2018 did not specifically focus on the O-LEVEL learner.

Mpofu and Chimhenga (2016), state that from the research that has been done by other researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa, an increase in numbers show that child-headed families are rising rapidly. This affects the children's welfare, since a family is an institution where children learn to interact with other human beings, putting forward the ideas of Emily Duncan and Talcott Parsons the profounder of functionalist theory in socialization. They argue that a child is born a tabular and he or she requires a well-established primary socialization institution which is a family. The family is the most important institution and without having a good primary socialization, a child might find it difficult to join the secondary socialization such as the school. This research is aimed at assessing the impact on academic performance of children living in child headed families children in Marondera District of Mashonaland East Province.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Despite the growing number of child-headed families in Marondera District Mashonaland East Province, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining the impact of this family structure on the academic performance of children. The unique challenges faced by these children, including financial constraints, lack of parental support, and increased responsibilities, may hinder their educational success. Understanding these challenges and their impact on academic performance is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems to mitigate the negative effects. Child-headed families are on the rise as a result of parental death caused by HIV and AIDS, natural disasters, migration, economic factors, road accidents and recently, COVID-19 pandemic. Young children who need adult care and support are taking care of their siblings thus depriving them of their childhood development and education. The increases of cases of HIV and AIDS, COVID-19, and other chronic illnesses have resulted in increased death rates and cases of child headed families. The situation in Zimbabwe reflects high migration patterns as parents fend for their families in other neighbouring countries. This means there is need for a more recent and O-level specific study. The absence of adult caregivers leads to taking over of responsibilities by children below eighteen years.

1.4. Research Objectives

- ❖ To identify the main causes and challenges of child-headed families in Marondera
- ❖ To assess the performance of O-level learners from child headed families in Zimbabwe.
- ❖ To examine the strategies that can be employed to curb the challenges faced by child headed families in the attainment of elementary education in Marondera district.

1.5. MAJOR RESEACH QUESTION

What are the effects on academic performance for children living in child headed families.

1.6. Research sub Questions

- ❖ What are challenges faced by children in child headed families?
- ❖ How do O-Level learners from child headed families perform?
- ❖ What are the strategies that caregivers can employ in helping children from child headed families?
- ❖ What are the policies put in place for child headed families?

1.7. Significance of the study

Schools

Schools may find new ways to help children living in CHF, since this research might create awareness for stakeholders to pay more attention to the development of children. Schools may engage parents and teach them about the importance of their presents to child development. Also schools may mobilize communities on the importance of extended families that is instilling the spirit of taking over responsibilities no matter the situation one might regard as the worst. Parents who could have migrated or lived away from their children to understand the condition of the children heading themselves may affect their academic performance. The research might also be significant to the parents in the community to understand that child headed families are also their responsibilities as a society.

Teachers

Teachers are the implementers of any school curriculum. The research findings might sensitize them on the intervention strategies suggested to help improve the performance and behaviour of young children from child headed families and in particular understand more about their background and the challenges they face, and teachers may gain more insight into the phenomenon and this will enable them to respond positively and effectively in helping learners from child-headed households in the challenges they face. The research may also assist teachers to keep in mind that no matter their social background, children come to school ready to learn with high hopes for success (Epstein and Sanders, 2018). Therefore; this research might raise awareness in facilitators on how to treat such learners and provide ways and means to assist such learners to realize their full potential. This implies that learners come to school willing to learn and succeed in their schooling activities regardless of their background.

Policymakers

The research may assist in policy formulation and plan of action in assisting child headed families. The research might be significant to the Administrators concerned with development of children so that they understand the challenges faced by learners from child headed families and this might increase their involvement in a bit to advocate the involvement of the Ministries (the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare Department, Ministry of Justice and other stakeholders) to be part of the cause to assist these pupils.

Learners

The research includes an interview of learners who may be able to express their views and feelings.

The researcher

The researcher might also be equipped with the knowledge of the effects of child headed families on the development of the child physically, socially, emotionally and psychologically. This might be fundamental to the researcher when she gets to start practical. The researcher might also be able to understand the social dynamics of child headed families making way for other researchers to act on the recommendations offered. The research's findings might also help in increasing the literature on child headed families and performance in academia. This might widen

the subject matter and give room for comparative analysis while adding on issues which are pertinent on young learners and their family background.

1.8. Limitations

The research is being carried out during such a time when the country is under lockdown following the rise of life threatening disease, therefore in trying to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus, there are rules and regulations imposed to limit the spread of the disease. Therefore, the researcher may be denied permission to travel to schools which may lead to gather information through media which may be costly and also cannot accommodate all recipients, since some have no gadgets and some digital illiterate. For those who are digital illiterate, the researcher opt to use phone calls though this might be costly. The researcher is likely to find limitations in the mobilization of people for focus group discussion since people might be having numerous commitments during the course of the study, this means that the researcher can make use of community development meetings or and meetings held at the schools included in the study. In-addition, the researcher may be affected by the fact that, she is employed on full time basis hence will have to utilize that limited time effectively to gather all the data. This means that, the researcher will arrange with her superiors to be allowed for a study leave. The other limitation is that other participants may not be willing to give information as required or in a stipulated time. Consultation with the supervisor may be affected due to the Covid-19 regulations. However, the researcher will follow the COVID 19 regulations in carrying out this research. The researcher's conclusion will be based on the information from adult participants and also child heads since they are the one who face challenges in taking care of their siblings.

1.9. Delimitations of the study

The research will be carried out at two secondary schools in Marondera District. The results of this study will generalize to the child headed families of Marondera District located in Mashonaland Province. The community is mainly composed of young adults, a few are working class who are employed, some are indigenous entrepreneurs who are always busy all day and some of them have migrated to

neighbouring countries in search of jobs. The participants will be school heads, teachers and learners from the child-headed families selected after finding out about their background from the child study. The study will mainly focus on the challenges that the learners from child-headed families encounter that affect their performance academically. It will not focus on what led them to be left on their own, which is taking care of them in terms of their welfare in the absence of their parents as this will need a research study on its own.

1.10. Definition of key terms

Child-headed families– These are families where there are no parents or guardians or where the guardian is below eighteen years in a family or household setting. The oldest child thus acts as a head of a house (Van der Waal, 2014). Martinus (2019) defines child-headed families as those in which there is absence or permanent incapacity of an adult caregiver which leads to the taking over of responsibilities by children. Sloth-Nielsen (2018) says a child-headed family is one where there are no adult caregivers available and children under the age of eighteen living on their own. Deducing from the above definitions, child headed family is a family set up where the older child takes responsibility of the home without adult support.

Young Child the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defined a child as any person below the age of eighteen. Therefore, according to the study a child is a person below the age of eighteen years who still needs parental care and support.

Academic performance Gordon (2019) views academic performance as passing an objective test. Therefore, according to this study academic performance refers to coping well with school activities and one has to pass and obtain good results in the studies completed. The outcome of education, the extent to which a student, institution has achieved their educational goal (Phillips, 2021).

Ordinary level (O-LEVEL) is viewed as a comprehensive approach to policies and programs meant for children from conception to sixteen years old (Vernez,Krop and Rydell (2020) O-level is further viewed by Zafeirakou (2012) as multidimensional process containing four basic interconnected areas of child development(birth to eight years namely physical, cognitive, linguistic and socio-

emotional. Early childhood refers to many skills and a milestone that children are expected to reach by the age of five, Minnet (2020) O-Level is that environment that enables holistic development, Berk 2019. Ordinary level consists of activities and experiences that are intend to effect developmental changes in children.

1.11. Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction to the thesis, highlighting the background, problem statement, research questions, and objectives, significance of the study, scope, and limitations. The subsequent chapters will delve into the literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of living in child-headed families on the academic performance of children in Marondera. Through this research, we aim to shed light on the unique challenges faced by these children and propose strategies to support their educational journey.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2:0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the literature that has been propounded and published about the subject matter of child headed families and academic performance at O- Level. The purpose of this chapter is to reflect the knowledge gap which the paper is addressing and it helps to give a platform for a comparative analysis of the findings against the literature already published. The chapter will reflect comprehensively on the narrative of child headed families and its narrative nature and scope, unpacking its impact on academic performance for children living in child headed families. The chapter also reflects on the theoretical framework to be used in this research.

2:1 THEOREHODSAL FRAMEWORK

The literature review is a select analysis of existing research which relates to the researcher's subject and the questions that are chosen Minkoff, (2012). There are various secondary sources of information such as researchers, theories, articles, newspapers and documentaries that will give detailed analysis of the literature review on matters related to the hypothesis. Assessing the literature will help the researcher to identify the gaps to be filled.

This research will be informed by Bronbrenner's theory of human development. The ecology of human development can be defined as the study of how the whole community functions to raise the children who will eventually take their place within that society Roberts, (2022). The four levels surround the core of the model, that is, the individual. The first level is the micro system, incorporating the immediate environments surrounding the individual and those people with whom the individual interacts, for example, family members, school and peers. The second level is named the so system, and incorporates the interactions that occur within the micro systems, so for example, relationships between the family and the school. The third system, known as the exo-system, describes the systems that do not directly affect the child, but still have influence in the child's life, for example, neighbour-hoods and school departments. The macro system refers to the larger social and police norms and the legal system. Finally the chrono-system which the child headed families fall into.

The ecological theory summarizes that human development must move beyond examining a child's biology. The ecological theory is the first theory to embed the context in which children live by biological predispositions. It is based on the thesis that children do not develop in isolation, but develop instead in a variety of contexts or environments in which they interact continuously. Pelton (2018) states that development is only shaped by the immediate environment, but also by the interaction with the larger environment. The Developing individual typically faces four ecological levels that contain both socio – cultural risks and opportunities. Garbarino (2017) describes risk as the impoverishing of a child's world so that the child lacks the basic and psychological necessities of life at that level, as likewise to child headed families.

Bronfenbrenner (2015) has indicated, not every environmental influence acting on a child has equal likelihood of positively or negatively affecting a child's development. As the most proximal agent in a child's development, primary caregivers are the most influential people in the life of a child. In addition, most information about the world is filtered through primary caregivers where children are very young, (Crittenden, 2018) As such, while recognizing the complexity of the environment in which child development takes place and given that children are most likely to be maltreated are the youngest in society, If someone wants to target one part of an ecological system for intervention that would result in the greatest amount of immediate change, the most sensible place to begin is with the primary caregiver. It logically follows that research on the aetiology of child maltreatment should include the primary caregiver as a central focus. The ecological theory's contribution is quite ideal in the discourse of child headed families development in a bid to protect children from various harms in different settings since it provides a comprehensive narrative of the risks associated with child development and how to effectively meet them.

Child-headed families refer to children below the age of eighteen and are left without adult care or caregiver. Martinus (2019) cited in Lepheana (2020) states that child-headed families are those in which there is an absence of adult caregivers which has left the responsibilities to children. Bequele (2017) defines a child-headed family as a family where everyone who lives in the household is below eighteen years of age and the family will be headed by one of the older siblings. Lepheana (2020) says the rate of child-headed families in Africa is on the rise since 2015. Some children will have lost both parents while others one. Some parents, if left alone to be single parents, migrate to neighbouring countries in search of jobs Tsegaye,(2018) leaving the children parentless.

2:2 NATURE AND SCOPE OF CHILD HEADED FAMILIES

According to Van Der Waal (2014) a child headed family may be due to residential instability and family arrangements such as parents leaving children on their own to seek employment and migrate to cities and towns. Child-headed families, also known as child-led households or children-headed households, refer to households where children, typically under the age of 18, are responsible for running the household and caring for their siblings in the absence or loss of parents. These

families emerge due to various reasons, including parental death, migration, abandonment, or the breakdown of family structures. Children in child-headed families face unique challenges as they take on adult responsibilities at a young age, including financial management, household chores, and caregiving. According to the Department of Social Development (2015) a child headed household or family is a household where both parents are deceased and remaining occupants are children of the deceased and are legally considered as minors under the law. Zubek (2013) defines a child headed household as a living situation/arrangement where a child has taken charge of a household in terms of decision-making as well as the responsibility to provide for the physical, social and emotional needs of others living with this particular child, in the household, and regardless of familial relationship. Therefore, child headed family is a family in which a minor has become the head of the household and resumes the duties carried out by parents.

Sloth-Nielsen (2022) revealed that there is an upsurge of child headed families in South Africa resulting from parental death as well as a number of other factors. De Klerk, (2020) in his study in North Uganda revealed that war resulted in many children becoming orphans. Furthermore Bregg (2018) in his Rwandan study revealed that the 1994 genocide led to over one hundred thousand child families.

Anderson and Phillips (2020) added that in South Africa AIDS is a main cause of parental death. Moreover, some children are abandoned by their parents for many different reasons peculiar to themselves. This is echoed by Jones, (2015) that in Swaziland there is an upsurge in the number of child headed families due to child abandonment, displacement or when parents cannot afford to care for their children. The complexity of estimating the prevalence of child headed households is well illustrated in Chiastolie (2018) research in South Africa when he used 2017 census data.

Functionalists' profunder Emily Duncan and Talcott Parsons in socialization mentioned the significance of the family as an institution. The profunder of the functionalist perspective argued that the family should perform its role for a functional society. The family as the micro system is referred to here is what the researcher can call the normal family with the father, mother and children. Child headed family is also another type of family but not even desired by anyone. This

type of family exists because of forced circumstances beyond human control such as death and divorce. If the family founders who are the parents have irreconcilable differences divorce is inevitable. Death in Zimbabwe is caused by a number of issues and HIV and AIDS is the major contributor, Covid-19 and road accidents also Zimstats, (2019). There are other scholars who even deny the existence of the so-called child headed families such as Tutu (2018). Tutu argues that no one is living on an Island and he based his argument on the African philosophy of existence which says "I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am". This philosophy simply means we live by others and for others. Helping each other is the core of every member of the society. This however, has got a very big challenge since most African families cannot be able to provide enough for them that they can help extended families. This therefore led to the existence of child headed families whether scholars try to hide it or not. The UNICEF (2018) in its end of year report said that there are about 200 million orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa in which Zimbabwe is included and about 14 million orphans are as a result of HIV and AIDS and uncountable orphans as a result of Covid-19 worldwide. Klerk (2020) also postulated that in Uganda and Somalia orphans are due to war and this challenge continued in the 21st century.

An average of about 100 000 children in Zimbabwe are living as orphans and without parental care (Zhangazha, 2020). The oldest sibling is the one taking care of others. Some parents who have migrated to other countries to seek employment no longer value the importance of guardianship. They leave children to take care of themselves, since they will be using technology to communicate with the children and also use it to send money in the fastest possible way to their children (Mpofu, 2020). Mpofu and Chimhenga (2016), state that from the research that has been done by other researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa, an increase in numbers show that child-headed families are rising rapidly. This affects children's welfare, since a family is an institution where children learn to interact with other human beings, putting forward the ideas of Emily Duncan and Talcott Parsons, the profunder of functionalist theory in socialization. They argue that a child is born a tabular and he or she requires a well-established primary socialization institution which is a family. The family is the most important institution and without having a good primary socialization, a child might find it difficult to join the secondary socialization such as the school.

The ecological theory summarizes that human development must move beyond examining a child's biology. The ecological theory is the first theory to embed the context in which children live by biological predispositions. It is based on the thesis that children do not develop in isolation, but develop instead in a variety of contexts or environments in which they interact continuously. Pelton (2018) states that development is only shaped by the immediate environment, but also by the interaction with the larger environment. The Developing individual typically faces four ecological levels that contain other socio – cultural risks and opportunities. Garbarino (2017) describes risk as the impoverishing of a child's world so that the child lacks the basic and psychological necessities of life at that level, as likewise to child headed families.

CAUSES OF CHILD HEADED FAMILIES

The HIV and AIDS pandemic and other chronic illnesses like cancer and diabetes have left many children vulnerable and orphaned due to death of parents and this led to the emergence of child headed families. Other causes can also include migration of parents in search of greener pastures, painful divorces and separation of parents and natural disasters like cyclone Idai have also led to child headed families. Child headed families face challenges and problems like lack adequate medical care, psychological problem, discrimination, early marriage, lack of education due to drop out and too many responsibilities can lead to poor school performance and child labour.

Diseases and death of parents.

Countries strongly affected by AIDS related deaths are witnessing the emergence of child headed families and HIV/AIDS is regarded as a major factor leading to the establishment and increase in the number of these households in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular (Ganga and Chinyoka, 2016). In a research carried by Mokoena (2017) shows that there are millions of people who are infected by HIV globally of which 35,5 million are found in Sub-Saharan Africa which ranks it top of the world regions with people that are affected by HIV/AIDS (UNESCO, 2020). UNICEF Zimbabwe (2021) states that there is about hundred thousand child headed households in Zimbabwe. One in every four children in Zimbabwe has lost one or both parents due to H.I.V and other chronic diseases (UNICEF, 2012).

Similarly, Zubek (2019: 44) posits that causes of child households include mortality rate caused by H.IV and AIDS in parts of Africa. Also supported by Le Roux- Kemp (2013) who says millions of children have lost their parents or primary caregivers due to a variety of reasons of which HIV and AIDS pandemic can be singled out as a major cause. Jakachira and Muchabaiwa (2015) says natural disasters, illnesses like cancer, road accidents mental and physical disabilities have also cause of child headed families. Population of orphans has rapidly rise due to the above causes of capable adult bread winners die resulting in children taking parents' responsibilities, (UNICEF 2021:9).Cyclone Idai is one example of natural disasters whose death toll has risen and left some children to be heads of the families.

Migration and divorce of parents

Gubwe and Mago (2015) aver that Zimbabwe socio- economic crisis of (2013 up to date) instigated migration of people into 'Diaspora.' Consequently some parents divorced and others died due to over working in foreign lands, which has led to a number of children living in child-headed households. Such children become vulnerable to a number of problems like lack of parental guidance, physical abuse, and lack of food, clothes, decent shelter and access to health facilities and resources for education to take place. Such children are deprived of many rights as pronounced in the Convention on the Rights of Children and Children Act chapter 5:06. CRC articles 24, 28 and 29, 31-37 which state provision and protection rights. UNICEF (2016:43) says children need peace, love and adults to provide for their needs as well as someone to solve their problems they encounter as they have the right to be loved and cared for by parents and guidance as propounded by the Guardianship of the minors Act and Maintenance Act. Absence of peace and love caused by sexual and domestics' violence may drive children away from home. Divorce can also lead to disputes that put children in devastating circumstances for example the parent may fail to sustain the family single headed and there might not be maintenance from the other spouse. Domestic abuse can also result in death of a spouse or imprisonment of the murderer, leaving the child vulnerable seeking safety from extended family members (Mkhize, 2016). For example, a mother can be found in an extra marital affair by the husband who forces the husband to beat the wife to death and the husband to be jailed. Hence, the children are prone to

abuse by members of extended family due to the issues of their parents and decide to leave alone as child-headed family.

Social transformation

Evers, Notemans and Ommering (2021:24) pointed out that the social structure of the family has been changed drastically due to social transformations such as migrant labour, rapid urbanization and modernization such that the extended family and community's nature of support may have changed. In the Zimbabwean tradition families supported each other through extended families and in the past child-headed families were non-existent since orphans were naturally cared for within the households of their extended family (Ganga and Chinyoka, 2020). However, due to an increase in economic difficulties, this system of supporting each other has been eroded by the economic challenges experienced that undermines the extended family's ability to provide for the orphaned children (Gubwe et al 2015). Globalization has eroded the social stratification of extended family to nuclear family hence, has escalate the child headed families making them vulnerable. Morale decadence, becoming children of the streets and on the streets, school drop outs, engaging in drug abuse, sexual workers and being trafficked for labour are the after effects of such vulnerable children Pelton (2018) stated that these causes have led to an increase in the number of orphans left to provide for their siblings or themselves with little or no support from adults.

2.2.2. Challenges faced by children in child headed families

An elaborate interrogation of both national and international literature on CHF led to the identification of several challenges that are experienced by children living in such households. Some of these challenges are: increased responsibility of a nurse and care for sick family members (Evans & Becker 2019; Skovdal *et al.* (2019); the difficulty of dealing with the stigma of family members being sick or dead due to HIV/AIDS (Campbell *et al.* 2012); the lack of grief support (Pillay 2012); shortage of resources (Seckinelgin 2017); increased risk of starvation and malnutrition (Madhavan & Townsend 2017); increased school absenteeism and withdrawal (Cluver *et al.* 2012); poor school performance (Guo³, Li & Sherr (2012); inadequate access to medical care (Skovdal & Daniel 2012) and the sexual exploitation of girls (Pillay 2012). Several South African studies on CHF have not

only collaborated the challenges mentioned but may also have expanded the body of knowledge, especially in terms of the educational, psychological and social challenges that children from CHF are confronted with on a daily basis (Leatham 2015; Pillay & Nesengani 2020).

Challenges experienced by children in CHF clearly reflect their social disempowerment and devastating experiences of poverty, which are further exacerbated by the lack of adequate social support from their families and communities (Van Dijk & Van Driel 2012). While much focus has been given to the challenges of CHF, one should also be cognisant of the fact that there are several children in such households who display strong resilience (Lethale & Pillay 2013), so one should be aware of the danger of limiting one's perceptions of these children as being only vulnerable (Kessi 2021; Meintjes & Giese 2020). Such perceptions lead to sensitive debates among researchers as to whether the concept of CHF could actually be detrimental to children. For example, Cheney (2020) argues that viewing children from CHF as vulnerable may unintentionally create a sense of dependency and entitlement for relief aid to address the arising pathology. This may actually inhibit the design and implementation of culturally relevant programme that could enhance the strengths and well-being of the children. Another view may emphasize the vulnerability of such children, arguing that not doing so could lead to undermining and minimizing the plight of CHF. Arguments such as these certainly indicate a need for the problematization of CHF.

Reviewed literature has restated the fact that monetary constraints are connected with schooling and academic progress of learners heading families. Children heading families are faced with prevalent deficiency that leads to their losing out on education for the sake of financial income (Masondo.2020; Leatham, 2015; Mokoena 2017). Pillay (2022) asserts that lack of money causes children to fail to purchase school needs, supplies and this leads to failing in class due to lack of these needs.

Mokoena (2017) points out that crime is prevalent in CHF as the families are poverty stricken which leads them to resort to criminal activities to support families. Children, especially girls as echoed by Pillay (2012) may face risk of ending in child prostitution in trying to provide for their family. It was also

established that even at school children from CHF face negative attitudes from both teachers and peers. Teachers were said not to have empathy for these children. Peers were also said to mock children from CHF, for example when they are chased out of school due to non-payment of fees or wearing poor clothes. Pillay (2012) also says children face the problem of social exclusion when teachers fail to understand the situation they are in. Teachers, for example, tend to punish these children for being late and for not finishing their homework without considering the reason for such behaviour. As a result of the social exclusion, feelings of esteem strongly related to competence which leads to greater motivation and involvement in school are thwarted thereby affecting academic performance.

Formerly in Zimbabwe community members and extended families absorbed the burden of orphans. The prevailing socio-cultural values made it natural that orphaned children should primarily be cared for within their extended families and community settings such as institutionalized care were presumed not to be good for children as it increased the stigma of the child. It was therefore natural that if parents died due to accidents or HIV/AIDS, relatives would take over the responsibility of looking after siblings.

In addition, the care in many of these orphanages tends to be of poor quality for the emotional life of the children. Presently, the extended families remain the principle orphan care units but due to the greatly increased number of orphans, in some regions the families abilities to care for orphans seem to have reached the maximum elasticity of absorption UN report (2022). The majority of studies of orphans in Sub Saharan Africa have focused on physical and socio economic factors, such as access to education, food shelter and clothing, factors which are observable and therefore easier to address. As a result, psycho-social and developmental needs, is warranted especially in resource-poor countries. To date, only a few studies have examined the psycho-social dimensions of orphan hood in Zimbabwe.

The exceptional situation of the young, who have to take over as a the breadwinners of their families after their parents death long before they are physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared to do so, is hardly discussed. Sengendo and Nambi (2022) carried out a study on the psycho-social effects

among orphans in Rakai District (Uganda). Since their study was mainly funded by the International Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) World Vision (WV), their study population consisted of orphans receiving education sponsorship from WV, which meant that most of the children were attending school. They found that depressive thoughts and feelings such as sadness, anger and guilt were present in the children at the time of bereavement. They also argued that as the individual child, over time, accepts the loss, the negative emotions are expected to disappear.

Atwine *et al.*, (2015) have compared psychological distress among orphans and non-orphans in the rural Bushenyi District in Uganda. According to their findings, orphans who had lost one or both parents ran greater risks than non-orphans of having higher levels of anxiety, depression and anger. However, this result may have been influenced by rather leading questions, such as “Do you think your life will be bad?” They also argue that depression scores are higher in orphans living in smaller versus larger households. Musisi, Kinyanda and Nakigudde (2015) argue that orphans in Rakai district reported more dissatisfaction with life, and were more emotionally needy and isolated, than non-orphans. Their study however focused on children in school only and does not report whether the orphans lived on their own or in other families. This study investigates the performance of orphans in primary schools and how they cope with their school work while at the same time providing the siblings with social and psychological support.

Furthermore, children from child headed families experience social exclusion. For example, in a Rwandan study (Boris, Thurman, Snider, Spencer and Broen, 2020 p. 598) children indicated that they felt “rejected by the community”. In addition Thurman, Snider, Boris, Kalisa, Nyirazinyoye and Brown, (2018) indicated that communities treated these children differently because they are child headed households. Chiastolite’s (2018) research in South Africa revealed that one of the reasons that led societies to distance these vulnerable children's the growth in their number which puts a burden on the coping strategies of families or societies at large. Chiastolite further added that many extended families find it extremely difficult to cope financially when planning to accommodate these children.

McIntyre (2022)) argued that child headed households have a feeling of not being wanted, that ends up preventing their natural development as well as their

schooling. This was confirmed by Evans and Schaumberg (2019) who argue that the situation of children from child headed families may affect the psychological well-being of a child and leave an indelible mark on their scholastic experience.”

Malinga (2022) revealed that the difficulties of caring for children in the child headed household tend to fall on girl children, resulting in psychological problems. The female children carry most of the care responsibilities for siblings and sometimes sick parents. This results in depression leading to withdrawal, sadness, isolation, moodiness which affects or contributes to behavioural problems which negatively affect their scholastic experience. Ramsden (2022) agreed with Chiastolite (2018) when predicting that by 2015, there will be an escalation of child headed families as a growing trend and it needs more attention to come up with ways to reduce stress and trauma for the victims.

The study by ABT Associates Incorporated (2017) on child headed household revealed that some learners are withdrawn from schooling because other children mock them. Furthermore, peers and educators exacerbate psychological trauma through stigmatization. Some children conveyed that they live on their own due to parental sickness, some disclosed that their parents live in hospices whereas some are bedridden at home hence the child becomes a caregiver. In addition the study highlighted that many learners will be vulnerable to abuse and pressures to engage in sex work or other survival strategies. The experiences of these children may result in them missing school, facing starvation and having difficulty with concentration as well they may contract diseases. Moreover, these difficulties lower the chances of the children completing basic schooling and ultimately lead to lower socioeconomic status as adults. Cluver and Gardner, (2017) further said that the findings from their study show that some children experience school as a place of hope from distressing home circumstances.

AIDS pamphlets by the department of Health (2015) indicated that due to the death of their parents, children showed alarming peer relationship difficulties, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, suicidal urges, delinquency and hopelessness. In support of the above mentioned hardships, these children are vulnerable to poverty, malnutrition, stigma, exploitation, sickness, and sexual abuse, which lead to intense psychological trauma which affects their scholastics experience.

Henderson (2020) relates the narrative of South African children coming from child headed households, saying “her evident stoicism was underpinned by anger”. These children are seen as troublesome among other learners. Fortston (2017), Evans and Miguel (2017) argued that the relationship between the child and their next of kin (other than the parents) was not as natural as that of parents themselves and may result in failure to acquire high academic achievement particularly because the children become suspicious and think that the relatives want to take their parents, possessions and leave them vulnerable.

Evans (2020) in his report revealed that children in Tanzania who are in child-headed households indicated that their housekeeping responsibilities affect their ability to learn at school. These children lack enough time to revise their school work and they arrive late at school. They find it difficult to concentrate at school because they worry about caring for their siblings and the need to earn money to support the family. This results in poor educational outcomes which will reduce their employment opportunities. The children in the interview with Evans lamented that there is no shoulder to cry on since even teachers are not aware of their hardships so they do not offer support. Masondo, (2020) argued that household heads are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of school either permanently or temporarily in order to care for their younger siblings who continue with their education. Van Breda, (2020) emphasized the ideas of the Chiastolite study (2018) when he contends that, the taking up of new responsibilities and roles was highly salient theme as it is very difficult to act apparent, a learner and a counsellor all at once to siblings.

2.2.3 Academic performance of pupils from child headed families.

Evans and Schaumberg (2019), argued that child headed families are adversely affected by poverty which affects their memories that ultimately results in greater difficulty to learn than other children. Case, Anne, Paxson, and Albeidinger (2018), added that the impact of the parents death on children’s schooling results in socio-economic circumstances as well as a lack of motivation which negatively affects their performance at school. This view was supported by Lyoons (2020) when emphasizing that child headed families are prone to increased poverty, poor health and poor nutrition which exacerbates poor school attendance that limits the

possibility of a good school performance. This shows that these children's main worry is the status of the household budget constraints. In addition, Robson and Kenyanta (2017) emphasized that child headed households are often extremely vulnerable, and impoverished which drives them to work and prevents them from attending school, thereby affecting their academic performance.

The United Nations Children's fund UNICEF (2022) reported that the survey conducted in Botswana schools showed three key performance indicators including absenteeism, repetition, and school interruption. Learners who were caught in this confessed that they want to be like everyone else. The emphasis from the report pointed out that the provision of nutritious school meals prompts disadvantaged children to attend school and results in them perceiving their home- environment as less attractive than school: since they have little or nothing to do during the day.

Furthermore, Brofenbrenner (2018) argued that the absence of parents promotes a lack of interaction between the family and school and it directly affects children's ability to achieve high-performance in school. Since the responsibility of parents is to attend parent-teacher meetings, take part in their children's sports days and monitor their learning but the situation on child headed families is distinct from that of their peers. This was also echoed by Fortson, Evans and Miguel (2017) when arguing that the absence of parents' results in delayed enrolment, fewer hours at school once enrolled, or drop out.

They also highlighted that parents are influential in the academic achievement of children. Furthermore, the normal learning requires a parent's push in doing homework, proper wearing of school uniform and participation in other school activities. In addition Jubber (1994) argued that the absence of parents results in a distorted family structure which exposes children to the risk of demotivation and low self-esteem. Moreover, Jubber (1994) saw that the responsibility of parents was to ensure the promotional support to the child.

Moletsane (2022) mentioned that the impact of the death causes children to grow up without adult attention, supervision or love and makes them vulnerable to abuse (physical, emotional and sexual) from other members of the community. The teacher may take for granted that he/she is scaffolding learning with inclusive

activities whilst missing the main issue and leaving the child in limbo. Recently, Wood and Goba (2021), in their study on the care and support of orphaned children at school, acknowledged that teacher training programme around HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa appear not to have been very effective in helping teachers to respond to the demands placed on them by the HIV pandemic.

Nkomo (2020) places emphasis on what Moletsane (2022) alluded to, saying that children from child headed families reported experiences like being neglected by society and family, facing financial constraints and being decision makers at an early age. Moreover, Nkomo (2020) commented that these children face such things as their obligation to take place of the deceased parents, being abandoned by extended family members and surviving in the face of economic hardships. Furthermore, Nkomo (2020) added that these children feel helplessness and uncertainty about [personal safety, indiscipline, feeling of deprivation, grappling with multiple responsibilities like being the head of the household and being a child who is eager to learn at school.

Mukerji and Albon (2020) argued that parents must be present in a child's life. This implies that parents must be there in their children's future to ensure their welfare, survival and development. For education to happen in the child's mind, the parent must directly enforce it. Children from child headed families have no one to enforce commitment to schoolwork and to praise good performance.

2.2.4. Interventions for child headed families

Government initiatives

Several frameworks have been adopted and implemented in Zimbabwe in a bid to help children from child headed families these include The National Plan for Action on orphans and vulnerable children (NPA 2018), UN Convention of the rights of the child (2020), world summit for children (2022). The NPA (2018) mention the Children's Protection and Adoption Act [Chapter 5:06] and the Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy of 2020 as legal acts that serve to protect children who become vulnerable. Zimbabwe has a broad-based, multi-sectoral consultative approach which includes key government ministries, The United Nations, international and national non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society (NPA2018).

The right to education has been met through the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) which is aimed at helping orphans and vulnerable children with their schooling needs. However the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), which is an arm of the government pays only a quarter of the children's, fees (Gubwe *et al.*, 2015). It also does not cater for A-Level learners. This clearly shows that the assistance is not enough and also due to lack of funds and mismanagement on the part of administrators not all children that deserve the support are getting the support they are entitled to receive. UNICEF has interjected with food program, resources like stationary and O-LEVEL kits. Social welfare has assisted with identification of such children in the community and taken them to homes where they are catered for.

In addition, supplementary Feeding Program have been adopted in all schools as a way of meeting the children's nutritional needs. The statutory instrument 106 of 2015 also states the needs of children to be given a warm meal for those at O-LEVEL centres which also show the government's commitment in improving the lives of all children. In addition, World Food Program donates food to the government for distributions among schools, although this does not meet adequate nutritious diet plan on its own but requires additional food that schools lack funding to provide. The NPA (2018) states that the government assist vulnerable families with basic living costs through programs like Public Works Funds, Cash Transfer to Vulnerable Groups, Public Assistants Fund, Drought Relief, and Assisted Medical Treatment Order. The National Strategy on Children in Difficult Circumstances is another government initiative through which the government provides resources to local authorities, which collaborate with other stakeholders to reach out to children in difficult circumstances in the community settings. These program work in partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs), Faith-based Organization's (FBOs), and NGOs (NPA 2018) and therefore they cannot be fully monitored and have their own expectations to meet.

Laws have also been enforced that guide against child labour and exploitation as stipulated in The Constitution of Zimbabwe. These laws are enforced by inter-ministerial collaborations like ministry of home affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Justice Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. There

are also Victim Friendly Units and Victim Friendly Courts which help in case of child abuse by facilitating fair judgement and rehabilitation of the victims.

Community initiatives

Bronfenbrenner's theory explains the influence of different system in child development among these systems there is community (Grant, 2017). The community plays a crucial role in identification and monitoring the welfare of orphans and vulnerable children. The community could offer moral support to the child-headed households and educate them in running income generating projects successfully and to ensure that material support is made available by government and non-governmental organizations. Community should also offer guidance, advice and teach these children about life skills through workshops. Organizations like Scripture Unions, World Vision and the Red Cross have been the top in helping out orphans and vulnerable children with the help of community members. Community foster homes have also been established for example Alpha cottages in Masvingo, Well-wishers also offer support through means of donations to orphans in their communities which has improved the livelihood of these children. However, these homes' contributions are not enough to cater for all the orphans and vulnerable children. However, these homes' contributions are not enough to cater for all the orphans and vulnerable children as they are many.

The extended family was the traditional social security system and its members were responsible for the protection of the vulnerable, care for the poor and sick and the transmission of traditional social values and education. In recent years, changes such as labour migration, the cash economy, demographic change, formal education and Westernization have occurred and have weakened the extended family. Labour migration and urbanization have led to a reduction in the frequency of contact with relatives and encouraged social and economic dependence; possessions are perceived as personal property and no longer belong to the extended family. Increases life expectancy and family size mean it is now not possible for an extended family of three or four generations to reside together; the diminishing availability of land makes it difficult for large families to be economically independent through subsistence agriculture. Education about social values is likely to be obtained from schools and interactions of children with

their peers rather than through traditional mechanisms, which lessened the ability of older people to exert social control over the younger generation.

The Families, orphans and Children under Stress (FOCUS) Program was established in 2015 by Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) in Mutare, Zimbabwe. The program is implemented by local churches in four rural areas of Manicaland province with a population of some 35000 people; orphan household were identified by 88 volunteer women living in villages in program areas and those families in need were given priority for regular visiting; during 2014, an average of 1398 supportive visits per month were made to 798 needy orphan households. In the city of Mutare, with a population of about 160000, FACT supervises a church home care program using 30 volunteers with approximately 500 visits a month to some 200 clients and a FOCUS program with 10 volunteer visitors.

However, most of these households had nowhere to run for emotional and social support to help the children cope with the problems they face. This was identified by virtually all of the community participants as an area where they and others in the community could do more. There appeared to be a lack of confidence about how to go about this and a general sense of helplessness. It was also noted that the children themselves were showing real signs of trauma and stress as a result of their situation. Although they were apparently coping on a daily basis on a superficial level, they were losing their social energy, and hope for the future. Very few of the children interviewed felt that they would have a better future and many did not see any reason to work hard to improve their lives.

Some have faced the problem of being forced to drop out of school and not be able to complete secondary education and lack of opportunities to undertake vocational training which might offer an opportunity for a better future. The problem is attributed not just to a lack of funds to pay school fees but also to the need for school uniforms, stationery, and books and to overcome stigmatization.

Although these are common problems faced by many orphaned children in a range of different circumstances, it is felt that child headed households are much more vulnerable and at risk because they do not have the material and personal resources to cope with the problems that they encounter on a daily basis. Many of the heads

of these families do not have the skills or knowledge to ensure that they are living healthy lives and to protect them from exploitation.

In addition, children living in commercial farm communities do not have access to the traditional support system that is in existence in communal areas. The economic and social safety nets such as the extended family and traditional community leadership structures that exist in other areas are not present and the prevalence of non-formalized marriages often means that men lack any sense of responsibility for the children from any relationships they develop. As a result, the extended family does not acknowledge any responsibility for children from these marriages. Furthermore, the current economic and social situation in Zimbabwe means that the support structures do exist for these children under severe stress and in danger of disintegrating. The extended family and community in general are facing severe economic hardships, food shortages and social upheavals. In these circumstances there is nothing to spare to give to non family child headed households.

2.5. Summary

This literature review has explored the concepts of child-headed families, academic performance, and the factors influencing educational outcomes. It has discussed the unique challenges faced by children in child-headed families and highlighted the supportive interventions that have been proposed to enhance their academic performance. The theoretical framework of ecological systems theory provides a lens through which to understand the complex interactions between individual, family, and environmental factors that influence the academic performance of children living in child-headed families. The subsequent chapters will delve into the methodology, findings, and discussion, contributing to a deeper understanding of the impact of living in child-headed families on the academic performance of children in Marondera.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3:1 Introduction

Neuman (2016) defines research methodology as a plan of action to measure variables of interest. This chapter deals with research design, sampling, data collection and data analysis. The approach used in this research is qualitative methodology. The approach uses different methods of data gathering which are interviews, focus group discussion and observation. The focus of this chapter is to highlight the research approach to data gathering, data research methods, sampling

procedures and also the reflection of the ethics and research techniques applicable to this inquiry.

This chapter focused on the research methodology which will be used to carry out the study. The research paradigm and the research design which are going to be used will be explained. The population, which will be the number of people to be involved, will be explained and the sample which will be the small portion of a population selected in carrying out the study will be explained. The chapter will look at the instruments that will be used in the study for collecting data, and will discuss the validity of the research, the reliability of the research and also the ethics of the research.

The study employed a qualitative approach because the nature of the topic that focused on the impact on academic performance of children who live in CHF, a short period of time for data collection (4 months) made qualitative methodology the best suit. More so, the subjectivity of the study and the context-specific conceptualizations of strengths, coping mechanisms, resources and understandings of childhood can be best studied qualitatively.

The Covid-19 pandemic that came with restrictions in terms of public transport, social gatherings influenced the amount of time in the field further making the qualitative approach suit the study. Qualitative research is also flexible in terms of the method, tools and questions under investigation (Bryman, 2012) which further made it suitable for the study. Children who head families live in the context of the community and the environment around them. In terms of epistemology (what is and should be considered as admissible knowledge), the study employed a phenomenological view [“how individuals (children who head households) make sense of the world around them”) and perform academically, (Bryman, 2012). As Bryman (2012) articulates, the study relied on the fact that the experiences and coping mechanisms are subjective based on the unique interpretation and creation of meaning to events in the world around them. In other words, how children who head household interpret their coping and what they mean by coping. These meanings and interpretations were explored in-depth from the context of the participants (also known as participants in this particular study) qualitatively. According to Bryman (2012), studying social phenomena involves constructionism

(social phenomena is a result of changing social interactions). The social world around children changes as a result of interactions in the environment they live in. As people interact with each other and the environment around them, they create meaning and interpretations and to understand such, a researcher must view them from the point of view of the people (Bryman, 2012). The study collected data from the point of view of children who head households themselves and what interpretations they have of the life they go through. Qualitative nature of research also pointed to the fact that literature review was carried out during and after data collection while theories were generated after collection hence guide the analysis. These points to the inductive study in qualitative research that is concerned with theory as an “outcome of an investigation,” (Bryman, 2012).

3:2 Research Design

The study employed a case study design where an in-depth inquiry was carried out to explore the impact on academic performance of children living in CHF. Studying a case at a single point is cost-effective and takes limited time compared to longitudinal studies. This was in line with the fact that the master’s thesis period and resources are limited to carry out studies that take a long time (Bryman, 2012). Six (6) children who head households were studied as a case by conducting deeper scrutiny using qualitative data collection methods (in this case unstructured interviews) and tools. Case study designs entail “a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case” allowing the exploration of distinctive features of the case. Case studies are often associated with qualitative research and particularly those that employ methods such as unstructured interviews as it allows in-depth scrutiny which is all associated with this study (Bryman, 2012, p.66). In qualitative research and case studies in particular, the researcher is not entirely focused on generalization of the research findings but rather on the generation of theory (ies) from the study findings. The generation of theory from findings also relates to the inductive nature that this study undertook (Bryman, 2012). Children living in CHF families were studied as a peculiar case (Yin, 2014) to explore their academic performance. Exploratory research as associated with subjects is where less is known about them and in this case academic performance of children living in CHF is overlooked.

3:3 Research Approach

The research will use both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This method will be adopted to incorporate the changes in circumstances and field work activities as the study progresses. Mixed research approach helps in minimizing loopholes in data presentation and analysis (Kvale, 2014). Qualitative research cannot measure the level of achievement and this is the reason why quantitative research will be preferred in measuring performance of children living in CHF in Marondera district.

3:4 Population

Population is any group of individuals whom the researcher would like to generalize the results of the study. Bless and Smith (2012) views population as the interest group of people which the researcher wants to learn more about. A population is any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interests to the researcher. In this study, the research's population will involve Chakadini and Nagle House High schools in district Marondera of Mashonaland East Province. A total of 60 participants will be interviewed using interview questionnaires and also unstructured questions.

3:5 Sample and Sampling procedures

Chiromo (2020) defines a sample as the selected elements, people or objects chosen to participate in a study or simply put a sub set of the population under study. The research will use purposive sampling. This is a non-probabilistic approach used in qualitative researches. This non-probability sampling technique is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling. For example, children from different CHF from three schools will be selected on their willingness to participate in the research. Purposive sampling will be used to select information-rich participants. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) state that purposive sampling or judgmental sampling is a procedure that relies on the researcher's judgment regarding which of the elements within the target population should be part of the corpus. McMillan and Schumacher (2020) also indicate that in purposive or purposeful sampling, the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest.

Creswell (2018) suggests that on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population a judgment is to be made about who should be selected to provide the

best information to address the purpose of the research. According to Marlow (2015) sampling is necessary because we cannot include everyone in the study and the sample should be representative of the population. The three primary schools were also purposely selected because they are close to the researcher's residents therefore no excessive travelling expenses will be incurred. A total of 20 learners both female and male will be therefore selected. Participant's involved 10 boys and 10 girls aged between 14-18 years of age. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) suggest that a typical sample size for a phenomenological research is 5-25 individuals who have direct experience with the phenomenon being studied. In the present study it is however acknowledged that the researcher's judgment left other learners from child-headed households in other grades. And focus on those in O-LEVEL to grade two.

3:6 Instrumentation

Research instruments assisted the researcher to gather information needed. Best and Khan (2020) say research instruments are tools used to collect data for the research study. Leedy (2017) says research instruments are any data collecting device. One can say research instruments are tools used to collect data or information. In collecting data for this study, the researcher will use questionnaires, observation and interviews as the tools.

3:7 Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from the respondent (Kreuter, Presser and Tourangeau, 2018). Kothari (2022) says questionnaires are generally less expensive and do not take much time in the administration. In this research, questionnaires will be used to gather information from the school heads and O-LEVEL facilitators. There are numerous advantages of using a questionnaire to carry out a research. Polit and Hungler (2015) state some of the advantages. They are less expensive than other data collection methods, they reduce bias or faults which could be caused by the researcher's attitude, results are quickly achieved, they offer a considered and objective view on the research question. As time might be a constraint for the researcher, using questionnaires is best suited as they are not time consuming as other methods. However, Debois

(2016) suggests that dishonesty could be an issue to questionnaires; participants may not be truthful with their answers. Sometimes participants might give wrong answers before reading the questions fully. Some participants might also withhold information because they do not wish to give it for some reasons. Vast amounts of qualitative data and in the process build trust relationships with the participants. Interview sessions will be presented to a target sample of purposefully selected Secondary school heads of Chakadini and Nagle House High schools in Marondera district of Mashonaland East province. Structured interview guides will be employed and their usage will allow the researcher to generate information regarding specific questions and the topic. To achieve effective data generation during the interview process, the researcher will allow participants to continuously provide their responses for as long as they feel they have answers and the researcher will only respond by asking probing questions and follow-up questions to fill in the gaps that the researcher may not understand. Questions were posed one at a time in order to prevent confusion and maintain the participant's composure.

3:8 Data collection instruments

The researcher will use a triangulation of data collection instruments in order to facilitate the validation of data. Unstructured Interviews will be used by the researcher because they allow participants to provide qualitative data rich in detailed information in form of descriptions, elaborations and explanations.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The research used of four qualitative inquiry methods, unstructured interviews and key informant interviews, discussions and observation.

3.9.1 Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are in depth qualitative interviews with individuals who know what is going on in the community or at any given place and time (Neuman, 2022). They are loosely structured conversations with people who have specialized knowledge about the topic and expertise in the field. They allow the researcher to explore a subject in depth. In the cases of the performance HOD are headmaster to understand impact of child headed families on child development.

3.9.2 Unstructured interviews

The researcher shall use unstructured interviews to examine the effects of living in child headed families Marondera District, Mashonaland East province. According to Neuman (2022) these are in depth interviews conducted without an interview schedule. They are one to one interviews where an interviewer gains a lot from discussing issues of child performance with the interviewees. Unstructured interviews were employed because of their appropriateness in the case study of understanding child development in regards to child headed families; they provide families, opening up new dimensions to the phenomenon, and to secure vibrant, accurate, and inclusive clarifications of participants that are based on personal experience. The researcher interviewed the teachers.

Through unstructured interviews the researcher could observe the feelings and emotions of participants through facial expressions, gestures and other body language. Key informant interviews will be conducted with the district schools inspection office, CAMFED and other child protection groups in the district. To study these topics, open-ended questions shall be asked in order to gather as much as possible the views and perspectives of the participants. The elicitation interviewing process has strengths in reflecting on an increased understanding of the idiosyncrasies of IKS at various community structures. Broadly, qualitative research is also intended to empower the people in devising sustainable interventions through capturing their stories into child headed families directions.

3.9.3 Structured Interviews

A questionnaire interview will be involved in gathering information on the level of achievement by stakeholders in helping these child headed families in Marondera district. Creswell (2013) hints that 10 subjects would represent a reasonable sample size in phenomenological studies involving long in-depth interviews. With key informant in-depth interviews, theoretical sampling of participants was also utilized. Starks and Brown-Trinidad (2017:1375) define theoretical sampling as “recruiting participants with differing experiences of the phenomenon so as to explore multiple dimensions of the social processes under study.” A total of 13 key informant interviews will be interviewed.

3.9.4 Focus Group Discussions

For Neuman (2022), the aim of a discussion is to obtain in depth information on concepts, perceptions and ideas of a group. The researcher thus gains a deep understanding on the performance of the pupils from teachers and their views on critical issues affecting child headed families. A discussion provides appreciated and spontaneous information in a short time and at a relatively low cost. In this case, they were relevant in order to clarify the debates surrounding the challenges faced by pupils from child-headed families and how it affects their performance. The researcher organized O-LEVEL teachers in a discussion on how they view the academic performance of pupils from child headed families and how this background affects the performance.

3.9.5 Observation

Neuman (2022) argues that observation is the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day to day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting. Observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. This helps in seeing the most visible forms and nature of communication capturing every emotion and detail. It helps in the unveiling of often overlooked and generalized practices and conditions surrounding the people. It is thus important to document their activities in regards to issues of effectiveness. The researcher engaged with school teachers in O-LEVEL centres, learning and observing hoe the O-LEVEL pupils from child headed families perform, respond and participate in class. The researcher also observed the academic records of these pupils to assess the trends of their performance.

3.9.6 Desktop research

Quinch (2020) stresses that desktop research refers to the collection of secondary data, that which has already been collected. It means gathering and analysing information, already available in print or published on the internet such as published reports and statistical. The researcher therefore, will gather some of the important information from the library, books, journals, documents and the internet. Desktop is useful to the researcher in that it enabled her to find broader knowledge gaps which helped in shaping the current research and its objectives.

3.9.7 Sampling Techniques and Procedures

This study utilized the purposive sampling technique. Through purposive sampling, the researcher will select participants who are supposed to be rich with information. Purposive sampling, also recognized as a selective, judgmental or subjective sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling technique. Platoon (2022) alluded that the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich and in depth analysis which is related to the central issues understudy. The purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select participants who are known and judged to be the exact suitable and relevant sources of information needed on child development and O-LEVEL.

Execution of the aforesaid research methods is clarified by specifying the sampling methods, plan for interview schedules, and procedures used to identify participants. Two schools will be selected using probability sampling. This type of sampling as Creswell (2013) puts it that statically inferences are made. Instead, it is an approach where one can best study the problem under examination. DeCuir-Gunby (2018:129) describes sampling as "...the manner in which participants are accessed as well as the number of participants needed." In all the methods outlined above, it will be necessary to select participants who are knowledgeable of the subject matter. Participants will be chosen until the level of saturation where no new issues will be emerging. Johnson (2017) and Starks and Brown-Trinidad (2017) describe this level as 'theoretical saturation'.

3.9.8 Study Sample

According to Neumann (2022) sampling is a smaller or subset of the entire population in such a way that knowledge gained is a representation of the total population. Platoon (2022) argues that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling design in which the required information is gathered from a specific target or group of people. The research made use of the purposive sampling technique involving personal contacts to build up a sample of a group to be studied. Purposive sampling targets particular group of people in this case the school administration, teachers and community members. Sampling size is the actual number of subjects chosen as a sample to represent the population. In a total population of 54 possible participants, the research used 54 possible participants,

the research used a sample size 30 participants, 3 key informant interviews and 6 unstructured interviews and 21 other participants will be engaged in focus group discussions.

3.9.9 Methods and Procedures for Recording and Storing Data

The data capturing process in social geography generates contention (McKether *et al.*, 2019; Meyer and Avery, 2019; Alvesson, 2021; DeCuir-Gunby, 2021). Alvesson (2021) posits that the procedure is a non-technical view where there is no single recipe for doing it. In this study, unstructured, open-ended conversations with child headed family children and stakeholders will be audio taped to allow it to be transcribed later as cited in Mawere (2014). This method will supplement by taking interview notes in notebooks, in case the audio recording would give problems.

The people in the study area use Shona (Karanga) as a vernacular. This means Shona will be the language of communication in conducting field interviews, including capturing and recording interview statements. In order to manage the difficulty of simultaneously asking questions and writing responses, one of the research assistants will be assigned the responsibility to write down the notes.

3.10 Reliability

Reliability is defined as the consistency or repeatability of data.it includes dependability and precision and accuracy as a function of reliability. The better the reliability, the more accurate the results.

3.11 Validity

Validity is defined as a degree to which the results are truthful.it depends on the reliability and relevance of the test in question and therefore validity cannot exist without reliability and relevance but reliability and relevance can exist independently. Validity requires inference and understanding of the subject in question.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethics in social research relate to how “important values are in terms of how we treat research participants and the limits of our relations” (Bryman, 2012). Researchers need to be aware of ethical principles and be able to make informed decisions and choices about certain actions. As a concept, research ethics” refers to a complex set of values, standards and institutional schemes that help constitute activity (Platoon, 2022). Scindler and Nachmias, (2014) define ethics as norms or standards of behaviour and relationship with others. The goal of ethics in social research is to safeguard that no one is harmed or suffer adversely from the research activities. Ethics are thus important to this research because the issue of taxi operations deal with human choices, actions and standards and institutions, beliefs and historical developments, works and traditions, language, thought and communications which are different from one group to the other and one individual from another. I ensured that all research ethics are followed as guided by the supervisor and the study guide. These are followed and upheld in every way possible in the following ways. Being a child who heads a family and also the discussion about their views and experiences bring up emotions and memories that might harm them physically or emotionally (Bryman, 2012). I will ensure that the participants are not harmed by informing them about study intentions and the potential risks involved. Potential harm would have come up mentally if they are deceived about the study intentions and the protocol. I only ask and allow them to only share information they are comfortable with while respecting pauses for emotional stimulation. Ample time and space will be given to avoid harm as they will think through their experiences.

I sought permission from the traditional leadership. In addition, voluntary participation /informed consent is another ethical consideration that is detailing the nature, purpose, duration, procedure, benefits and possible risk of the research will be obtained from all participants, Schutt. (2019).The researcher will make sure that everyone will voluntarily give information. Some of them will even decide to withdraw and I will allow it. Some participants do not want to be exposed and would want their identity to be anonymous therefore it is the researcher`s duty to protect the privacy of participants who agree to provide you with data for your research. Therefore, pseudo names are going to be used for the sake of confidentiality. Thus the research will be guided by ethical considerations.

3.13 Trustworthiness

Connelly (2016) referred to trustworthiness of qualitative research as the degree of confidence in the data, the interpretation, and the methods used to ensure the quality of the study.

3.14 Confidentiality and anonymity

Since the research is about child development matters, the researcher ensured secrecy and confidentiality during the course of the researcher so that the participants/teachers feel comfortable and they are also allowed to have their names not mentioned. Where need be, the use of a consent form were done during the course of the research. The research will treat all the participants equally with respect and no regard for race and or creed.

Confidentiality and anonymity should be ensured with the participants to avoid the genesis of harm (Bryman, 2012). Extra “care” will be given to the identities and information provided by participants whereby their names are not used or even appear anywhere in the study results. Pennames will be given to seal their identities and the information they will provide is only for academic purposes.

3.15 Informed consent

Informed consent means that subjects are well informed about the study, the potential risks and benefits of their participation and that it is research, not therapy, in which they will participate. The researcher will approach the O-LEVEL centres and key informants with a letter from the school and identity card to authenticate the purpose of the research. The researcher at first informed the participants that the research would be carried out solely for academic purposes and not for personal or political or political. The consent requirement is intended to prevent invasions of personal integrity. It was essential that participants understand that participating in a research study is completely voluntary; they can withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to participate.

3.17 Respect

The research had unwavering respect for the participants, who in this case are the teachers. The researcher did not stigmatize or cast personal judgments. Moreover, the researcher respected the key informant interviewees who, in this study are the

Headmasters and HODs. The researcher treated every participant fairly and with favour and selective treatment.

3.18 Honesty

The researcher honestly reported data, results, methods and procedures and publication status. The researcher did not fabricate, falsify or misrepresent data. It was also fundamental need not to deceive colleagues, research sponsors, or the public and or supervisor. This is so because it helps develop academia and ensures the acquisition of valid information from the participants.

3.19. SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the research design, participants, and data collection methods for the study. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches will provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of living in child-headed families on the academic performance of children in Marondera District in Mashonaland East Province. The subsequent chapters will present the findings, discuss the results, and provide recommendations for interventions to support the educational success of children in child-headed families.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the analysis of data followed by a discussion of the research findings relative to the research questions that guided the study. This chapter will discuss the findings in response to the inquiry of the impact on academic performance for children living in child headed families. The findings are systematically presented on tally with addressing the objectives of the study. The names of the teachers will not be disclosed. The research was informed by HODS of both School A and B, one deputy head from the school in key informant interviews. Twenty other teachers participated in unstructured interviews having thirteen from school A and fourteen from school B.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ❖ What are the challenges faced by children in child-headed families?
- ❖ How do O-LEVEL learners from child headed families perform?
- ❖ What are the strategies that caregivers can employ in helping children from child headed families?
- ❖ What are the policies put in place for child headed families?

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION

This section will present the results that have been gathered from interviews, focus group discussions and observations on the impact on academic performance for children living in child headed families. The results will be presented thematically in coherence with research questions.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

This section provides biographical data which provide the context in which data was gathered and analysed. Its aim is to present, analyse and discuss findings of the impact on academic performance of children living in CHF. Questionnaires were distributed to twelve O-LEVEL practitioners, six from each school and they were identified by pseudo names given. T1A (teacher 1 from school A). HODSA, is a holder of a BED in Ordinary level and the rest are Diploma holders. In both schools, there is only one male O-LEVEL facilitator and others are females. Most of the O-LEVEL facilitator's age range is from 41-50; this implies that mature people are well versed with young learners. The researcher interviewed two HODs from school A and B (HODSA and HODSB), and School Heads gave the task to

HODs as they are the ones who are responsible for day to day running of O-LEVEL and A-LEVEL Department.

4.1.1 The Nature and Scope of Child Headed Families

Eight O-LEVEL B teachers from school B in a focus discussion collectively agreed upon the sentiment that a child headed family is a family whose day to day operations and mode of living depend on someone whom himself or herself is not an adult. They all collectively agreed that this may be caused by a lot of reasons but however affects the learning process of the child. When asked about what they understand about the nature and scope of child headed families, all teachers concurred that it might be of the following reasons presented hereinafter. The children may desire to stay together as a family rather than change school, friends, home and neighbourhood. They are said to resist attempts of relatives to foster them in a relative's household, fearing maltreatment or because the relative only agrees to foster younger siblings. Reports of physical and sexual abuse that took place within the families are the other issue that cause children to refuse to live with relatives.

One teacher added that orphaned children may be concerned about losing their inheritance rights to property and land if they are fostered. They may also be concerned about the possibility of neglect, abuse and exploitation by certain relatives so they resolve to stay as children alone. Urban children in particular may be concerned about their schooling being discontinued or deterioration in their standard of living should they be fostered by a poor rural relative. So instead, children may actively choose to stay living together in their own household rather than relocate to a poor, reluctant or abusive relative's home.

In three cases mentioned in a focus group discussion at school A, the households were established in the year before the last parental death. In such cases, households may be left by relatives to continue after death to a parent's terminal illness. It is common for older children to take over parenting roles during prolonged parental illness due to AIDS.

At school A, the issue of migration was raised, T 7 claimed that:

Some families may just be child headed because breadwinners, who are the adult parents, may have migrated to neighbouring countries in search of greener pastures so they leave children alone for fear that their remittances will be abused by a guardian; if they leave the children any.

HODSB said:

Migration and resettlement was raised and was seen to cause much problems in the academic performance of young children. Due to incapacitation, most parents send their children to stay near schools.

10-LEVEL and 2 grade 2 learners who stay with their 15 year old sister who is in form 4 claim that the sister came home late since she will go for extra lessons ,this implies that the learners will be alone hence are exposed to abuse, either physical or psychological.

The other family is led by a girl who is 16 years old; it is a family of five that include two O-LEVEL B learners. The head of the family outlined that; they face challenges of food that affect learners mostly. According to Maslow, food is one of the most important things a child should be provided with. In this case these children will be suffering due to lack of basic needs that may cause them to concentrate due to hunger and poor health.

4.2: RISKS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN FROM CHILD HEADED FAMILIES.

Lack of Educational opportunities.

Most of the child headed families are being forced to drop out of school and being not able to complete secondary education as a consequence of poverty or in order to comply with the responsibilities of household head which drives them to work. In a research carried by Moyana (2012) find out that in Kenya the main cause of school dropouts is heavy household duties, in Namibia the main being care duties, hunger and pregnancies often as a result of transaction sex. Chizororo (2020) says children from child headed families often perform poorly at school such that they cannot afford to continue schooling and have to spend their days working in order to survive. This shows that these children's main worry is the status of the

household budget constraints. These children also lack opportunities to undertake vocational training which might offer opportunities for a better future. This problem is attributed not just to lack of funds to pay school fees but also to the need for school uniforms, stationery, books and to overcome stigmatization. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) stipulates that all children have the right to Education.

The growing number of vulnerable children threatens the achievement of Education for All (EFA) which is one of the United Nations Millennium Developmental Goals to which Zimbabwe is also a signatory. The child headed family as a context of child development presents numerous challenges that are not favourable for academic performance. UNICEF (2021) says that children are being forced to take on responsibilities of the heads of the families when both parents succumb to the diseases and the extended family is not available to take on the responsibilities. Such children overwork themselves to support siblings, sometimes abandoning school to engage in labour that gives them a meal. In some cases if they cannot find a job they end up stealing food from neighbours. Growing up too fast in this way can be physically and emotionally damaging. Education supports their social development, future opportunities, identification and reduces vulnerability (Hughes 2022). Too many responsibilities shouldered on a child threaten his or her education as one tends to dropout in a bid to fend for the siblings thus posing a serious risk as it shuts all the benefits stated in the above statement which availed through education.

Lack of enough time to rest.

The absence of parents lead children in a child headed family to contend with household chores and look after the siblings since they played a dual role of a child and a parent NPA (2018) posits that children heading households provide for the physical care of their siblings. They should cook, wash, iron, clean, sweep the home and help other siblings with homework. They make sure that siblings wake up on time, eat before they go to school. Similarly Masondo (2016) asserts that child headed family carries a burden of roles much greater than in an adult-headed household. Child headed families suffer from disturbances like house cleaning, paying attention to siblings, cooking, washing of which interfere with school work. When these children go to school they are already tired and drained, will not

concentrate on school work and it will have a negative impact on their academic achievement. This might lead to absenteeism as well as school drop outs. In a study by Mkhize (2020) children in child headed families reported that it was stressful to carry out household chores for the family and make decisions on problems encountered. At such an age children are not yet cognitively developed enough to make mature decisions which result in experiencing fatigue, illness and academic failure.

Poverty

Poverty is one of the experiences of child headed families, as the children have limited means of generating income, such as piece jobs and vending to sustain their households therefore, become vulnerable. Magwa and Magwa (2016) showed that financial constraints impact negatively on both education and behaviour of child headed family. Moreover they lack decent meals and rest which result in deterioration of health, prostitution, early marriages and become prone to abuses, become malnourished, infected with diseases like HIV and AIDS, kwashiorkor among others. Once the health is affected retards the total development of the child in all domains.

UNICEF (2021) states that female children are being married at a young age prematurely facing challenges of early pregnancies and child bearing which has repercussions on their reproductive organs. Mokoena (2017) pointed out that crime is prevalent in child headed families as the families are poverty stricken which leads them to resort to criminal activities to support families, like stealing from neighbours or growing marijuana for sale out of desperation. Poverty drives children into illegal work at their young age and lack of qualifications may not allow them to be formally employed in paying jobs. It clearly shows that poverty expose them to serious risks in life making them more vulnerable.

Abuse and health problems

Child headed families also face different forms of abuse. UNICEF (2021) states that children fall under the care of abusive relatives when orphaned, some relatives adopt orphans simply to gain access to the assets of the deceased, not because they love the children and soon as they achieve their goal, they may continue looking after the children, they publicly made such commitments, but may abuse them

sexually, physically and verbally leading such children to leave their home for the streets. . Older people take advantage of such children especially girls and abuse them sexually in exchange of food. Sexual abuse can in turn lead to contracting diseases like HIV and AIDS and Sexual Transmitted Diseases which expose the children to further serious health problems. Campbell et al (2014) asserts that children from poor economic backgrounds are more likely to experience various health problems. UNICEF (2021) states that female children are being married at a young age thereby prematurely facing challenges of marriage, pregnancy and child rearing. Studies have shown that early birthing by children results in serious problems for both the young mother and the new-born child. This clearly shows that serious health problems can be encountered by child headed families as they will be a source of survival. Another poor health can arise due to their living circumstances with no proper housing and sanitation. A study carried by Grant (2017) shows that in Marondera District the dwellings occupied by child-headed households are found to be in very poor condition and dangerous in at least one third of cases with collapsed walls and leaking roofs. In addition, access to medical care is extremely limited due to the fact that children lack the means to buy medication or pay for transport to healthcare facilities.

Stigmatization and Emotional distress

NPA, (2018) states that we think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless but the poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. Similarly Grant (2017) posits that children living in child-headed households face stigmatization and discrimination such that they have reduced self-esteem and lack confidence to participate in class activities. They also have problems with respect and discipline in classroom since they lack parental supervision at home (Garbarino, 2019). In addition a study by Magwa and Magwa (2016) established that children in child headed families are often discriminated against in their very own society, as some parents may not allow their children to play with children from child headed families since they are viewed as outcasts having no one to guide them. Isolation or the social exclusion of these vulnerable children may lead to withdrawal from the society and cause psychological misery and feeling of being unwanted can have disastrous effects like suicide. NPA (2018) averred that children in the child headed family tend to suffer trauma as a result of parental loss during childhood. Such trauma may be increased due to rejection by

extended family members or the community as well as frequently experience social stigma.

4.3 Challenges faced by Learners from child headed families

Aligned to the main research question posed to the participants; the findings established domestics, financial and stigmatization as main challenges faced by learners from child headed families. The challenges clearly reflect their social dis-empowerment and devastating experiences affecting their academic learning and behaviour in general.

In an interview with the HODS of school B, she said

Parental involvement provides a support network for children, which is particularly important when they face academic hurdles or other challenges with friendships or extracurricular activities. It also means you also know where your child's education journey is going and are able to be part of the highs and lows along the way. As a result, children whose parents stay involved are more likely to have higher self-esteem, be disciplined, have more self-motivation and tend to achieve better grades, regardless of their ethnic, social or racial backgrounds and without parental support, there will be a challenge in achieving these.

Responding not the same question of challenges faced by learners from child headed families, both HODS from school A and school B added the same sentiment that in trying to help these vulnerable children, the administration and SDA engage in meetings where by either community members and teachers donate food, stationary and clothing for these learners. At times, they even engage some churches like Catholics which through its Helping Hand initiative donate books and uniforms and even school fees for orphans and other abandoned learners.

One challenge faced by child headed families affecting their school learning as noted by the study was social exclusion. The children experience discrimination in the society and at school. The study established that children in child headed families are discriminated against in their own society. The words of an Interviewee, a teacher from school B identified as T3, reflects views of most participants on this issue: Most parents hesitate to let their children associate with

children from child headed families as they view these children as dirty, beggars, prostitutes since they have no one to guide them.

All participants in a focus group discussion of 7 O-LEVEL A teachers at school A pointed out those learners from child headed families are financially challenged. It was established that because of a disintegrated extended family safety net and inadequate material support from the government, children from child headed families are vulnerable to poverty. They have very limited means of generating income to sustain their households. Teachers, parents and learners pointed out that financial constraints impact negatively on both the education and behaviour of children from child headed families. One teacher from school B identified as T5 had to concur with those of school A and had this to say:

Children in child headed families have many unfulfilled basic needs such as providing food, paying fees. As a result of this some of them ended up missing school or completely dropping out trying to work and provide for the family. Girls especially can engage in prostitution so as to earn a living.

From the focus group discussions held, one at school A it was also established that lack of economic capital leads to learners being unable to purchase textbooks and uniforms thereby affecting their academic performance. These were the findings from school B:

T1;

These children face the challenge of being neglected by their friends because their friends believe that they are orphans because their parents died of COVID-19.

T9:

Yes the other children thus think that these children have the virus as well so they discriminate against them.

T10;

Another challenge faced by learners from child headed families is lack of books and stationary, and some of them do not even pay school fees, and it becomes difficult for them when they are expelled from school.

T11 added in support of Teacher 3 that:

As a result of financial problems children in child headed families end up dropping out of school. Some end up being thieves and prostitutes so as to provide for the family

T12 added that;

Sometimes these children come with torn clothes and their diet is below standard and in worst cases they don't even come with food to school.

T13 brought about another issue and he said;

Learners from child headed families are not always shunned by their peers, sometimes they just isolate themselves from other learners and it's probably because they feel out of place and fail to fit.

T7 Expanded on the point said;

This is a major challenge because interaction is very important for child development and play is required for wellness of the child.

One challenge imposed by growing up in child headed families affecting the academic performance of learners established by the study was household chores. Several participants pointed out that heads of households take up many domestics' chores such as cleaning the house, paying attention to siblings, gardening. One teacher identified as T26 quoted that a parent once said;

Children who head families should not take bulk of house work such as sweeping, cooking, washing and this does interfere with school work. When they go to school they will be tired and will not concentrate.

From the observation made by the researcher, it was evident that learners who come from child headed families had fewer books, some not even covered and their clothing was not in good and comfortable condition. Half of the sample identified performed relatively fair and only one was exceptional but the rest had challenges in obtaining good grades. Most of them did come with food to eat not a balanced diet meal for a learner of such age. It is also critical to note that they participated less in class but their behaviour was relatively well.

4.2: MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Teachers understood well what child headed families are:

- ❖ Learners from child headed families perform poorly and behave differently in class.
- ❖ Learners from child headed families face various socio economic challenges.
- ❖ Teachers try to assist learners from child headed families with books and stationary.
- ❖ Learners from child headed families are not prioritized by the school development association.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of this research trying to understand and investigate more on the responses given and it also does this through cross comparisons with other studies and weighing the findings against the theoretical framework. It also unpacks further on the various issues raised like isolation, parental involvement, COVID-19, HIV/AIDS and discrimination among others. This discussion will be a systematic, thorough and detailed review of existing literature on the topic, designed to address the questions of the topic.

It was discovered by the researcher that child headed families are usually in poverty. This may be because they have no breadwinner who is formally employed to help them with their financial needs. Mokoena (2017) points out that crime is prevalent in child headed families as the families are poverty stricken which leads them to resort to criminal activities to support families. Children, especially girls as echoed by Pillay (2012) may face risk of ending in child prostitution in trying to provide for family. This can be evidenced by T7's claim that:

Some families may just be child headed because the breadwinners, who are the adult parents may have migrated to South Africa or neighbouring countries so they leave children alone in fear that their remittances will be abused by guardians; if they leave the children with any.

Teachers also reflected that the learners from child headed families do not really understand what their older siblings do for a living. This poses a greater risk of prostitution and other risky ways to earn a living. The AIDS and COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rapid increase in the number of double and maternal orphans. Previous studies have shown AIDS to be the underlying cause of most recent parental deaths in one area where his study was carried out(Foster et al.2019) in a majority of these households, their establishment was associated with the second parental death which was usually that of the mother. The rest of the other children tended to associate the deaths of their parents with HIV/AIDS and they believe the orphans are also suffering from the disease. The tasks that they perform in order to support their siblings meant that at times they could not go to school. Lack of parental involvement becomes a major setback. This is typical of HODS of school B remarks, she said:

Parental involvement provides a support network for children, which is particularly important when they face academic hurdles or other challenges with friendships or extra-curricular activities. It also means you know where your child's education journey is going and are able to be part of the highs and lows along the way. As a result, children whose parents stay involved are more likely to have higher self-esteem, be disciplined ,have self-motivation and tend to achieve better grades, regardless of their ethnic, social or racial backgrounds and without parental support, her will be a challenge in achieving these.

Adolescents learn responsibility, effective coping mechanisms and nurturing skills in this situation (Grodny 1994:1 Levine 2019) were parents to die suddenly and unexpectedly, adolescence would have had no opportunity to take over care-giving responsibilities for younger children forcing relatives to foster children. Similarly, if there were no adolescent caregivers in the household, relatives might feel forced to foster a relative orphans. This death of parents is usually associated with COVID-19 hence other parents will desist their children from playing with HIV/AIDS/COVID-19 orphaned learners. This can be reflected in T3, reflection that;

Most parents hesitate to let their children associate with children from child headed families as dirty, beggars, or prostitutes since they have no one to guide them.

From focus discussions with teachers at school B it also emerged that heavy household duties lead to school absenteeism and eventually dropping out of school. In the same vein Masondo (2016) and Kabede (2015) also point out that children from child headed families carry a burden of family roles much greater than children in adult headed households. These responsibilities are considered developmentally inappropriate and lead to disruptions in education. In a study by Mkhize (2020) children in child headed families reported that it was stressful to carry out household roles for family and making decisions. This was also revealed by T20 quote that:

Children who head families shoulder the bulk of housework such as sweeping, cooking, washing and this does not interfere with their school work. When they go to school they will be tired and will not concentrate.

The preference of many parents should be incapacitated is that their children be looked after by a same generation relative such as an aunt (Foster *et al.*, 2014) but many uncles and aunts are reluctant to foster relatives' children, possibly because of their concern that fostering relatives' orphans would result in a reduction of their own and fostered children, they would tend to show preference towards the former. This course of action might lead to accusations against them of neglecting fostered children in their care by community members. Rather than risk such censure and in order to protect their own children, relatives may refuse to accept orphaned children into their family. Subsequently children from child headed families end up without basic needs as reflected by T7 that;

Children in child headed families have many unfulfilled basic needs such as providing food, paying fees. As a result of this, some of them end up missing school, completely dropping out, trying to work and provide for the family. Girls especially can engage in prostitution so as to earn a living.

It was also established that even at school, children from child headed families face negative attitudes from both teachers and peers. Teachers were said not to have empathy for these children. Peers were also said to mock children from child headed households for example when they are chased out of school due to non-payment of fees or wearing poor clothes. Pillay (2012) also says children face the problem of social exclusion when teachers fail to understand their situation they are in. Teachers, for example, tend to punish these kids for being late and not finishing their homework without considering the reason for their behaviour. As a result of the social exclusion, feelings of esteem strongly related to competence which leads to greater motivation and involvement in school are thwarted thereby affecting academic performance.

In some cases, relatives may consider themselves free of responsibility towards orphans, even though they are closely related to the children. Relatives may not recognize the legitimacy of orphaned children, if, for example, a sister had children but was never married or if bride price was never paid to her brothers; in such circumstances they may feel justified in not providing support to her orphaned children after her death. Some relations have had little contacts with a relative's family before the parents' death.

With families sometimes being separated by large distances, regular communication between family members may be difficult; as a result, close ties that formerly existed between family members have become weaker. Lack of assistance by relatives to child headed households may be due to poor communication, with relatives simply not knowing about the desperate situations being faced by orphaned children living in difficult circumstances. Households which are separated by large distances from their relatives such as migrant families and foreigners who have infrequent contact with their extended families are especially vulnerable in this regard (SafAIDS 2014). Barriers such as national borders make it especially difficult for extended families to fill their traditional roles of providing social support in times of difficulty.

Households headed by children or adolescents thus represent a coping mechanism in response to the impact of AIDS on communities. Where these households exist, there are often relatives living nearby who are providing material support,

supervision and regular visits; such relatives to bring up their families to cope with the burden of orphans and prevent the breakdown of the extended – family safety net by encouraging the establishment of volunteer based visiting programs to at risk families, and by channelling essential material support to destitute families. These are initiatives made to address what T10 reflected;

Another challenge faced by learners from child headed families is the lack of books and stationary, and some of them do not even pay school fees and it becomes a difficulty for them when they are expelled.

The challenges experienced by children in child headed families clearly reflect their social dis-empowerment and devastating experiences of poverty, which are further exacerbated by the lack of adequate social support from their families and communities (Van Dijk & Van Driel 2012). They then become low, and isolate themselves at school. This occurs with T13 statement;

Learners from child headed families are not always shunned by their peers, sometimes they just isolate themselves from other learners and it's probably because they feel out of place and fail to fit.

While much focus has been given to the challenges of child headed families, one should also be cognizant of the fact there are several children in such households who display strong resilience (Lethale & Pillay 2013), so no one should be aware of the danger of limiting one's perceptions of these children as being only vulnerable (Kessi 2021; Meintjies & Giese 2020). Such perceptions lead to sensitive debates among researchers as to whether the concept of child headed families could be detrimental to children. For example, Cheney (2020) argues that viewing children from child headed families as vulnerable may unintentionally create a sense of dependency and entitlement for relief aid to address the rising pathology. However they need interaction explained by T7 In the question of challenges that;

This is a major challenge because interaction is very important for child development and play is required for the wellness of the individual.

This may actually inhibit the design and implementation of culturally relevant programme that could enhance the strengths and well-being of children. Another view may emphasize the vulnerability of such children, arguing that not doing so could lead to undermining and minimizing the plight of child headed families. Arguments such as these certainly indicate a need for the problematisation of child headed families.

Inevitably, in South African societies, one would see people from poor communities constantly exposed to deprived environmental circumstances, often characterized by economic hardship, unemployment, food insecurity, communicable diseases, poor quality education and much more. Inadvertently, all of these characteristics contribute to the escalating number of child headed families; one may actually be treating the symptom and not the real problem. There is need to emphasize systematic interventions that tackle the root of oppression and discrimination of child headed families. Hence government policies and systems need to be structurally and strategically directed at poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor.

4.4: INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Government initiatives

Several frameworks have been adopted and implemented in Zimbabwe in a bid to help children from child headed families these include The National Plan for Action on orphans and vulnerable children (NPA 2018), UN Convention of the rights of the child (2020), World summit for children (2022). The NPA (2018) mentions the children's protection and Adoption Act [Chapter 5:06] and the Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy of 2020 as legal acts that serve to protect children who become vulnerable. Zimbabwe has a broad-based, multi-sectorial consultative approach which includes key government ministries, The United Nations, international and national non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society (NPA2018).

The extended family was the traditional social security system and its members were responsible for the protection of the vulnerable, care for the poor and sick and the transmission of traditional social values and education. In recent years, changes such as labour migration, the cash economy, demographic change, formal

education and Westernization have occurred and have weakened the extended family. Labour migration and urbanization have led to a reduction in the frequency of contact with relatives and encouraged social and economic dependence; possessions are perceived as personal property and no longer belong to the extended family. Increases in life expectancy and family size mean it is now not possible for an extended family of three or four generations to reside together; the diminishing availability of land makes it difficult for large families to be economically independent through subsistence agriculture. Education about social values is likely to be obtained from schools and interactions of children with their peers rather than through traditional mechanisms, which lessened the ability of older people to exert social control over the younger generation.

The Families, Orphans and Children under Stress (FOCUS) Program was established in 2015 by Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) in Mutare, Zimbabwe. The program is implemented by local churches in four rural areas of Manicaland province with a population of some 35000 people; orphan households were identified by 88 volunteer women living in villages in program areas and those families in need were given priority for regular visiting; during 2014, an average of 1398 supportive visits per month were made to 798 needy orphan households. In the city of Mutare, with a population of about 160000, FACT supervises a church home care program using 30 volunteers with approximately 500 visits a month to some 200 clients and a FOCUS program with 10 volunteer visitors.

However, most of these households had nowhere to turn for emotional and social support to help the children cope with the problems they face. This was identified by virtually all of the community participants as an area where they and others in the community could do more. There appeared to be a lack of confidence about how to go about this and a general sense of helplessness. It was also noted that the children themselves were showing real signs of trauma and stress as a result of their situation. Although they were apparently coping on a daily basis on a superficial level, they were losing their social energy, and hope for their future. Very few of the children interviewed felt that they would have a better future and many did not see any reason to work hard to improve their lives.

Some have faced the problem of being forced to drop out of school and not be able to complete secondary education and lack of opportunities to undertake vocational training which might offer an opportunity for a better future. The problem is attributed not just to a lack of funds to pay school fees but also to the need for school uniforms, stationery, and books and to overcome stigmatization.

Although these are common problems faced by many orphaned children in a range of different circumstances, it is felt that child headed households are much more vulnerable and at risk because they do not have the material and personal resources to cope with the problems that they encounter on a daily basis. Many of the heads of these families do not have the skills or knowledge to ensure that they are living healthy lives and to protect them from exploitation.

In addition, children living in commercial farm communities do not have access to the traditional support system that is in existence in communal areas. The economic and social safety nets such as the extended family and traditional community leadership structures that exist in other areas are not present and the prevalence of non-formalized marriages often means that men lack any sense of responsibility for the children from any relationships they develop. As a result, the extended family does not acknowledge any responsibility for children from these marriages. Furthermore, the current economic and social situation in Zimbabwe means that the support structures do exist for these children under severe stress and in danger of disintegrating. The extended family and community in general are facing severe economic hardships, food shortages and social upheavals. In these circumstances there is nothing to spare to give a non-family child headed households.

The right to education has been met through the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) which is aimed at helping orphans and vulnerable children with their schooling needs. However the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), which is an arm of the government pays only a quarter of the children's fees (Gubwe *et al.*, 2015). It also does not cater for O-LEVEL learners. This clearly shows that the assistance is not enough and also due to lack of funds and mismanagement on the part of administrators not all children that deserve the support are getting the support they are entitled to receive. UNICEF has interjected

with food program, resources like stationary and O-LEVEL kits. Social welfare has assisted with identification of such children in the community and taken them to homes where they are catered for. In addition, supplementary Feeding Program have been adopted in all schools as a way of meeting the children's nutritional needs.

The statutory instrument 106 of 2015 also states the needs of children to be given a hot meal for those at O-LEVEL centres which also show the government's commitment in improving the lives of all children. In addition, World Food Program donates food to the government for distributions among schools, although this does not meet adequate nutritious diet plan on its own but requires additional food that schools lack funding to provide. The NPA (2018) states that the government assist vulnerable families with basic living costs through programs like Public Works Funds, Cash Transfer to Vulnerable Groups, Public Assistants Fund, Drought Relief, and Assisted Medical Treatment Order.

The National Strategy on Children in Difficult Circumstances is another government initiative through which government provides resources to local authorities, which collaborate with other stakeholders to reach out to children in difficult circumstances in the community settings. These program work in partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs), Faith-based Organization's (FBOs), and NGOs (NPA 2018) and therefore they cannot be fully monitored and have their own expectations to meet.

Laws have also been enforced that guide against child- labour abuse and exploitation as stipulated in The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013). These laws are enforced by inter-ministerial collaborations like ministry of home affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Justifies Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. There are also Victim Friendly Units and Victim Friendly Courts which help in case of child abuse by facilitating fair judgement and rehabilitation of the victims; in addition, Child line Zimbabwe plays a crucial role in protecting children from being abused.

Community initiatives

Bronfenbrenner's theory explains the influence of different systems in child development among these systems there is community (Grant, 2017). The community plays a crucial role in identification and monitoring the welfare of orphans and vulnerable children. The community could offer moral support to the child-headed households and educate them in running income generating projects successfully and to ensure that material support is made available by government and non-governmental organizations. Community should also offer guidance, advice and teach these children about life skills through workshops. Organizations like Scripture Unions, World Vision and the Red Cross have been the top in helping out orphans and vulnerable children with the help of community members. Community foster homes have also been established for example Alpha cottages in Masvingo, Well-wishers also offer support through means of donations to orphans in their communities which has improved the livelihood of these children. However, these homes are not enough to cater for all the orphans and vulnerable children.

This study has analysed the impact on academic performance for children living in child headed families. These families may erupt due to death and mainly caused by HIV and AIDS, Divorces, COVID -19 and migration. Challenges and risks have also been stated which include lack of education, poverty, abuse and health problems which can result in inter-generational poverty if interventions are not implemented. Multi sectoral intervention strategies have been outlined as intervention strategies to improve academic performance for children living in child headed families. Shortfalls like lack of supervision in administering policies and initiatives like BEAM and shortages of resources that meet the population of the orphans and vulnerable children have been highlighted as key barriers in implementation of the government and other stakeholders' efforts in supporting children with child headed families. It is also apparent that caring for orphans should not be government only or the extended families but it calls for collaborative efforts from all societal members.

A substantial amount of research has shown that many children from poor families have inferior education (Munoz, 2012), poor health care (Huston, 2021), and fewer job opportunities when they become adults (Holzer *et al.*, 2017). Such research further emphasizes the need for government intervention in the early education and

care Hunger found to be prevalent among learners from child headed families. Germann (2015) also reported severe food insecurity in child headed households in Marondera urban, Zimbabwe and that the children sometimes went to bed hungry. Financial constraints and inadequate food hand-outs expose these children to hunger. Hungry children tend to have lower academic performance because they cannot concentrate in class. Incessant hunger leads to ill health and malnutrition (UNICEF, 2020) which can affect school attendance and participation in class. When learners fail to attend school or participate in class because of hunger they miss concepts which are crucial for academic performance of children.

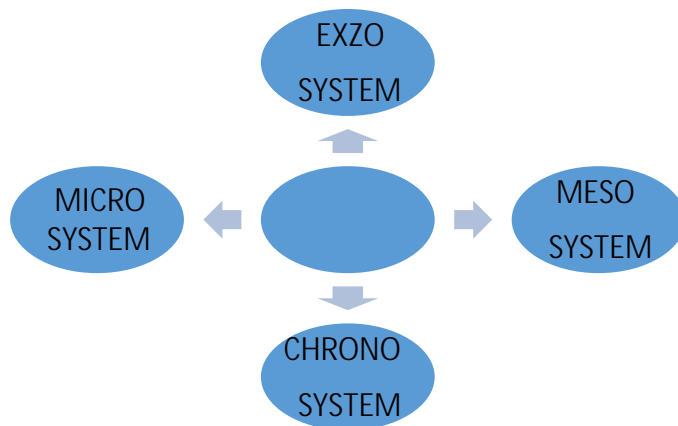


Figure 1: Children's environment Source.

The researcher developed and adopted the above analogy that puts the child as a family head in the Centre and moves from the child to the environment around the child that entails systems and subsystems. In the results chapter, it is noted how children indeed relied on the environment and the multiple systems to enhance their coping though is compromised.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the results obtained from the study, focusing on the academic performance of children living in child-headed families in Marondera District. The factors influencing academic performance, the experiences and perspectives of the children, and the recommended supportive interventions were presented and interpreted. The chapter also discussed the impact of child head families on performance and behaviour. The discussion also included cross comparative tenets associated with child headed families. The findings contribute

to the existing knowledge on child-headed families and provide insights for developing targeted interventions to improve the educational outcomes of children in such family structures. The next chapter will provide a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for future research and interventions.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter revisits the research question, the aim of the study and the research goals. The chapter also gives summary, conclusions and recommendations made from the research journey. It will conclude on critical and controversial issues, summarize the whole purpose and insignificance of the study and ultimately provide recommendations in areas which may require to be attended. The chapter is a closeout of the entire research, and it gives a reflection of the knowledge gap discovered as the research unfolded.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

These types of households are a growing phenomenon in many African countries and are increasingly being recognized as household structures. However, in the absence of an economically active adult, orphans living in these households experience numerous challenges. The socio-economic challenges in Zimbabwe could further exacerbate the conditions of child-headed households. This article discusses findings of an ethnographic inquiry on orphans living in child- and youth-headed households in Zimbabwe. We identified parentification, lack of income and social isolation as risk factors affecting quality of life. Social capital and agency were identified as protective factors enhancing children's quality of life. Our findings suggest that orphans living in child- and youth-headed households are not only victims but are also resilient and can exercise agency.

Therefore, interventions to support this vulnerable group should build on their existing resilience and agency.

The research had four objectives which were to analyse the nature and scope of child headed families, to analyse the performance of an O-LEVEL learner from a child headed family and to analyse intervention strategies to analyse intervention strategies available for child headed families. The research conducted qualitative research and made use of focus group discussions, observation and interviews. The research employed various ethics including the use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The research introduced the topic in chapter one, defined the problem and elaborated on the justification of the study and its relevance to various discourses.

Chapter 1 focused on the background of the study, the research objectives and research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitation were explored and also definition of terms in the context.

Chapter 2 focused on the different dynamics and studies carried out in the discourse of child headed families and the impact on academic performance, with particular emphasis on the O-LEVEL pupils. Various issues on the nature and scope of O-LEVEL pupils and O-LEVEL performance were unpacked, discussed and reviewed. The different dimensions to the impacts of child headed families and the predicaments associated with parental absence were also reviewed in this chapter. The chapter also reviewed the theoretical framework to be used in this research study.

Chapter 3 explored the various issues concerning the methodology of the research, its design and the data gathering methods and sampling procedures of the research. The chapter elucidated limitations and delimitation of the study and also examined how the researcher comes up with the population to be interviewed, the research techniques to be used to gather information and perceptions of the people on various issues concerning the impact of child headed families on the performance of O-LEVEL learners. The chapter also reflected on the ethics to be considered during the course of the study and the conduct required. Mentioned in the chapter as well was the nature and scope of methodology used in the research and a

summarized narrative of its relevance to the problem and knowledge gap being addressed by the objectives.

Chapter 4 reflected on the presentation of the findings gathered and provided a detailed analysis of these findings and subsequently reached this chapter to provide an academic conclusions and recommendations. This chapter looked at the findings that were gathered from the interviews, focus group discussions and observation. The findings were presented in themes which summarized the research questions and the nature of response given. The chapter also discussed the impact of child head families on academic performance. The discussion also included cross comparative tenets associated with child headed families.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

In conclusion, the improvement of the welfare of children in CHF requires a genuine involvement of stakeholders at all levels (family, community, district and national levels). This means involving children from their world views, experiences and environments. This is possible through strong state capacity in terms of laws that give space, voice and audience to children. It also entails the quality of the governments to implement programmes that affect child welfare (Lansdown, 2019; Rothstein, 2021; Fukuyama, 2014). Social workers being agents of change must develop skills to meaningfully engage children and other stakeholders in the realization of meaningful and contextualized child welfare. Children further need an enabling environment (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2019) for their functioning. Therefore, it is imperative to note that such an environment can be understood when there is a focus on the environment of children and how it affects their coping. As indeed noted by Gitterman (2019) social work practice in the life model should focus to create a fit between people and their environments. Social work practitioners stand as a pillar in the life course as they work with individuals to manage life transitions and be able to tap into the resources in the environment (Teater, 2020).

Based on the findings from this research, it can be concluded that the child headed families as a context of child development present numerous challenges that are

not favourable for academic performance. The lack of parental presence and guidance had various effects on the children heading the families. These children take on many household tasks which are demanding and age appropriate. Due to financial constraints the learners from child headed families succumb to criminal activities, and prostitution to make ends meet. Children are often impoverished, driving them into work and preventing them from attending.

Isolation and discrimination of children from child headed families by society, teachers and peers lead to development of negative self-concepts and erratic school attendance. Thus, children living in homes where there are no parents are extremely vulnerable. They are confronted by a multitude of difficulties in their everyday lives which affect the school work. Regardless of the formidable socio economic challenges posed by the child headed household, the academic performance to hard work which they claim is motivated by their desire to use education to change their poor socio economic status. It was however noted that the academic performance of these learners was much better before they assumed household headship roles.

Head households, they were able to identify the composition of their environment that entails a range of systems, resources and the source of resilience all paramount for their functioning and coping with adversities. I have put the figure below to illustrate the environment around children who head households in Marondera District.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study established that child-headed household (CHH) learners faced a myriad of challenges both at home and at school that impacted negatively on their academic performance. The researcher recommends that schools should seriously consider the impediments that are faced by CHH learners and should come up with well-articulated policies since there is now a significant increase in the number of learners coming from such families. The study further recommends the introduction of viable projects for CHH learners at school and at home in small groups to reduce poverty.

Based on the above conclusions, it is recommended that:

Teachers should be able to assess and understand the different backgrounds of children and stop labelling, discrimination and stereotyping these children. They should love and care for child headed household since they are in loco- parenting.

Organizations that assist children should not only on material needs of such children but also on their psycho-social wellbeing through provision and counselling

Learners from child-headed household need material support as well as guidance and counselling services. These services assist them to cope with isolation, stigma and discrimination which they are subjected to because of poverty. Guidance and counselling services also give the children hope for the future and enable them to develop to their full potential.

The ministry of labour and social welfare and that of primary and secondary should identify child headed families and support them and try to reconcile them with their relatives.

The research recommends that the School Development Association should put aside a budget specifically to meet the substantial and incidental needs for education for learners who come from child headed families.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher suggests that;

- (i) A similar study should be carried out in a rural school in urban settings to establish the dynamics of child headed families, academic performance and behaviour which would create a good platform for comparison with the findings of the current study.
- (ii) Research should be carried out to discover the impact of parental and community involvement alone on the performance of the pupils in both rural and urban settings.

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APPENDICES

Title: An Exploration of the Academic Performance of Children Living in Child-headed Families

Appendix 1

Interview guide for the teachers

I am inviting you to participate in my academic research study conducted as a prerequisite for the attainment of my bachelor of Education student in Chemistry at Bindura University of Science Education. The purpose of this study is to analyse the impact of child headed families on the performance of O-LEVEL learners. The information you provide will at all times be treated as confidential and will not be made available to any entity or third party. Your name or your institution will only be linked to your contributions to this study upon your consent. The data obtained from this interview will be used for academic research purposes only.

ACADEMIC
QUALIFICATIONS
(LEVEL) :

ZJC
O-
A

PROFESSIONAL
QUALIFICATION

Certificate in Education
O-LEVEL
Diploma in Education
O-LEVEL

Bachelor of Education Degree O-
LEVEL

--

Master of education Degree O-
LEVEL

--

EXPERIENCE
TEACHING O-LEVEL

1-5
6-10
10 AND
ABOVE

CLASSES
TAUGHT
(LEVEL

O-A
O-B
A-A



SECTION B

Q1. What are the teacher's perceptions on child headed family?

a. What is a child headed family?

b. Do you have learners from child headed families?

Why should parents be involved in O-LEVEL activities at the school?

Q2. What is the teachers' perceptions on learners on learner's development and parental involvement?

a. What is child development?

b. what is the role of the parent in child development?

c. How child do headed families affect learner's performance?

Q3. What challenges are faced by the learners from child headed families?

a. What types of challenges are faced by the learner?

b. What are the causes of these challenges?

c. How can these challenges be solved?

d. -----

Appendix 2: Interview guide for the teachers

I am inviting you to participate in my academic research study conducted as a prerequisite for the attainment of my bachelor of Education student at Bindura University of Science Education. The purpose of this study is to analyse the impact of child headed families on the performance of O-LEVEL learners. The information you provide will at all times be treated as confidential and will not be made available to any entity or third party. Your name or your institution will only be linked to your contributions to this study upon your consent. The data obtained from this interview will be used for academic research purposes only.

SECTION A: Biographical Data

SEX	M	<input type="checkbox"/>	F	<input type="checkbox"/>
AGE:	21 - 30	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	31 - 40	<input type="checkbox"/>		
31	41 - 50	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	51 and above	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**ACADEMIC
QUALIFICATIONS
(LEVEL)**

ZJC
O
A

**PROFESSIONAL
QUALIFICATION**

Certificate in Education
O-LEVEL

--

Diploma in Education
O-LEVEL

--

Bachelor of Education Degree O-
LEVEL

--

Master of education Degree O-
LEVEL

--

**EXPERIENCE
TEACHING O-LEVEL**

1-5
6-10
10 AND
ABOVE

**CLASSES
TAUGHT
LEVEL**

O-A
O- B

A-A
A-B

SECTION B

- Q1. What are the HODS perceptions on child headed family?
a. What is a child headed family?

b. Which privileges are offered for child headed families?

c. What is the importance of parental involvement in O-LEVEL learning?

Q2. What are the perceptions on learner performance and child headed families?

a. What is effective learner's performance?

b. How child do headed families affect learner's performance?

c. How does parental involvement affect child development?

d. How do you assist child headed families to enhance their learning?

Q3. Which is the role of school development association on learners from child headed families?

a. What are the challenges faced by learners from child headed families?

Appendix 3: Focus group discussion guide for teachers

I am inviting you to participate in my academic research study conducted as a prerequisite for the attainment of my bachelor of Education student Bindura University of Science Education. The purpose of this study is to analyse the impact of child headed families on the performance of O-LEVEL learners. The information you provide will at all times be treated as confidential and will not be made available to any entity or third party. Your name or your institution will only be linked to your contributions to this study upon your consent. The data obtained from this interview will be used for academic research purposes only.

Focus group discussion guide for teachers

a. What is a child headed family

b. What is the role of the parent in the learner's performance?

c. How are parents involved in child development?

d. What challenges have you faced in fostering effective parental and community involvement?

e. How does the state of the family affect child development?

f. What are the challenges faced in engaging parents/relatives/ guardians?

What do you suggest the administration should do for children from child headed families? What should be done by the teachers to improve the performance of learners from child headed families?

Appendix 4: Observation guide

Section A

Performance indicators	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good
Classroom participation					
Report marks					
Classroom behaviour					
Resilience and adaptability					
Time management					

GENERAL COMMENT

Section B

Availability of performance necessities	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Books and stationary					
Clothing					
Packed foods					

GENERAL COMMENT

