BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATIONFACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

The socio-economic challenges experienced by children as a result of parental migration to the diaspora: A case study of ward 6, Maramba in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district.

BY

RUMBIDZO CHAKUWANA

B210252

2025

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF SOCIAL SCIENCE HONOURS DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.

SUPERVISOR

MR L.T SHONIWA

DECLARATION RELEASE FORM

I Rumbidzo Chakuwana pursing a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work, am conscious that academic dishonesty undermines scholarly integrity and the principles of ethical practice in Social Work field. Therefore, I affirm that the work presented is truthful:

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b) The research was implemented with adherence to the ethical principles of the Social Work profession.

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I certify that I have supervised CHAKUWANA RUMBIDZO (B210252B) for the research entitled *The socio-economic challenges experienced by children as a result of parental migration to the diaspora: A case study of ward 6, Maramba in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district,* in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Social Work (HBScSW) and recommended that it proceeds for examinations.

Supervisor

Name……………………………Signature…………… Date……………………………
Leeroy Tafadzwa Shoniwa 　　　　　　　　　　　　　 20 June 2025

Chairperson of Department Board of Examiners.

The department board of examiners is satisfied that this dissertation report meets the examination requirements and I therefore recommend to the Bindura University to accept a research project by CHAKUWANA RUMBIDZO (B210252B) for the research entitled *The socio-economic challenges experienced by children as a result of parental migration to the diaspora: A case study of ward 6, Maramba in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district,* in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Social Work.

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4

DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, whose unwavering love, guidance, and support have been the driving force behind my academic journey.

PLAGIARISM REPORT

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MARKING GUIDE: UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION	Possible Mark	Actual Mark
Abstract	**10**	
Background to the study- what is it that has made you choose this particular topic? Include objectives or purpose of the study	**20**	
Statement of the problem	**10**	
Research questions	**15**	
Assumptions	**5**	
Significance of the study	**15**	
Limitations of the study	**5**	
Delimitations of the study	**5**	
Definition of terms	**10**	
Summary	**5**	
Total	**100**	
Weighted Mark	**15**	

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Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction- what do you want to write about in this chapter?	**5**	
Conceptual or theoretical framework	**10**	
Identification, interpretations and evaluation of relevant literature and citations	**40**	
Contextualisation of the literature to the problem	**10**	
Establishing gaps in knowledge and how the research will try to bridge these gaps	**10**	
Structuring and logical sequencing of ideas	**10**	
Discursive skills	**10**	
Summary	**5**	
Total	**100**	
Weighted Mark	**20**	

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Chapter 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction	**5**	
Research design	**10**	
What instruments are you using to collect data?	**30**	
Population, sample and sampling techniques to be used in the study	**25**	

Procedures for collecting data	**15**	
Data presentation and analysis procedures	**10**	
Summary	**5**	
Total	**100**	
Weighted Mark	**25**	

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Chapter 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction	**5**	
Data presentation	**50**	
Is there any attempt to link literature review with new findings	**10**	
How is the new knowledge trying to fill the gaps identified earlier	**10**	
Discursive and analytical skills	**20**	
Summary	**5**	
Total	**100**	
Weighted Mark	**30**	

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Chapter 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction- focus of the chapter	**5**	
Summary of the whole project including constraints	**25**	
Conclusions- have you come up with answers to the problem under study	**30**	
Recommendations(should be based on findings) Be precise	**30**	
References	**5**	
Appendices i.e. copies of instruments used and any other relevant material	**5**	
Total	**100**	
Weighted mark	**10**	

Comments
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SUMMARY:-

	Actual	Total
Chapter 1		
Chapter 2		
Chapter 3		
Chapter 4		
Chapter 5		
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I humbly express my heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty Lord, for the gift of time, opportunity and provision. My supervisor, Mr. Shoniwa's mentorship and guidance throughout my research journey. I am also grateful to my family, for being my pillar of strength throughout this journey.

ABSTRACT

The study aimed at exploring the socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind by parents in the diaspora, in ward 6, Maramba. It focused and targeted on exploring the nature of socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind by parents in the diaspora, establishing coping mechanisms employed by these children, as well as identifying the consequences of the challenges they face. The research employed a phenomenological research design and it was qualitative in nature. The study was grounded on the ecological systems theory which was used in interpreting and analyzing data. From the target population the researcher employed purposive sampling to select 20 participants. 14 participants were children ranging from age 13 to 17 and both in either primary school or secondary school. Many of these children left behind are staying with their relatives as caregivers especially grandparents, aunts and uncles. Migrant parents are usually mothers or both parents due to the increase of economic hardship in the whole country. Most of them work in countries such as South Africa and they mostly employed in low paid jobs without job security which has resulted in inconsistent and insufficient remittances. The other 6 were key informants who have experience of caring for or working on cases involving these children left behind. These involved a caregiver, community childcare worker and a teacher. The data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions on both key informants and participants. Through thematic analysis various themes and patterns were identified emerging from the study. The research highlighted that parental migration has devastating consequences on the children left behind, such as dropping out of school, sexual abuse, child labour, early child marriage as well as mental health issues. To a certain extent only a few children benefit from remittances which can be considered as the solely advantage of parental migration to children left behind. The study calls for the government to have tailored targeted programs and policies to support children left behind. It is emphasizing a proactive approach in the provision of a social support network which promoted access to economic opportunities, counseling services, and educational resources. This will encourage resilience and capacity of the children to cope with these challenges as well as promoting their well-being. The study emphasizes on provision of counselling and training programs for caregivers to improve their ability to support left behind children.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A LEVEL	Advanced Level
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CCW	Community Childcare Workers
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DSD	Department of Social Development
FDMS	Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy
MOPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
MOHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
O LEVEL	Ordinary level

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

Many communities in Zimbabwe have faced devastating socio-economic challenges and this has had a catastrophic impact on children left behind by parents in the diaspora (Salami & Okeke, 2018). This study focuses on these socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind by parents in the diaspora, focusing on children in ward 6, Maramba area of the Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe, Zimbabwe. This chapter gives a brief background on the socio economic challenges encountered by neglected children in transnational families. This is achieved through sections such as the background of the study, aim of the study, the statement of the problem, and research objectives. In addition, this chapter contains the research questions, the significance of the study, definition of key terms, and a chapter summary.

1.2. Background to the Study

Migration is movement that people do from their place of origin across an international boarder, and there are various types. There is a connection within them for instance internal and international migration. These are influenced by push and pull factors such as poverty and economic opportunities. In addition, these factors have impact on both the countries and communities of destination and origin. Migration is a complex concept and it comprises of various dimensions based on the unique time and area (Skeldon, 2017). It dates back to the era of ancient civilization in 1970s, being influenced by social, economic and political challenges (Koser, 2016). The International Organization for Migration, (2020) report, states that there is an estimation of 281 million international migrants which is equivalent to 3.6% of the global population. The males have the highest rate which is 146 million compared to 135 million of migrants which are females. Male labour is in more demand for economic purposes in sectors such as the construction and manufacturing which are physically demanding jobs (Anastasiadou et al., 2023). Females are more vulnerable to the devastating impact of migration which exposes them to violence and exploitation. Women are primary caregivers in cultural expectations which reduce their probability to migrate.

Migration is a dynamic phenomenon that is caused by various factors. The economic causal factors include poverty and employment challenges which have pushed many parents out of their homeland

in search of better economic opportunities abroad and they send remittances to their children (Turcan, 2023). This further shows that parental migration has always been mainly an economic necessity at the expense of children left behind. In order to support their families financially they are forced to seek better economic options (Al-Azzeh and Diab 2025). It is also caused by low prevalence in labour costs in developing countries which explains the large number of emigrants. This is as a result of better economic opportunities which are attracting more skilled talent in developed countries such United States of America. The desire to have better living conditions has exacerbated brain drain in developing countries due to demand of skilled talent resulting in family separating. In countries such as Congo, Syria and Ethiopia continued conflict has been the major cause of displacement (UNHCR, 2018b). Neglected children in this context are children left behind by their parents being deprived of basic needs. The children suffer from mental health related issues due to stress anxiety and depression as well as finding it difficult to socialize making emotional bonds due to absence of parents (Al-Azzeh and Diab 2025). The impact is explained in various segments which are globally, regionally and locally.

Globally, the norm of leaving children behind on their own or with extended family members is an on-going trend. For instance, in countries like Nigeria (Busari & Adebayo, 2022). Millions of children are left behind by one or both parents migrating in search of better economic opportunities. This has exposed many children to neglect on top of the socio economic challenges they experience. Indonesia is considered the highest supplier of migrant labour globally with an estimated population of 300 000 international migrants in 2020, (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). The effects of these transnational families are not entirely uniformly negative the severity of this dire situation is perpetuated by the exposure time of the child. This global norm of out migration of parents is commendable for its essence in economic benefits but at the expense of the children left behinds wellbeing, (Lu, 2014). It is of great essence to note that the 37 democracies that are members of the Organization for Economic cooperation and development, receive the highest number of labour migrants and United States of America is the highest. The Migration Data Portal (2024), reported that about 2 519 700 were family migrants within the OECD countries.

Regionally, during mid-year 2020, Africa had an estimated population of 363.2 million people, 64 million were international migrants. African countries with finer developed industrial sector receive an increased rate of parent migration for example mining sectors in South Africa and Angolan oil

industry have improved these countries' economies. This stands as the greatest magnet reaching as far as the Eastern side of the region. For instance, countries such as Malawi and Mozambique are affected by constant natural disasters which force some parents to the southern region for better economic opportunities in order to support their children, (SADC, 2012).

The economic crisis has worsened in Zimbabwe, since the year 2000 thus exacerbating the socio economic challenges that children left behind face (Tawodzera & Themane, 2019). As if not enough, the percentage of migrant parent has increased to regional or international destinations leaving children in the care of extended family members or on their own. This catastrophe has negatively affected children left behind as in some cases they encounter anxiety and critically low self-esteem. This is because children need direct support from their parents which promote self-consciousness and confidence, (Mavaza, 2022). In addition to that, children with parents who have migrated are facing devastating economically and socially driven hardships such as health, education and psychological problems. The psychological problems are sometimes quickly identified by deteriorating academic performance and social dysfunction. In Zimbabwe this has been highly notable in rural areas such as Chiredzi. This matter of concerns roots dates back to the colonization era showing that neglected children left behind faced various socioeconomic challenges, a deeply entrenched problem, (Jaure & Makura, 2023). This study is therefore exploring in-depth the challenges neglected children in transnational families' face. The change in the commonly known family structure and parental obligations has subjected the diaspora orphans to a form of negative stereotype locally. (Kufakurinani, 2014). Provide global, regional, and local perspectives on the issue(s) under investigation. Demonstrate that from a global, regional, and local perspective, the problem under investigation deviates from the norm. In certain instances, please provide statistical data. Lack of research.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Children left behind by their parents in the diaspora are facing devastating socially and economically related hardships, girls being the most affected (UNICEF, 2021). These diaspora orphans experience social stigma and discriminatory attitudes within the community, which are stemming from negative societal norms and expectations that discredit their dynamic family structure. Parental absence has resulted in role reversal in these transnational families and children are burdened with caregiving

duties (Racaite et al., 2019). In addition to that, they face poor social support and strained relationship bonds which results in mental health challenges such as depression, low self-esteem and stress as stated by Antia et al. (2020). These children also face financial instability due to unreliable and insufficient remittances which has resulted in inconsistent living standards, vulnerability to exploitation and child labour which ultimately disrupt child development, as according to Kufakurinai et al. (2014). All members in a transnational family are affected by the impacts of parental migration on different levels but children are the most devastated. This study indicates unique struggles that these children left behind face, enabling the foundation of adequate social support systems. This understanding can inform programs and policies that promote frequency in communication and visits between parents and children.

1.4. Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to explore the socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind by parents in the diaspora, utilizing a case study of Ward 6, Maramba area in UMP district.

1.5. Objectives

i.   To explore the nature of socio-economic challenges faced by children from ward 6, Maramba area of UMP district, left behind by parents in the diaspora.

ii.   To establish coping mechanisms employed by children from ward 6, Maramba area of UMP district, left behind by parents in the diaspora.

iii. To assess Social work strategies in addressing the challenges faced by children in Maramba, ward 6, who have been left behind by parents in the diaspora.

1.6. Research Questions

1. What is the socio-economic impact of parental migration on children in ward 6, Maramba in UMP district?

2. What coping mechanisms have been employed by these children left behind by their parents in the diaspora?

3. What social work strategies can be utilized to support children left behind by their parents in the diaspora?

1.7. Justification of the Study

1.7.1 Body of knowledge

There is a void in comprehensive data which pays specific attention to socially and economically related hardships that are faced by children left behind by migrant parents (Mutopo, 2014). This therefore suggests limited understanding in the unique needs of these vulnerable children. There is also lack of in-depth analysis of the experiences of these children due to generalized views of challenges faced in transnational families (Chipeta, 2018). This district has unique migration patterns and socio-economic norms which cannot be covered by other studies which paid attention to specific regions and countries such as Asia (Al-Azzeh and Diab 2025). This research will provide more information, on the African context, specifically Maramba area in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district, Zimbabwe. It is to highlight the vulnerabilities faced by children left behind due to parental migration. It also explores more the impact of parental migration based of gender, age, caregiver type and occupation of the migrant parent. This fills the gap in research and also informs tailored programs and policies to assist these children.

1.7.2. Community

The study will help the community with evidence-based recommendations which aim to help children with parents in the diaspora. The findings can also be used in raising awareness of the challenges faced by children with parents in the diaspora. This will render effective coping measures to socioeconomic challenges they face and to be able to properly integrate in the society. The study also assists in community based interventions to help these vulnerable children. This is through allocating resources and support system locally as well as effective in helping support the wellbeing of these children in a sustainable way.

1.7.3. Social policy/programs

There are various programs and social policies which will benefit from this study, such as the Child protection policy, the constitution as well as the children's act chapter 5.06. The findings from this

study will be relevant to the local and national policies aiming to support children with migrant parents. The study will inform the government and the Civil Society Organizations in child protection with valuable insight into the unique challenges faced by children left behind as formulate programs and policies tailored to assist in their wellbeing Key government ministries will benefit as well from this study. The ministry of Women affairs uses this study to inform effective policies in promoting the wellbeing of girl's rights and reducing gender based violence they face.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is informed by this study to develop policies and programs that improve access to quality education of these children with migrant parents. The Ministry of Health and Child Care can use this study to formulate policies that effectively address the health challenges that these children are facing.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

Parental Migration refers to the temporary or permanent relocation of parents from their home country to another, often seeking improved job prospects and better standards of living (Hernandez & Dreby, 2021).

Diaspora refers to the communities of people who have spread from their original homeland to various parts of the world (Safran, 2020).

Children are individuals in the early stages of life, typically defined as those from birth to adolescence, who undergo significant physical, cognitive, emotional and social development (Parker, 2020). The Constitution of Zimbabwe (section 81) and the Zimbabwe National Orphan Care policy as any persons below the age of 18 years.

Parents are individuals who provide care, nurture, and guidance to their children, playing a crucial role in their emotional, social, and cognitive development (Belsky et al., 2020).

1.9. Dissertation Outline

Chapter 1 introduces the study focus and specifies the problem. It also gives the background of the study as well as the introduction to the research on the socio economic challenges faced by neglected

children with parents in the diaspora. This section highlights assumptions of the study as well as carrying a justification of the study.

Chapter 2 carries a critical exploration on the comprehensive surveys in existing researches on the matter of concern in discussion. It further identifies the void left and the debates concerning this topic of neglected children with migrant parents and the socio economic challenges they face.

Chapter 3 contains the research approach, philosophy, techniques as well as procedure and tools of the study. These carry an explanation in which the researcher will conduct their research and analyse this study.

Chapter 4 section involves a structured approach of analysing data patterns as well as interpretations of findings. The findings have to be in line with stipulated objectives for this study. The data is represented in various forms such as bar graphs and pie charts illustrating the findings.

Chapter 5 carries a brief sum up of the study and shows the relevance of this research to the social work body. More recommendations are given for future researches.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

This chapter highlights various studies that have provided literature concerning the socio-economic hardships faced by children with migrant parents. More focus is on the social support networks, caregiver roles and community perceptions in worsening the experiences of these children. Through examining the available literature on this topic this chapter seeks to identify the gaps in research and highlight areas that need further investigation.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework is a structure guiding research and providing a systematic analysis and interpretation of complex phenomena to yield meaning (Barbour, 2014). Theoretical integration is crucial for researchers to gain a more nuanced and meaningful knowledge and revelation. Expanding on the foundation basis for research, it also provides a lens to interpret and understand data exploring interdisciplinary connections (Allen, 2017).

2.1.2. Ecological Systems theory

The ecological systems theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner (2008), will be employed for the purpose of understanding the social and economic hardships that migrant orphans face. The ecological systems theory enlightens more on complex hardships the children left behind face in their environment. Examining the five systems of this theory reveals a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by these children (Lubis & Tarigan, 2024). The microsystem level focus on how parental absence and substandard parental care has formulated a unique family structure which relies more on the caregiver's ability to support these children's wellbeing. Cortes, (2020) concurs with the above study pointing out that, it has affected the children's mental development inducing mentally related difficulties such depression, and feelings of abandonment initiating from their home environment.

Chakanyuka and Chingwe (2023), emphasize that, the mesosystem indicates challenges such as stress on the child as a result of disconnection on the family and school environments which are crucial

systems. Inconsistent expectations confuse the child and inadequate communication frustrates and strains the child reducing their ability to thrive in both systems. It is often they are emotionally distressed and have strained relations as in harmony with some studies. (UNICEF,2020; Santrock,2019). Parental absence has overburdened the children with household responsibilities which overwhelm them directly having a harmful influence in their academic performance. The exosystem and macrosystem encompass the children's external environment (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). These include their parents work, resources available to them in the community and broader societal perceptions. The children battle with financial constraints as most of their parents' work in poorly compensated and unstable jobs especially those in neighbouring countries like South Africa. They also need to deal with social stigmatisation and strained relationships. Consequently, Mavaza (2021), and Shen and Shen (2014) concur that these circumstances have increased risky behaviours, psychological difficulties and emotional struggles.

The chronosystem is the final stage, illustrating that prolonged separation of the children and their parent's increases depression, and social isolation. It is also exacerbated by the children's age and gender when their parents left them as well as which parent is working in the diaspora (Chingwe & Chakanyuka, 2023; Cebotari et al., 2018; Adem, 2021). Cebotari et al. (2018) further puts emphasis that maternal migration has a more profound impact on children left behind. The economic instability where the parent is working and here in Zimbabwe worsen the monetary difficulty. The struggles these migrant orphaned children face, extend far beyond their homes as it is intensely intertwined with broader societal and economic challenges. They face the harsh realities of poverty, inadequate social support systems, and stigma in the community worsening the extent of their vulnerabilities (Makondo & Tabane, 2023). Given, the Zimbabwe's economic meltdown entrench the situation of poor social services support systems, suggest that an impact for positive change require a multifaceted approach covering all levels of the system. Manyeruke et al. (2021) shared a similar perspective that, the absence of parental care and support has an intense detrimental impact on the children's emotional stability, academic potential and long term well-being.

2.3 Socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind

Children who have parents in the diaspora face socioeconomic challenges such as disrupted education, healthcare issues, financial strain and food insecurity. The hardships they face have a long term impact on their wellbeing and development.

2.3.1. Financial instability

Chingwe et al. (2025) and Kufakurinani et al. (2014) concur that, the left behind children depend of remittances which in most cases are insufficient and inconsistent making them vulnerable inducing in disruptions in their wellbeing. Makondo and Tabane (2022) and Tawodzera and Themane (2019) further emphasize that, low budgets incapacitate the migrant parent to hire a proper care giver which forces them to leave their children in the care of relatives such as grand parents and others the older sibling is given the responsibility. This stresses the child as they are overburden with budgets and household responsibilities leaving disrupting their child development.

2.3.2. Food constraints

Separation from parents puts more pressure on the caregiver (Cebotari et al., 2018). This has caused disrupted child development. Chingwe et al. (2025) and UNICEF (2024) concur that children left behind depend on remittances in order to get access to basic food. The inconsistency of these remittances has left the children in food insecurity. It has resulted in reduced meal time, quality and quantity as it can be one or two meals per day thus inadequate nutrition. Correspondingly, UNICEF (2024) further points out that, the situation is worsened by the El Nino drought in Zimbabwe whereby an estimate of 580 000 children are malnourished. These hardships have burdened the children left behind who indulge in risky behaviors such as prostitution and theft to survive and in some cases they are exploited or involved in child labour (Makondo & Tabane, 2022). They suffer health related issues such as malnutrition and permanent damage on the children's physical and mental health.

2.3.3. Health access issues

Children separated from their migrant parents encounter medical vulnerabilities and face challenges in accessing health care. These health related challenges are deeply intertwined with strained family relations, economic hardships, social stigma and the overall underperformance of the healthcare

system (Tawodzera & Themane, 2019). Most remittances from these migrant parents are inconsistent and sometimes insufficient corresponding with the work they do. This directly impact the children left behind who in some cases endure prolonged illness because of delaying to seek medical attention due to constraints on the budget. Caregivers are usually relatives and in most cases grandparents. In some instances, they can be a hired house helper as highlighted by Kufakurinani et al. (2014). They sometimes lack motivation and knowledge or even immediate finances to accommodate these children on health emergencies. This has resulted in formulation of chronic illnesses in children left behind due to negligence. Kufakurinani et al. (2014) highlights that, the healthcare system of Zimbabwe has inadequately provided service as due to health infrastructure shortages, limited medicines and medical personnel. Given the situation the absence of an active parent to advocate for assistance for their child results in the child being neglected and unattended.

2.3.4. Emotional and psychological distress

The microsystem shows that the child is made vulnerable due to emotional neglect and a strained bond with their loved ones. The detachment with their parents has increased chances of depression and anxiety especially in cases where there is inconsistent communication (Zhao et al., 2018). The situation is worsened by inadequate care available for these children provided by the guardians they are left with, which is in harmony with Makondo and Ramodungoane (2023). With regard to the first objective this stage of the theory express that the children face inconsistent and inefficient remittances as an economic hardship. They are also facing emotional neglect as a challenge. Tawodzera and Themane (2019) underpins that inadequate resources and poor environment interfere negatively with holistic child development.

2.3.5. Education disruption

Children left behind face negative impacts on their academic performance, attendance, and overall educational experience due to the parental absence. Kufakurinani et al. (2014) and Rupande (2014), share the same opinion that the children in the midst of mesosystem environment such as school are associated with negative behaviour associated with delinquency and recklessness. Most teachers overlook and stigmatize them. Rupande (2014) further emphasize that there is underperformance at school and peer pressure as well as an antisocial behaviour amongst these children. As outlined by Tawodzera and Themane (2019), these children get little to no assistance with their homework,

delayed fees payments and they are often not represented in school meetings. This affects the overall performance of these children academically.

2.3.6. Social stigma and exclusion

Cebotari et al. (2018), highlights that parental absence has done more harm than good to the children left behind. In agreement, Kufakurinani et al. (2014) pointed out that these children are considered disrespectful and delinquent because they lack parental supervision who can be effective disciplinarians. Their situation is further illustrated by the term diaspora orphans who portray poverty and vulnerability caused by being left behind which suggest that it is more harmful than good. Transnational family arrangement is complex and has formulated a different family structure (Cebotari et al., 2018).

2.3.7. Abuse

Chingwe & Chakanyuka, (2023); Ettekal & Mahoney, (2017); Botezat (2018) points out that children with migrant parents face abuse, and it is worse for girls especially early childhood and adolescence. Similarly, Cebotari et al. (2018) and Zhao et al. (2018), concur that, parental absence has subjected children left behind to maltreatment and exploitation as caregivers are being less effective in taking care of these children. Caregivers in most cases maltreat these children with bizarre disciplinary measures and neglect them for instance withholding food or overworking children. Some children are exposed to sexual abuse especially girls fall prey to the male caregivers they stay with or predatory neighbours (Muridzo &Chikadzi, 2020; Rupande ,2014). In order to cope with the situation some children find part-time jobs to get money for basic needs and they are exploited in many of these case for instance in mining (Filippa, 2011)

2.3.8. Psychological and mental health challenges

Chakanyuka and Chingwe (2023) points out that children left behind suffer from mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety and stress. To children separated from their parents during early childhood and adolescence phase the experience is traumatic because this stages mark significant physical, psychological and social transformations. Chingwe et al. (2025) further made emphasis that this emotional turmoil has resulted in risky behaviors such as drug and substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections. The emotional turmoil also affects their academic performance and

the children fail to properly have social relationships. The situation is worsened by inadequate support systems and stigmatization in the community concerning the issue of mental health.

2.4.0 Coping mechanisms adopted by these children

Children left behind employ adaptive strategies in order to manage the challenges they face in the absence of their parents. These strategies include emotional expression, begging, vending and part-time jobs. In most cases some of these coping strategies have a negative impact as it may expose the children to abuse, exploitation and other risks. This highlights the need for support and protection for them.

2.4.1. Mining

The left behind children have been exposed to various exploitations as they try to survive with the issue of financial constraints (Makondo & Tabane, 2022). Mining is mainly done by boys in areas nearby for work in order to get money and support their siblings such as in Mazowe district, Zimbabwe. In agreement, the child's development is affected by premature responsibilities resulting in them becoming school dropouts compromised educational and developmental consequences (Tawodzera & Themane, 2019). Likewise, another research showed that Democratic Republic of Congo is a prominent hotspot of child mining (Lawson, 2021). Child mining is a survival strategy of desperation that is exposing the children left behind on a compromised state. Conditions in the mining sector are harsh, hazardous, risky and expose the children to long hours of physically straining. This situation makes them vulnerable to injuries, illnesses and death

2.4.2. Begging

Mkwanazi and Maposa (2021), mentions that children have resorted to begging in the community as means to survive, for instance in Hatcliffe suburb of Harare. These children are usually of age 10 up to 18. Similarly, Kabermann (2017) also highlight that these children left behind were exposed to uncertainty and stress as they lack basic needs thus they resorted to begging as shown by the study conducted in Germany. During the process the children experience violence, abuse and stigma in the community. In addition, Jacobsen (2019) mentions that children in Kenya who have migrant parent have resorted to begging money or food in the major roads especially in poverty stricken areas of Nairobi. This is exposing them to exploitation and abuse in the streets.

2.4.3. Emotional expression

Emotion focused coping strategy has helped children deal with their hardships through making acknowledgements and communicating the challenges they are going through. Children verbally label their emotions of what their going through. Humphrey (2019), conducted a study in England, with various children who expressed their emotions which have resulted in reduced mental health challenges. Expressions are done through various ways such as drama, music and dance. Likewise, in Portugal children who express their emotions have better social interactions as they cope with parental absence (Abott, 2017). Jimu and Tarisayi (2024), supplied further information that in Chivi district children with migrant parents participate in peer groups at school and church. They share their experiences and motivate each other.

2.5.0. Social work support systems and interventions

Children left behind by parents in the diaspora can benefit greatly from social work support networks, which can improve their welfare. Social workers can help these kids become more resilient by teaching them, providing counselling, and educating caregivers. They can also advocate for policies and programs tailored to target these children's needs which reduces the long term impact of parental migration.

2.5.1. Counseling

Counselling can be a useful strategy done by social workers to assist children left behind, caregivers and migrant parents in promoting psychosocial wellness for instance as shown by a study conducted in Canada (Bauer, 2019). It helps these children cope with mental difficulties such as depression, feelings of abandonment and anxiety as well as minimize risky behaviors. They can further work with programs that assist children with parents in the diaspora who are often overlooked minimizing the harmful consequences of parent migration.

2.5.2. Education

This intervention comes in two phases whereby the social worker educates the community on challenges associated with transnational families and also to assist these children with educational needs. Tawodzera and Themane (2019), suggest that promoting a system at school that creates an environment accommodating to children with absent parental supervision. This promotes more social interaction and also reduces the chances of the children being marginalized. Social workers also provide awareness concerning the issue of migration consequences and strategies to cope with the hardships. Kelly and Heath (2023) and Gumbo et al. (2023), concur that there has to be an inclusive system in the community and at school to accommodate the diaspora orphans. More counselling sessions in community centres and workshops facilitate these children's understanding of their situation. A study conducted in Shurugwi district shows that this initiative supports more resilience in children left behind, (Jaure & Gregory, 2022)

2.5.3. Peer groups

Studies have shown that, in China children participate in community based children's centres whereby they participate in art, music and dance activities with their peers as emphasized by Zhao et al. (2017) and Gao (2023). Social workers volunteer in these centres promoting psychological wellbeing of children facing challenges because of migrant parents. Peer relationships are also encouraged especially early childhood and adolescence ages. Similarly, in Zimbabwe children left behind by parents in the diaspora depend on their peers for emotional support and sense of belonging as concurred by Tawodzera and Themane (2019) and Mufambi (2020). Another study in Kenya supports this by pointing out that these relations with peers reduce feelings of isolation and social stigma pressure on the children left behind by migrant parents (Save the Children International, 2019).

2.5.4. Caregiver support

Research conducted by Mupambwa and Makuwa (2022), Social workers in Zimbabwe can work in various institutions promoting child welfare and support, as they can support caregivers. Similarly, a research in Ghana indicated that caregivers get psychological support as it is acknowledged that the impact more in the wellbeing of the left behind children (Poeze, 2018). Zhao et al. (2017) and Gao (2023) concur that in China there are community based children's centres and clubs as well as family workshops which caregivers attend. This support positive family relations and child wellbeing

through financial assistance, family communication and psychological wellness. In South Africa, programs such as Isibindi provide resources and psychological support to caregivers promoting resilience in families through having access to services as agreed by Mkwanazi (2018) and Hall and Sambu (2018).

2.5.5. Building resilience

Social workers are vital in promoting resilience by utilizing culturally sensitive practices and building social support networks. Family based interventions such as family sessions and parent support groups encourage communication in families as shown in China (Gao, 2023). The programs offer counselling and educational support to the families affected by parent migration. Likewise, Tsareva et al. (2021) conducted a research in Russia which support that enhancing social interactions reduces mental difficulties in children left behind. Community and peer groups provide psychosocial support through shared experiences and sense of belonging for instance youth camps. Mkwanazi (2018) reinforced that awareness and skills training promote resilience and problem solving for instance Isibindi project in South Africa. Social workers educate children left behind by migrant parents empowering them to cope with disruptive impact of migration in Zimbabwe as agreed by Ndlovu and Tigere (2018) and Rupande (2014). They can facilitate resources for these children curbing the challenges they face. They also mental wellness through psychosocial support.

2.6. Gaps in the literature

There is lack of in-depth information concerning the unique socio-economic challenges faced by children with migrant parents, resulting in lack of specific policies that address their situation (Chingwe et al., 2025; Ampiah, 2016). These children are often overlooked because of assumptions in the community that migration does less harm to children thus the need to address limitations in research and policy response. The two studies also agree that less attention is paid to the long term impact of parental migration on the children left behind. Such a study can identify the critical phases that these children are affected and the long term impact and find interventions to reduce in impact becoming chronic. There are misconceptions that remittances they receive are self-sufficient has resulted in these children being excluded in welfare programs (Gumbo et al., 2023). This has made the children vulnerable to poverty. The study also indicated that there is less reliable information in

the community on strategies to assist this specific group of children in rural areas. Understanding these challenges can assist in formulating financial interventions targeted to address this vulnerability.

Gumbo et al., (2023) points out that, there is a gap in terms of lived experiences of these children in rural areas rather many studies have focused on children in urban areas. Correspondingly, Themane and Tawodzera (2019) concur highlighting that less research has focused on the gender impacts on these children in the ward 6, Maramba area. A realization of this problem can lead to a formulation of competent policies that address both genders. The available literature mainly focuses on the economic and educational challenges imposed by parent migration. Themane and Tawodzera (2019) and Gumbo et al. (2023) emphasize that there is less documentation on mental issues and social stigmatisation associated with being a child with parents in the diaspora. A comprehension of these psychosocial challenges can result in tailored programs that address this challenge

2.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed review on various researches conducted relating to the socioeconomic consequences faced by children left behind by migrant parents. The children are affected in various segments such as emotional development, social interactions and even in academics. This chapter also highlighted numerous literatures that illustrated social support network, caregiver roles and the community perceptions have had an impact on the challenges these children face. A gap gas been identified in the literature in terms of limits in research and policy responses, exclusion of these children in welfare programs and less focus put on the psychosocial challenges these children experience.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology which highlights the research approach, design, setting as well as target population. It also shows the methods employed to collect data, sampling techniques and the sample size and data collection methods. This aim at providing an in-depth insight into the socio-economically constructed hardships that children with migrant parents face. This study will be ensuring validity, reliability and adherence to ethical standards.

3.2. Research Approach

Research approach refers to the comprehensive plan and procedures that guide a study thoughtfully integrating philosophical assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). The study employed the qualitative approach, which is an approach that seeks to understand and interpret the meanings individuals associate with social problems, paying attention to the participants' perspectives and experiences with their realities (Brown & Clarke, 2016). The qualitative research approach was chosen because, it is essential in amplifying risk assessment and management strategies, (Rizwan, 2024). Kostere and Kostere (2021), further explains that this approach gives an insight in understanding human experiences. Its purpose is to uncover the socially constructed nature of reality, highlighting the dynamic relationship between the researcher and the subject. Ultimately, it's aims to discover nuanced understandings of complex issues.

3.2 Research Design

Akhtar (2016), states that research design is a plan for the suggested research work and can be perceived as the "Glue" that put together all of the components of a study together. The author stressed on the fact that it is needed since it enables the even operation of various research procedures, making research as proficient as conceivable as well as producing the most evidence with the minimum amount of effort, time, and money spent. The purpose of a research design is to address the problem with an overall structure. Case study is the design being adopted as it examines complex phenomena within these participants' real-life context, utilizing multiple data sources such as interviews and document analysis, (Danek & Urgosikova, 2024).

3.3 Study Setting

The study was conducted in ward 6, Maramba area of Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe in Zimbabwe. The district is characterized by a high rate in the prevalence of parental migration. This trend is making many children neglected and vulnerable to socially and economically constructed hardships. It is crucial to explore their experiences and find ways to mitigate the challenges. The area is also characterized by drastic social economic challenges such as poverty and limited social services. This scenario has worsened the hardships that neglected children face who are left behind by migrant parents. There is need to understand the intersection between child neglect and migration in this area. The Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district has cultural dynamics which provide a competitive environment for studying child neglect in transnational families. These unique traditional values and norms in regards to child rearing have a major impact. This area provides rich insight into child neglect in relation to their beliefs. The body of knowledge lacks specific experiences of these neglected children which are going to be covered by this study. This will offer evidence based knowledge useful to policy makers and community organizations in mitigating this burden on neglected children.

3.4 Target Population

It is the population which the researcher intended to study and take conclusions from (Akhtar, 2016). The primary investigation is the left behind children who are being affected by the impact of parental absence. They have one or both parents in the diaspora. The study will also focus on caregivers or guardians who have the responsibility of taking care of children with migrant parents. This group has relevant information to the study as they play a pivotal role in these children's support system. The school officials and community leaders will bring an insight on the indirect challenges faced by the children in regards to their environment. Parents in the diaspora will also provide knowledge in terms of the challenges they encounter in maintaining relationships with their children and supporting them from a distance.

3.5.0. Sampling techniques and Sample size

3.5.1. Sampling technique

Sampling technique is a strategical approach that is employed when selecting a representative sample from the whole population. It also aims to collect comprehensive data that can precisely mirror the characteristics of the population (Kothari, 2013). Likewise, Taherdoost (2016) points out that, sampling is the taking of a subgroup from preferred structure or all-inclusive population. In this research the study will adopt purposive sampling. This a method that focuses on selecting individuals based on characteristics which are specific and of relevance to the study, (Creswell, 2014). This is because the sampling technique aligns with the study's goals and ensure that participants provide relevant knowledge. For example, focusing on neglected children identified as diaspora orphans.

3.5.2. Sample size

Coghlan and Brannick (2014), highlights that, an appropriate sample size relies more on the goal and context of the research. The researcher employed the principle of data saturation, guiding the selection of 14 participants. 7 boys and 7 girls. Data collection continued until no new themes emerged which gave confidence that the data is comprehensive and representative. The key informants were 6 including 2 school principal, a social development officer, 2 caregivers and 2 migrant parents. The children's age ranges from 10 to 17.

3.6.0. Data Collection Techniques and tools

Data collection is a process that is systematic in capturing and measuring data from diverse sources (Creswell, 2014). In this study, data collection methods included in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions ensuring that comprehensive data is captured from participants.

3.6.1. Semi-structured and direct dialogue interviews

These give researchers an allowance in exploring social phenomena through engaging directly with participants to gain their perspectives on their experiences. Semi-structured Interviews offer flexibility whilst covering major topics of concern (Andrabi, 2017). Direct dialogue interviews are of essence in intercultural contexts. It is characterized with open ended questions and face to face

interactions allowing the researcher to observe non-vernal cues. This is essential in gaining in-depth data and building rapport with participants in this case mostly children (Chingwe et al., 2025).

3.6.2. Focus groups

Focus groups involve two to eight people and focus on in-depth knowledge of social issues. Data is collected from purposely selected individuals. Neuman (2014), emphasis that, Focus group discussions are there to capture a comprehension of insights into thoughts and emotions that these children left behind face. The researcher conducted separate groups of girls and boys in order to get more detail information of their unique experiences. Observations were done as the researcher observed the participants' experiences without interfering. Document analysis for instance in the form of text, image or other forms of media (Lopatina et al., 2024). This is essential in gaining further understanding and identifying patterns.

3.6.3. Data collection tools

In-depth interview guide

In-depth interviews, allows participants to share their personal stories and perspective on the hardships of being a child in a rural area with migrant parents. The guide allows open and thoughtful discussions. This capture lived experiences in their complexities.

Key informant interview guide

Childcare experts and social workers from the Department of Social development in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district shared their professional insights on the experiences of children in ward 6 with migrant parents. The interview provided perspectives on children welfare and protection issues concerning this group of children.

The researcher made use of coding through assigning labels or codes to data in order to easily depict trends, patterns and themes. Thematic analysis was employed through identifying themes that emerge from the collected data. Field notes contained written records of observations and conversations. Recording devices were used to capture first-hand information that is not distorted. Focus group transcripts were also employed.

3.7 Research Procedure

The researcher requested authorisation from the Department of Social Development in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district, to conduct the study in ward 6, Maramba. This department supervises and has access to child protection matters in the district. Additionally, the researcher secured permission from the local Chief and village head, as they were the leaders to the home of the key informants and participants whose expertise and experience respectively was crucial to the research. Interviews were done both face to face and via telephone calls to the department of social development officer and local leaders. The researcher also looked into the district statistics of neglected children paying specific attention to the ones with parents in the diaspora.

3.8. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness means that the study's results accurately reflect the experiences, perspectives, or phenomena being investigated. It is established through four main criteria. To be deemed trustworthy, this study was accurate, consistent, and true to the experiences of children left behind. This was achieved was ensured by recognizing qualitative research guidelines and ensuring credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability (Barbour, 2014).

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is about making sure the results accurately represent what participants saw or experienced (Barbour,2014). In this study it guarantees that the results appropriately depict the socioeconomic difficulties that children of migrant parents confront. In order to produce credible and reliable results, it entails accurately expressing the opinions and experiences of participants. Strategies such as consistent observations were used to establish credibility by firmly establishing findings based on participant reality rather than conjecture. The researcher maintained credibility by building rapport with participants and using their direct quotes. To be deemed trustworthy, this study was accurate, consistent, and true to the experiences of children left behind. This was achieved was ensured by recognising qualitative research guidelines and ensuring credibility, dependability, transferability

3.8.2. Dependability

Reliability guarantees the consistency, stability, and transparency of study findings. It entails recording each action and choice made during the research process (Allen, 2017). In order to allow tracing and verification of findings, the researcher maintained a thorough audit trail, recording each step, decision, and modification in the research process, including data collection techniques, analytical protocols, and methodological changes. This ensured reliability.

3.8.3. Transferability

The degree to which the results of a qualitative study may be used or transferred to different contexts, settings, or people outside of the particular study sample is known as transferability in research (Khalid, 2024). This was accomplished by giving readers thorough, in-depth explanations of the research setting and participants, enabling them to assess if the findings apply to their own circumstances. The researcher explained the unique social, cultural, and economic circumstances of the children whose parents were migrants, taking into account elements such as schooling conditions, local support networks, and community structure. Direct statements from kids, parents, and educators were incorporated to vividly highlight important themes, and participants with a range of experiences were chosen through the use of purposeful sampling. The study enables readers and future researchers to evaluate whether the findings are pertinent and applicable to comparable groups or contexts elsewhere by recording these contextual features and participant characteristics.

3.8.4. Conformability

Conformability is the degree to which a participant responds not being biased by preferences, or interests of the researcher which influences the conclusions (Creswell, 2014). The researcher maintained a transparent audit trail, which records each stage of data collection, coding, and analysis as well as allowed others to follow the development of conclusions from the raw data. To make sure interpretations stayed rooted in the real experiences of children left behind by migrant parents, the researcher also engaged in reflexivity, periodically considering personal presumptions and potential biases throughout the research process.

3.9. Data analysis

Data analysis is a systematic process of organising, integrating, and examining data to identify patterns and relationships within data (Neuman, 2014). Demographic data was illustrated in two

tables for easy analysis of the participants. It is vital in a qualitative study to have a well-planned system for securing and an easy retrieval of data and this is why the researcher used thematic analysis. (Creswell, 2014). Thematic analysis was used in interpreting the data due to its suitability to examine people's experiences and views to identify, analyse and report patterns and themes (Sharma,2017). This process facilitated an in-depth examination of the challenges faced, experiences and views of children left behind by parents in the diaspora. This was done by analysing data from transcripts of the interviews, notes and other texts collected.

3.10. Ethical considerations

Following ethical norms is crucial to ensuring participant protection and research integrity, particularly in comprehensive investigations. According to Haider (2022), ethical values include maintaining professional demeanor and conduct. By putting ethics first, researchers protect themselves and participants from any harm and misunderstandings. The following important ethical guidelines were followed in this study.

3.10.1. Informed consent

Informed consent entails expressly consenting to engage in research after being fully informed of its dangers and advantages, as Sandu (2021) points out. The methods, possible results, advantages, and hazards of the study were thoroughly explained to the participants. They were guaranteed the freedom to go without repercussions. In order to make sure participants understood their involvement and what was expected of them, the researcher placed a high priority on clarity. Participants gained the ability to make well-informed judgments on their involvement as a result.

3.10.2. Confidentiality

In order to comply with legal and ethical requirements, social workers must maintain confidentiality (Raines and Cox, 2021). Maintaining confidentiality helps defend privacy, security, and trust in both personal and professional interactions by preventing illegal access to sensitive information (Raines and Cox, 2021). In order to remedy this, the researcher made certain that participants understood their right to confidentiality with relation to the data they would divulge.It is the duty of social work researchers to accurately and thoroughly inform participants about the goals and parameters of the

study. As a result, participants are better equipped to decide whether to continue with the study or not.

3.10.3. Anonymity

According to Hollway and Jefferson (2013), anonymity entails hiding individuals' identities in order to avoid identification. By coding participants' names to prevent data from being traced back to them, the researcher ensured anonymity and safeguarded their privacy and confidentiality. This method created a secure and reliable research setting by allowing participants to answer openly and honestly without worrying about being discovered.

3.10.4. Voluntary Participation

According to Sharma (2017), voluntary participation gives study participants the freedom to choose their involvement voluntarily and without pressure. Participants were able to engage freely and authentically because the researcher promoted trust and honesty by honoring their autonomy. This method prioritized the subjective experiences and well-being of participants while upholding fundamental ethical concepts such as self-determination and non-maleficence.

3.11. Feasibility

Feasibility, in the words of Neuman (2014), is the possibility of successful execution. This study was judged possible because of a number of supporting elements. Easy accessibility was guaranteed by the researcher's close vicinity to Ward 38, which is only 5 km from Masvingo's Gutu Growth Point. The feasibility of the experiment was also aided by the villagers' readiness to help and the researcher's ability to obtain the required approvals from the appropriate authorities. These elements worked together to make the research feasible and useful.

3.12. Limitations

Limitations necessitate careful consideration of the research design and methodology to enhance the credibility and applicability of the results (Regmi, 2024). Maramba area, ward 6 has limited understanding of what child vulnerability is and this is seen through various interpretations from the participants which directly affected the data collected. There is need to engage community leaders and relevant stakeholders in formulating a cooperated basic definition.

Some participants are reluctant when faced with sensitive issues during interviews this created a bias as they only supplied information socially desirable. Support from community leaders encouraging honest responses is crucial as well as creating more confidential spaces to conduct interviews.

Collecting data from children requires consent initially from the guardian and the child, but this procedure can introduce adult interference and potential bias in the data. This is because the adult can tell the child what to say and what not to say prior the interview.

3.13. Delimitations

The researcher's prior interaction with the Department of Social Development Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district greatly facilitated successful data collection. Thus, only a few obstacles were encountered during the collection of data. Navigating in the research setting was easy due to established trust with key stakeholders and was an advantage in leveraging as well as overcoming potential challenges in data collection.

3.14. Chapter Summary

This chapter explored more on the realistic experiences that children with migrant parents are facing. The researcher made ethical considerations during the process of data collection. The challenges and limitations encountered in this chapter were highlighted as well as the recommended solutions.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter carries a discussion and an interpretation of the results from this study. It explores more on the complexity of the impact parental migration has on children left behind in ward 6, Maramba. A total of 20 participants took part, comprising of 7 boys and 7 girls as well as 6 key informants. These were from the ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, and Department of Social Development. The researcher analysed data using thematic analysis through identifying the key patterns and themes in the participants' responses. Findings are presented while maintaining anonymity through pseudonyms and aggregate data, ensuring confidentiality as well as protecting participants' identities.

4.2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants/Respondents (if applicable)

The participants in this study reached a total of 20, notably 7 girls, 7 boys and 6 key informants. Priority and attention was put on children left behind from age 10 to 17. The studies incorporated children from low income schools and affluent schools in the Maramba area, ward 6. Key informants were experts on this topic as well as the migrant parents and the caregivers.

Table 1: Demographic Information for Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Parent(s)in diaspora	Caregiver(s)	Education
Ruth	17	Female	Mother	Grandmother	School dropout
Hannah	17	Female	Mother	House maid	Secondary
Ruva	16	Female	Both	Grandparents	Secondary
Rejoice	13	Female	Both	Grandmother	Primary
Emma	15	Female	Mother	Aunt	Secondary
Tariro	13	Female	Father	Mother	Primary

Ben	17	Male	Father	Grandmother	Secondary
Taku	16	Male	Mother	Grandparents	Secondary
Kundi	17	Male	Father	Mother	Secondary
Joe	14	Male	Mother	Grandmother	Primary
Tim	17	Male	Mother	Uncle, grandmother	Secondary
Given	16	Male	Mother	Child headed	School dropout
More	15	Male	Both	Uncle, aunt	Secondary

Source: Researcher

Table 1, illustrates that the participants' ages range from the age of 13 to 17, which shows that these children were eligible to understand the discussion and provide essential responses to the study. Covering this group was important as they are adolescence, which is an important period of child development whereby the children are vulnerable psychologically, emotionally and physically because of parental migration (Zhang et al., 2015). The study is a combination of 7 girls and 7 boys which ensured gender balance as well as encourages the quality and relevance of the findings through highlighting gender specific challenges being faced by these children (Wallace et al., 2016). 8 of these participants are in Secondary school, 3 are in Primary school and 2 are school dropouts. This captured the impact of migration on various stages of child development in which younger children face challenges emotionally and developmentally related whereas the older ones usually have psychosocial and academic related problems. Including the two groups ensured that the study has a comprehensive assessment of the challenges these children face specific to their development stage (Zhang et al., 2015).1 of these children belong to a child headed family. Majority of these children are taken care of by grandparents whereas a few are cared for by uncles, aunts and a housemaid. It is a common norm for relatives to be caregivers for these children as they are the most trusted family members who can provide care as well as the issue of financial constraints incapacitate most parents to hire someone who can provide care and be trusted (UNICEF, 2023).

Table 2: Demographic Information for Key informants

Pseudonym	Designation	Experience	Age
John	Social development officer	7 years	40
Peter	Principal	5 years	35
Kudzai	Teacher	20 years	55
Gamu	Community childcare worker	4 years	32
Rebecca	Migrant parent	10 years	40
Mukudzei	Caregiver	7 years	65

Source: Researcher

Table 2 illustrates that the research collected information from key informants who had experience in dealing with children left behind by migrant parents. As they engaged in their work they also handled issues that involved children with migrant parents. All of them had more than 2 years' experience working with these children. The social development officer and the community childcare worker provided their expertise on the inadequacy of social systems which is worsening the hardships these children face. They identified risks and recommend essential services that these children need (Tawodzera & Themane, 2019).A senior teacher and principal observe the children left behind when they are on the school premise. They identify behavioral, academic, and emotional challenges in these children (Zhao et al., 2023). Caregivers and migrant parents also provided first-hand information of the experiences of these children. These two groups provide a day to day basis of the experience of these children as well as their motivation to migrate, experience and perspective of family separation which is a comprehensive data crucial to the study (Lu, 2015).

4.3. Socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind by migrant parents

The research explored on the emotional, psychological, social, financial toll on children who were the separated from their parents by migration. It also revealed concerns such as sexual abuse, drug

and substance abuse, early child marriages, child labour, and mental health challenges amongst these children.

4.3.1. Drug and substance abuse

Children left behind by migrant parents are vulnerable to drug and substance abuse which is having a devastating long term impact on their wellbeing. Commonly used substance include illicit alcohol, marijuana, Research has indicated that children involved in this area trying to seek solace through this temporary escapism and to feel a sense of belonging. These children depict psychological issues such as depression, stress and feelings of abandonment which is the major push factors to drug and substance abuse. Many key informants noted that boys with absent parents have been vulnerable to drug and substance abuse as well as exposure to gang recruitment. Only a few girls have been associated with this trend. A male participant aged 17 struggling with addiction commented that he started associating with a gang at the age of 15 were he was introduced to marijuana.

One male participant said that;

*"I had friends at the shops that drank beer that's when l started to drink alcohol too. Later on when l had turned 13 I started taking mutoriro and l would spend my time at our base. To keep up with my cravings l would go steal especially from people l know to sell and get money to buy more."***(More, aged 15)**

A key informant (caregiver) mentioned that;

"I'm aged 65, taking care of my grandson who doing drugs.... I started noticing that each time he comes he steals something like the gas tank, blankets and television. He sold all his clothes. He comes home 2 days then leaves and we can see him after a week or more". **(Mukudzei, aged 65).**

Another key informant (CCW) commented that;

*"In ward 6, l has observed that because of depression and economic hardships, 1 out of every 5 children here either drinks alcohol, smokes or is involved in drugs. These children with absent parents suffer trying to cope with the gap left by their parents in the diaspora...."***(Gamu, aged 32).**

Wang et al. (2022), highlights that the impact of lack of communication of inadequate parent adolescence communication increases the changes of substance use across children who were left

behind by children left behind in China by their parents in the diaspora. These children face mental difficulties and this vulnerability has exposed them to smoking and drinking. It is essential to put interventions that help children cope with the emotional breakdown. Wang et al. (2020) points out that the North African Maghreb children left behind are abusing drugs as an escapism way on their hardships. These children are having access to these illicit drugs through their associates and this is affecting them especially at the age of 12 to 17. The systems theory illustrates that the parental absence tampers with the guidance and support system for children left behind. This framework highlights that these children are part of a larger system that is the family, social and environmental factors which interact shaping their behaviors. Lack of parental supervision is creating an environment conducive for peer influence which is also worsened by lack of supervision which increases risk of psychoactive substance use.

4.3.2. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is one of the major risks faced by children left behind by migrant parents, especially the girls. They are vulnerable to being exploited by relatives, community members and neighbours. The perpetrators can easily manipulate these children because they do not have the capacity to defend and protect themselves. These children are disadvantaged more because they have little access to services, information on the justice system which may result in many cases being unreported. A female participant shares here experience with sexual abuse and the perpetrator is still unknown.

A participant commented that;

*".... When l was nine l was sexually l stay with my grandmother. When she was not around the perpetrator covered his face and came in our house. This person knew our daily routine. It was hard for me and he threatened to kill me if l talk."***(Ruva aged 16).**

A key informant (DSDO) mentions that;

"As a social development officer I have handled many cases of sexual abuse on children who were left behind by their migrant parents. These children are made prey by perpetrators who know that there is less parental care and supervision on them and they suffer in silence". **(John aged 40)**

Another key informant (principal) says that;

*"These children left behind are on a heightened risk of sexual abuse even here at school some teachers may take advantage of them......"***(Peter, aged 35).**

The findings highlight that sexual abuse is major concern of the hardships faced by children left behind by parents in the diaspora. This form of abuse has devastating long term effects on the physical and emotional wellbeing of these children. Perpetrators are usually in the close circle of these children such as family and some children may not be aware that they are being abused. A comparable scenario is documented in a study by Ozor (2022) that was conducted in South Africa similarly illustrate that children with migrant parents lack a support system for them to feel safe to disclose sexual abuse. Similarly, Mkwananzi and Maposa (2021) research highlighted that in Zimbabwe, girls are more vulnerable with migrant parents are more susceptible to sexual abuse in the hands of trusted family members. This shows a harsh reality that the absence of a supportive family system has devastating consequences on the wellbeing of a child left behind, as described in the ecological systems theory. Children are left vulnerable when their parents leave them and the situation gets worse the longer the period they stay away. Sexual abuse is one of the inevitable challenges that these children come across and it is discovered or reported when damage has already been done. It would be a beneficial solution if more interventions targeted on information dissemination that promote reporting and disclosure of these sexual abuse cases in time.

4.3.3. Early child marriages

Early marriages are an issue of concern within the children in transnational families. This form of abuse robs children of their childhood as they are overburdened with marital responsibilities at an early stage. Their education is interrupted, encounter many health risks of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy complications as well as limited decision making power making then vulnerable. Two female participants share their experiences.

A pparticipant mentions that;

"I was started staying with my husband at the age of 16; I was pregnant so l eloped. My husband used to promise to take care of me but when l went there he already had a wife. .... Life is hard. **(Ruth aged 17)**

Another participant mentions that;

".... I got pregnant and was sent to my boyfriend's house by my grandfather saying l had disgraced him." **(Ruva aged 16).**

One key informant (DSDO) said that;

*"Nearly 1 in three women are married off before the age of 18 and this includes children left behind by migrant parents. It's a combination of poverty, and lack of parental guidance that put these children in these circumstances."***(John aged 40)**

Another key informant (CCW) explained that;

*"These children left behind by their parents in the diaspora face poverty and this is one of the reasons that have led to early child marriages. Some of them feel peer pressure seeing their counterparts with older guys with cars spoiling them, they get involved just to experience the same too. .... They are exposed to domestic violence."***(Gamu aged 32).**

These findings are similar to research conducted in Malawi by UNICEF (2020); show that child marriages increase the risk of violence, more abuse, rape, early pregnancy and maternal mortality in children. The country is considered to have one of the highest rates of children marriages and those left by migrant parents are included in these rates. Additionally, in Kenya it is the same story especially worse in rural areas (Erulkar, 2019). Many of the push factors include harmful cultural practices and poverty. It's even worse in rural areas. This finding aligns with the study conducted in Germany by Huisman (2018), that emphasized that these children left behind are married of at a young age especially girls. In relation to the ecological systems theory, a child's development relies on a comprehensive support network within the family. Each family member plays a significant role and their failure can have a negative impact on the whole system. Collective family support is needed especially for children who have a high exposure to early child marriage. It is important to support these children when it happened and even to protect these children with preventive measures.

4.3.4. Child Labour

One of the major exploitations that happen to children with migrant parents is child labour. Financial hardships put these children in circumstances whereby they are forced to work to support themselves

in their household. A male participant shares that he had to go to mining as a measure to cope with the financial hardships at home.

A participant explained that;

"......my life is a sad life. I started working in the mine when l was 10 because my mother was sick and my father was failing to manage to take care of use. I used to go to school here and there but now l completely stopped going to school to support my siblings." **(Kundi, aged 17).**

A key informant (principal) mentions that;

"In my experience I have noticed that over 3 million children are involved in child labour and this includes children left behind by migrant parents." **(Peter, aged 35)**

These reports show that there is a blurry line between child labour and teaching children to work in the communities. Similar studies share the same view as shown in Congo that children are working in mines and are exposed to health risks. Many of this children are just trying to support their families which are in poverty and they cannot entirely depend on inconsistent remittances because it's not enough (International labour organization, 2023). In addition, a study conducted in Malawi by show that many children left behind of ages 5 to 17 are victims of child labour especially in the farms (International Labour Organization, 2024). Child labour exposes children to physical and mental harm and even traps these children in a cycle of poverty. This reality is explained by the ecological systems theory, that children are spending more time in harmful environments rather than a safe environment that nurtures them. Despite government and NGO initiatives to handle child labour, the weak enforcement of the child protection laws and programs against child labour have ongoing challenges which is why the researcher supports that less progress is being done.

4.3.5. Mental health challenges

Children left behind by parents in the diaspora face depression as one of the major challenges. Increase in this type of vulnerability is caused by an increased time of the parents being separated from their children. This can even lead to poor parent and child relationships as well as depression

and stress on these children. A female participant aged 13, mentions that she feels lonely and sad most times.

The participant explained that;

*"....it just feels like they abandoned me. I cry myself to sleep that they left me here. My grades in school dropped and no longer like going to school l just want to sleep the whole day. .... I have poor appetite."***(Rejoice, aged 13).**

A key informant (teacher) mentions that;

*"..... Most of these children are struggling with significant mental issues which include depression, anxiety and stress. They struggle with feeling abandoned, and rejected which is affecting their capacity to have social relationships. "***(Kudzai, aged 55).**

These discoveries show that children left behind are struggling with mental illness. Similarly, a study in China by Chen et al. (2022) showed that these children have a high risk of experiencing depression and anxiety especially those with a prolonged period of separation from their parents. In addition, in Ghana a study by Raturi and Cebotari (2022) indicated that children left behind portrayed signs of poor psychological wellbeing. This situation is worsened if it is the mother who left and leaving the child at a young age. The researcher noted that, it is crucial for mothers to remain a primary care giver support because the separation has lifelong impact. On the same note other studies indicated that, some parents are working in high paying jobs for example in the UK and they are managing consistent communication with their children and can manage visiting them time and again on top of the consistent remittances. A stable home environment, and constantly supported by care givers and effective communication can save the children from the vulnerability of depression.

4.4.0. Coping mechanisms for neglected children with parents in the diaspora.

The study also explores on the various measure that children left behind use to manage in the absence of their parents. These strategies include begging, part time jobs, emotional expression and vending as means to survive.

4.4.1. Part-time jobs

Getting part-time jobs has assisted these children with immediate money to survive on as a measure to cope with the financial difficulties they have. This has exposed children to exploitation disrupting proper psychosocial development in children. 2 male participants commented on this illustrating their experiences working to survive.

A male participant said that;

"..... So I go there after school and during weekends to make clay bricks. So if l spend a whole day l am given 1.50 USD. It's hard work but that is how l buy my uniform and something to eat at school. Right now I'm saving l want to buy a mobile phone because I do not have a laptop and I need it for school."(**Tim, aged 17).**

Another participant says;

"I work in the Dewe mining area. Sometimes I stay there for months before coming back home. I started working there when l was 16 that is when things started getting hard my father would sometimes not send money. ..... We work the whole day and sometimes go for months without getting anything. It's only when l gets lucky to get some gold and sell."(**Ben, aged 17).**

A key informant (teacher) mentions that;

"I have noted that in every 8 children one of them is exposed to some form of child labour. This includes these children left behind by their parents who try to cover up the financial gap by working. "(**Kudzai, aged 55).**

Another key informant (CCW) mentions that;

"I have been in this village all my life and l have seen children going to the mines and never returning home. Poverty and neglect by caregivers push these children into hazardous work environment to survive. ..... They work more than 15 hours per day prone to injuries. "(**Gamu, aged 32).**

The findings above are similar to the scenario in China whereby in rural areas children left behind do piece jobs in factories and in agriculture (Zhu et al., 2023). As much as they can earn some money they are exposed to psychological stress and health hazards in these areas. In many cases the care givers are failing to fully support these children especially when the children's parents are sending

insufficient remittances. Malawi also has a similar case as shown by Ansell (2020). From the age of 6 children are seen working in farms especially during harvesting and planting season. Through a review with the systems theory, this issue is interconnected between various systems in a child's environment. Having a migrant parent and inconsistent remittances shapes these children's experiences uniquely. This is because it exposes children to environments that expose them to stress and danger as they try to survive. A possible solution would be for local leaders in the village to identify these children and include them in welfare programs.

4.4.2. Begging

It is improper for children to fend for themselves but most of the children left behind live in an interplay of family poverty and family separation. Begging in the streets provides a moment relief if they come across enough well-wishers. Some of the children left behind especially from 5 years rely on asking for charity. It exposes children to emotional trauma, exploitation, and abuse, hindering their access to education and future opportunities. It perpetuates poverty and social exclusion, affecting their self-esteem and overall development. One female participant aged 15 shares her experience of begging in the community.

A participant explained that:

"We usually go at the growth point and the market to beg. Sometimes we are given little food stuffs and other days we get money. Some days I beg from our neighbours and they now know our situation as well as sympathize with us. Some days l get frustrated because I get no well-wishers and it means we spend the day with hungry stomachs." **(Emma, aged 15).**

A key informant (CCW) mentions that;

"When they go out to play they beg for food mostly from their counterparts' homes. For some it is even worse they beg in the streets for strangers. This is an issue of concern ...... because if this mechanism fail that are likely to become thieves in those same streets." **(Gamu, aged 32).**

These findings show that financial constraints have inconvenienced the children left behind. Sometimes the remittances sent are inconsistent and insufficient as well as the fact that some caregivers they stay with divert the purpose of the remittances. This can relate to the scenario in Uganda in a study conducted by Knaub (2024), where children who are neglected beg for money in

major traffic areas especially in Karamoja region. These children become distressed and inconvenienced. Similarly, in Kenya, in Nairobi's slums, children are begging in order to survive (Jacobsen, 2019). Using a lens of the ecological systems theory, the neglect faced by children left behind cannot be entirely blamed on parental absence but is worsened by the poor quality of connections in the community and social support networks available for these children. The rural community has limited resources and welfare policies and programs are leaving these children behind. All these contribute to a child surviving on begging in the streets. It's of significance to consider a coordination of all these systems surrounding the children left behind.

4.4.3. Vending

Some children who are left behind sell a variety of goods to help their family make ends meet. They frequently sell perishables while strolling about their neighborhoods or locate a location on major thoroughfares to get clients. In their accounts of participating in such activities, two participants described how they would get up early to prepare their items and then spend hours attempting to generate enough revenue to sustain their households. In addition to helping them pay for necessities like food and school supplies, their daily hustle exposes children to dangers including missing class, becoming tired, and becoming targets of exploitation. Despite these difficulties, their testimonies demonstrate an incredible sense of accountability and fortitude as they work to cover the financial strains in the absence of their migrant parents.

A female participant:

"When l am at school l sell zapnacks, sweets and freezits to my school mates. I carry these things every day to school people now know me for it. During the weekends l go to gardens in distance places out of ward six and buy perishables around 4 am in the morning. I usually return around 10am and walk around in the community selling. **(Tariro, aged 13).**

A male participant said that;

"I started selling airtime a few months ago. I'm helping my mother taking care of my 4 siblings. I upgraded now l sell phone chargers and earphones at the bus rank. I do not get a lot of money but l survives." **(Given, aged 16).**

These findings show that children who become vendors have a hard time concentrating with their academics even when they are still enrolled. Some of them sell for long hours whilst walking around which is tiresome. The interactions they do in these streets are sometimes negative as the can be influenced into some negative behaviors. They are not supervised and can be exposed to exploitation. Mufambi (2022), show that in some parts of the country such as urban areas children are also engaged in vending like selling food stuff in the bus terminal area. They in some cases get harassment from local council security for selling without permits. Similarly, in Nigeria, a study conducted by shows that child vending is perceived as normal especially from age of 13 (UNICEF, 2017). Children left behind are compelled to do vending due to various factors interconnected in their lives. Instead of a supportive parental care and guidance they face the harsh environment of the streets where they are bullied or stigmatized.

4.4.4. Emotional expression

Negative emotions are of more dominance in children left behind by migrant parents. These include loneliness, sadness and stress. The straining of the bond with their parents make the children miss their parents. Some of these children adapt to sharing their feelings as a way to deal with their negative emotions. Two participants mention their experiences in trying to reach out and how it helps relieve them.

A participant explains that;

"I usually talk to the senior teacher at our school telling her the challenges lm going through. ...... She assisted me through the school to get new uniform and sanitary pads monthly. Talking to my teacher expressing how l feel helped me get help." **(Emma, aged 15).**

A Key informant (teacher) mentions that;

"I think it's important for these children left behind by their migrant parents to purposefully express themselves. Here at school through career guidance we created a space for children to at least find a teacher they feel comfortable with and to express how they feel and some do so through music or art." **(Kudzai, aged 55).**

These findings show that although parents do not intent for their children to be neglected but poverty forces them to find other better economic opportunities. Similarly, children left behind in China by

migrant parents they are reluctant to share and express their emotions as mentioned by Wang et al. (2019). In order to deal with these suppressed emotions, they engage in risky behaviours. Additionally, Chingwe and Chakanyuka (2023) conducted a study in Zimbabwe which highlighted that children who verbalize loneliness and cry openly communicating how they miss their parents get solace from their peers, teachers and other community members. It is important for these left behind children to learn how to express their emotions in a healthy way. When the environment show that these children's emotions are not important the children struggle with their psychological wellbeing and it has a long term effect. It is of importance to consider implementing family centres where children engage in art, drama and song which help them express their emotions just like the way it is done in China. This peer interaction helps them share experiences and have a sense of belonging.

4.5.0. Social work strategies to address the challenges faced by children left behind by migrant parents.

In order to support these children left behind by migrant parents, social work formulate various strategies. These include equipping and training caregivers, offering counselling services, promoting education on the concept of parental migration and resources provision programs to promote stability. These strategies can help in promoting resilience and empowerment to transnational families.

4.5.1. Training and equip caregivers

Support to caregivers through training and equipping them is a critical measure in assisting children left behind. Many participants concurred to this as a solution to consider. These include formulating welfare programs that offer food for nutritional purposes. Some other key informants mentioned that there is need to extent the BEAM to these children.

A key informant explained that;

*"As a social development officer, I think many relatives who are burdened by the caregiving role are lacking in terms of the knowledge and parental skills that are needed to support these children. ..... Providing them with targeted training is a strategy to empower them to offer better care and supervision to these children."***(John, aged 40).**

Another key informant (CCW) explained that;

"............ Including them on welfare programs like BEAM and FDMS. These can help with the burden of taking care of these children who are often overlooked." **(Gamu, aged 32)**

These outcomes suggest that caregivers need to be supported and trained in order to be able to provide proper care to the children left behind. Most of parental givers are the grandparents, housemaids or other relatives. Some may lack proper resources because of inconsistent remittances. This can reduce their motivation to properly take care of these children. Some caregivers lack parental skills and programs that train them assist in equipping them. An effective caregiver supports children physically and mentally which shapes the children's behaviour, mental health and even proper adaption into the society. Likewise, a study conducted in China show that caregivers who are usually grandparents are trained to positively support children in material, emotional warmth and guidance. This goes a long way in ensuring proper child development and resilience (Wang et al., 2019). Another study in Uganda conducted by Bourdillon (2018), concur that training and equipping caregivers has a direct impact in the resilience of the children left behind by migrant parents. The support groups can also offer counselling sessions to assist the caregivers with coping with the burden of taking care of these children. Therefore, it is crucial for social workers to tailor programs for these caregivers which directly promote a healthy environment for the children left behind.

4.5.2. Counselling

Community based counselling is a social work approach which is crucial in supporting the mental health of children left behind. Key informants indicated that social workers should offer counselling sessions to children left behind by migrant parents. This can be done facilitated by the Department of Social Development and other organizations. Services can be offered in school premises, in their offices and even in the homes where these children live.

A key informant mentions that;

"I came across these children in my experience working as social worker in this department. Some of them become child offenders all because they failed to get psychological support. Most of them have depression and anxiety which is often overlooked at home. The department has no specific intervention target for these children, and they need targeted counselling support." **(John, aged 40).**

Another key informant explained that:

"I started offering counselling sessions and they feel comfortable talking to me because I stay with them in the same village. This is helping some of them deal with depression and anxiety caused by the separation from their parent." **(Gamu, aged 32)**

The findings show that, counselling can promote mental wellness in children left behind. These counselling sessions can be done on a family level and individual basis in order to identify and solve mental problems these children are facing (Farinha, 2020). Similarly, Fellmeth et al., (2018) conducted a study in United States of America which shows that there are programs such as the American Academy of pediatrics' immigrant child health toolkit, which provide mental health support to children with migrant parents. This program help children manage stress and emotional hardships that they face in transnational families. Knowing the exact problems these children face can be a foundation base to formulate policies that help these children. In order to properly address this issue of concern Mkwananzi and Maposa (2021) suggested that social workers utilize counselling in supporting these children's wellbeing as they deal with mental distress, social isolation and even difficulties in their academics. In reviewing the above, it is of essence to consider offering counselling sessions to these children left behind as well as include caregivers and migrant parents. These mental difficulties have to be addressed in children as the symptoms can persist even into adulthood. This therefore shows that counselling is more than an immediate relief but rather it is a long term approach to promoting mental wellness.

4.5.3. Education

Everyone involved in the transnational family needs enlightenment on the unique experiences they may face and how to solve challenges they encounter. These include the children left behind, the caregiver, the migrant parents as well as the community members. Through awareness social workers

can inform about the challenges that migration bring on children left behind. Many participants indicated that they needed to be educated on how to deal with the problems they face.

A key informant (teacher) said that:

"More awareness need to be done in the community regarding hardships these children encounter which can reduce stigma by creating an environment that is more supportive to these child who are often overlooked." **(Peter, aged 35).**

Another key informant mentioned that;

".... If social workers could do campaigns in the community or even here at school on the impact of migration the community as whole would make more effort to ensure welfare for these left behind children. The social stigmatization, neglect and abuse that these children face can adequately be addressed." **(Kudzai, aged 55).**

Another key informant (migrant parent) said that;

"I think the community members can sympathize with these children only when they are enlightened on the challenges they go through. A better support system can be made available for these children if the environment is accommodating and not overlooking them." **(Rebecca, aged 40).**

These outcomes show that, education on the impact of migration can promote an overall understanding in the community of support networks that these children need. This directly promote resilience and healthy development of these children. this is similar to a study conducted in Nigeria by Fayomi (2022), which emphasized that children left behind are vulnerable to neglect and various forms of abuse but community interventions such as education have played a role in helping children left behind cope with the hardships in a transnational family. Madzivadondo (2012), concurred with a study in Zimbabwe showing that social workers need to formulate a tailored education program on the impact of migration. This will reduce social exclusion of these children and encourage them to be more resilient. It is of great importance to consider migration in the school's curriculum in order for the children to familiarize with this trend. Teachers and caregivers can be included in educational workshops such as workshops. Social workers can overseas these programs as well as establish support groups for these children. This therefore boost self-esteem of these children and resilience in the left behind children.

4.6.0. Chapter summary

This chapter explored the impact of parental migration on children left behind in ward 6, Maramba. It carries presentation of findings basing on the data collected and thematic analysis aligning with the objectives of the research. It offers more insight that is valuable on the complex issues related to parental migration.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides details of the key findings from chapter four, a summary of the research findings. Based on data presented it also contains conclusions and recommendations in addressing socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind by parents in the diaspora in ward 6, Maramba. The recommendations target the key themes that emerged from this study. The study's results were synthesized combined with practical recommendations which overall suggest that this chapter is a comprehensive conclusion for this study.

5.2 Summary

5.3.1. The nature of socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind.

Children left behind in ward 6 Maramba, face significant challenges due to parental migration. These include financial strains, emotional distress, and social isolation. The absence of parents disrupts family dynamics, disrupt the children's education and healthcare as well as cause health related issues such as anxiety and depression. In order to address these concerns, a comprehensive support system is crucial such as economic assistance, mental health services, and community based programs that offer social support through guiding and caring for these children. These strategies mitigate the devastating effects of parental migration on children left behind.

Children left behind in ward 6 Maramba encounter social challenges such as social isolation, and stigmatization in the community. These problems stem from interconnecting structural and relational factors such as being overlooked in the community, disrupted family dynamics and financial strain. The absence of parents has left these left behind children exposed to exploitation and abuse, as well as limited access to support networks pushing them to risky survival strategies to cope with the challenges such as mining. The lack in stable caregiving exacerbate feelings of abandonment and

depression. Social challenges such as parental separation and increased responsibilities, set off an array of emotional issues such as anxiety and stress.

Financial constraints is an issue of concern that left behind children face. It is commonly due to inconsistent and insufficient remittances from migrant parents. This disrupts the children's access to education, healthcare, and food. In order to cope these children are engaged into exploitative and hazardous work such as street vending, begging and mining. The cycle of poverty and vulnerability continues due to health risks, and abuse they face. Many of these children drop out of school or perform poorly in their academics compromising their future prospects.

5.2.2. Coping mechanisms for neglected children with parents in the diaspora.

The study revealed that children left behind by parents in the diaspora develop various coping strategies to deal with emotional and practical challenges. These include vending, begging and piece jobs in which they take on more responsibilities, and are burdened. However, despite these efforts, many children still experience emotional distress, feeling lonely, sad, and anxious due to the absence of their parents. Children engaged in piece jobs, vending, and begging face immense hardships, including exploitation, abuse, and economic instability. These informal livelihoods often expose them to hazardous working conditions, long hours, and minimal earnings, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Begging, in particular, can lead to emotional trauma, social stigma, and increased vulnerability to violence and exploitation. The struggle to survive on a daily basis can be overwhelming, with many children sacrificing their education, health, and well-being in the process. Some find solace in school or activities, while others struggle with feelings of abandonment and insecurity. The study highlights the complex reality of these children's lives, showcasing both their resilience and the ongoing emotional toll of family separation. While many adapt remarkably well, the lack of consistent parental presence poses significant challenges, emphasizing the need for community support systems to address their unique needs.

5.2.3. Social work strategies in addressing the challenges these children face

The findings have shown that, counselling, education, and training for caregivers are key social work strategies to address the challenges faced by left behind children. Counselling helps caregivers manage stress, develop empathy, and learn positive coping and problem-solving skills, which in turn improves their ability to support children emotionally and practically. Educational interventions equip caregivers with knowledge about child development, typical caregiving stressors, and available social support systems, empowering them to respond effectively to children's needs and seek help when necessary. Training programs further strengthen caregivers by teaching practical caregiving skills, effective communication, and self-care strategies, while connecting them to community resources and peer support networks. These interventions not only enhance the well-being of caregivers but also foster safer, more nurturing environments for left behind children, reducing the risks of neglect and promoting resilience within families and communities.

5.3. Conclusions

Based on the study, the conclusions drawn are:

The research explored on the socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind in ward 6, Maramba by parents in the diaspora. Comprehensive data was collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interview with 14 participants as well as 6 key informants. The research applied a phenomenological lens and a qualitative approach. Thematic analysis highlighted various themes and patterns from the study. The research also employed the ecological systems theory framework which revealed that the absence of these parents is affecting the children's well-being due to disruptions in family system, in education and other social structures. The interconnection of these effects of parental migration make the hardships these children face complex and bear a long term impact even into adulthood.

The ecological systems theory highlighted that children left behind face challenges which are interconnected starting from the child, family, community, and the social support networks. These

have disrupted these children's emotional, psychological, and social well-being which is critical in early childhood. This is why most of these children are emotionally detached, depressed and poorly perform in academics. The theory emphasizes that the hardships being faced by left behind children has further impact on the overall stability and functioning of the family and community. Therefore, this creates a cycle of distress and vulnerability in the community.

The research findings suggest a concerning state that children left behind in ward 6 Maramba are facing. The absence of their parents is continuously increasing these children's vulnerability and risks such as drug and substance abuse, child marriages, and sexual abuse. The impact is worsened by disruption in family structures which is supposed to be the primary support for these children as well as incapacity of caregivers to provide parental supervision and support due to reasons such as financial strain. This is a disturbing issue of concern as children need consistent support and care to be resilient and navigate through hardships they face when their parents are in the diaspora especially during the adolescence stage.

The economic instability in the country worsens the conditions for left behind children in rural areas in this case ward 6, Maramba. Many migrant parents are failing to provide consistent remittances which is shaking the financial foundation burdening caregivers who struggle to provide for the needs of these children increasing their vulnerability. A comprehensive support system is crucial to assist children left behind. These include professional counselling, educational resources, and financial assistance. More protective measures through policies and programs are needed to protect children from exploitation and abuse in the absence of their parents. These strategies help in mitigating the hardships being caused by parental migration as well as offer an environment that is safe for these children.

5.4. Implications for Social Work

The findings in this research call for social work methods that are holistic in nature, participatory and context specific. There is need to prioritize child centered assessments in order to understand nuance experiences these children have and offer mechanisms that replace the risky survival activities that these children engage in to survive. It is significance to incorporate an asset based approach using local resources from all sectors such as school and community leaders. This ensures protective multi

sectoral methods that work in ward 6 Maramba. In addition, it also ensures that the interventions are proactive and community engaged.

This study urges for the social work practice to extend beyond the common traditional offices but to be actively engaged in schools, community centers, health institutions and even in households through visits even when no case has been reported by to check the wellbeing of the children. Social workers require specialized training in trauma care and asset based approaches. The training equips practioners to easily identify and address psychological issues in children such as depression and anxiety. Social workers should be willing to use phenomenological and participatory methods to comprehend the experiences of children left behind as well as work with social systems available to help these children.

The study advocate for social workers to ethically uphold quality standards when handling these child protection issues. This involve informed consent, confidentiality and active participation of each and every child who is left behind on decisions concerning them. Social workers should advocate stronger legal policies and programs tailored to cover the gap left by caregivers and migrant parents in protecting these children.

5.5. Recommendations

Based on the study's results, recommendations are proposed in addressing socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind in ward 6 Maramba, by parents in the diaspora which aim at improving resilience and the wellbeing of these children.

5.5.1. Policy/programmatic recommendations to the government

The government should establish school-based counselling and support services. The placement of delegated social workers in schools in ward 6 Maramba area of UMP district. This ensures consistent psychosocial support and monitor children at risk as well as facilitating support groups for left behind children. The government should put a program that provide resources to the Community Child Protection Committees which include teachers, health workers, youth representatives and community leaders. This tailored intervention should also include trainings for caregivers on positive parental skills which ensures that vulnerable children get adequate assistance to deal with challenges they

face. Programs such as the Harmonized Cash Transfers, FDMS, BEAM should extent and be available for these children left behind which assist them in acquiring basic needs like food. Legal aid desks should be made accessible and an anonymous reporting mechanism in ward 6 as well as making awareness about them which ensures that exploitation and vulnerability of these children is reported. A database should be created to track records of children left behind, what help they need and what assistance they received as well as highlights on progress made.

5.5.2. To civil societies (CSO)s and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

These should strengthen school and community support through engagement with all school, as well as funding counselling services, and support groups to offer trauma -informed care, children protection to these children left behind. They should organize consistent workshops to train caregivers on positive parenting. It is encouraged for them to offer or fund awareness campaigns on the issue of parental migration and challenges faced by children left behind. The non-governmental organizations that focus on child protection should establish community-based monitoring systems within ward 6, to monitor and assist children who are at risk due to parental migration. They should provide referrals and have a priority to offer timely interventions. They should put programs tailored in mobilizing resources such as money and food to these children left behind. In addition, they can advocate policies to address further gaps and challenges encountered in assisting children left by parents in the diaspora.

5.5.3. To the Department of Social Development

The study recommends that the Department of Social Development intensify regular home visits for left behind children in Maramba ward 6 to identify issues of concerns that may not be reported or overlooked. The department should supervise and delegate officers who monitor programs in the community that assist children left behind by migrant parents. This ensures that the safety net for these children is comprehensive. The department should initiate workshops on trauma -informed care on children in order to ensure early identification of vulnerability of children left behind and prioritize assisting them as mandated by the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Community childcare workers should continue to be funded in order for them to continue bridging the gap between the community and formal social services which is critical because government resources are limited. This makes it for them to do home visits and attend to children who need protection which is a critical community intervention. The department should do workshops and train more community childcare workers to cope with the increased vulnerability of these left behind children which being caused by mass parental migration.

5.5.4. To the hospital

The medical professionals should participate in all awareness campaigns of the challenges faced by children left behind by migrant parents sharing insights on the health related issues related. They should provide mental health screening services and counselling to children who have been made vulnerable due to parental migration. Initiating adolescence friendly rooms at hospitals and in the community where children can confidentially seek assistance. The hospital should establish a database containing records of these children to track progress made in assisting them and formulating preventive measures that are conducive with the environment.

5.5.5. To the community

At village level and ward level Child Protection Committees should engage with the community member encouraging them to participate in awareness campaigns on children's rights and reporting mechanism as well as legal aid available for children left behind. The village head, councilors and the chief are encouraged to revise cultural practices that stigmatize and isolate children left behind by parents in the diaspora. These Child Protection Committee should include child representatives who are also children left behind by migrant parents, ensuring that the whole group's voice is heard in the community.

5.5.6. Interventions to solve the problems unearthed by the study

The Child Protection Committee should include child representatives of the various groups of vulnerable children in the community. It is crucial to consider having a child-led subcommittee that includes all vulnerable groups of children including children left behind by migrant parents. This is crucial in ensuring that children who are left behind participate in their own protection just as other vulnerable children as well as for their voices to be heard in the decisions concerning them.

A social worker should be deployed in this ward overall facilitating the programs tailored to assisting children left behind. It also includes monitoring and evaluating the progress being made in these programs. Community Childcare workers should be given incentives monthly in order for them to perform their work adequately. They should also conduct quarterly meetings and workshops with the department of social development officers ensuring they cope with contemporary challenges being faced by children left behind.

Traditional leaders in ward 6 should reinforce the issue of parental migration and its effects on children left behind, in their community dialogues and social meetings. A program offering conditional cash transfers and material resources to offer relief to these left behind children. It should also cover for aspects such as food, school uniforms, stationery, fees and health care. The program should also fund awareness campaigns whereby community members participate in drama and music promoting child protection as well reduce the social isolation of children left behind by parents in the diaspora.

5.6. Areas for Future Study

There is need for further research on quantitative data on the exact number of these children who are left behind in ward 6 Maramba. There is need for more research in other districts which is necessary to understand contextual differences of the experiences of these children. More comprehensive data is needed on the differences in psychological impact of paternal and maternal migration.

5.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter summarizes the challenges faced by children left behind by migrant parents in ward 6 Maramba. These include emotional distress and sexual abuse. It gave recommendations of community driven interventions such as strengthening child protection committees in supporting children left behind.

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APPENDICES

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH TOPIC: The socio-economic challenges experienced by children as a result of parental migration to the diaspora: A case study of ward 6, Maramba in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district.

Researcher: Rumbidzo Chakuwana

Institution: Bindura University of Science Education

Dear participant

I am Chakuwana Rumbidzo, a Social Work student at Bindura University of Science Education conducting a research on the socio-economic challenges being encountered by neglected children left behind by parents in the diaspora in Maramba area ward 6. The research aims to formulate interventions to address the needs of left behind children. I am kindly asking you to participate in the face to face interviews that are going to be conducted as means of collecting data. The researcher understands the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the information you provide is solely for educational purposes only.

If you agree to participate please sign below.

Participant signature..

Researcher's signature...

Date..

For more information, you may contact: 0718 208 306

Appendix 1: In- depth interview guide with transnational children.

Participation is voluntary and the discussion will be confidential. Be reminded that, the research has no harm and your names will not be capture

1. Demographic Data

What is your age?

....

Gender: male/female?

....

How long have you been part of a transnational family?

....

Who are you staying with at home?

....

Which school do you attend?

....

Current level of education?

....

2: Exploring in socio-economic challenges faced by neglected children in transnational families within ward 6.

What challenges have encountered since your parents/guardians left you behind for diaspora?

....

....

....

Who is responsible for taking care of you at home? Are they doing a good job?

....

....

Do you attend school? What challenges related to your education have you faced?

....

....

....

Do you have access to healthcare and other essential services?

....

....

What financial constraints have you had in accessing basic needs such as food?

....

....

3. Coping mechanisms adopted by neglected children in transnational families.

What strategies have you used to cope with the challenges you are facing

i. At school

....

ii. At home

....

iii. At in the community

....

Are there institutions that assist you in coping with these challenges?

....

....

4. Intervention to addressing the challenges faced by these children

What kind of support do you need that you view as helpful in your situation?

....

....

Which institutions do you think can assist you and in what manner?

....

....

How do you think policy makers can better assist you in your needs?

....

....

This is the end of my interview. Thank you for your participation!!!

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

KEY INFORMANTS CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH TOPIC: The socio-economic challenges experienced by children as a result of parental migration to the diaspora: A case study of ward 6, Maramba in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe district.

Researcher: Rumbidzo Chakuwana

Institution: Bindura University of Science Education

Dear participant

I am Chakuwana Rumbidzo, a Social Work student at Bindura University of Science Education conducting a research on the socioeconomic challenges being encountered by neglected children left behind by parents in the diaspora in Maramba area ward 6. The research aims to formulate interventions in order to address the needs of left behind children. I am kindly asking you to participate in the face to face interviews that are going to be conducted as means of collecting data. The researcher understands the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the information you provide is solely for educational purposes only.

If you agree to participate please sign below.

Participant signature...

Researcher's signature...

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

For more information, you may contact: 0718 208 306

APPENDIX 2: IN- DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH KEY INFORMANTS

Participation is voluntary and the discussion will be confidential. Be reminded that, the research has no harm and your names will not be captured.

1.Demographic Data

What is your age?

  ....

Gender: male/female?

  ....

Which institution do you work for?

  ....

Occupation?

  ....

2. Exploring socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind

What are the major challenges faced by children with parents in the diaspora?

  ....

  ....

How do these challenges affect their child development?

  ....

  ....

Are there specific challenges to certain specific groups of children? Explain why?

  ....

  ....

3. Coping mechanisms adopted by children left behind

What coping mechanisms have been used by these children to cope with the hardships they face related to being in a transnational family?

  ....

  ....

Are there institutions offering services (counseling, health, education) to these children?

....

....

How accessible are they to these children?

....

....

Are there programs and initiatives stipulated to help these children?

....

....

4. Intervention to address these challenges faced by children left behind

What support services are needed by these children? How accessible are they?

....

....

How can child protection service providers, from the government, community and non-governmental organisations formulate a collaborative system to assist children with parents in the diaspora?

....

....

What do you think policy makers should consider in addressing the challenges faced by children in transnational families?

....

....

....

This is the end of my interview. Thank you for your participation!!!

APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE WITH RESPONDENTS

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Focus Group Discussion Guide with Respondents

I am Chakuwana Rumbidzo, a Social Work student at Bindura University of Science Education conducting a research on the socioeconomic challenges being encountered by neglected children left behind by parents in the diaspora in Maramba area ward 6. The research aims to formulate interventions in order to address the needs of children left behind. I am kindly asking you to participate in this group discussion. The researcher understands the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the information you provide is solely for educational purposes only.

1. Socio-economic challenges faced by children left behind by parents in the diaspora.

What social challenges are these children facing?

What economic challenges are these children facing?

What is the impact of these challenges on the wellbeing of left behind children?

What is the long term impact?

How does parental migration disrupt education, socialization and child development?

2. Coping mechanisms by adopted by these left behind children

How are left behind children surviving from the effects of parental migration?

What strategies do they use in dealing with financial constraints, family separation and psychological difficulties?

Are there institutions that support these children?

3. Interventions are needed to help these children

What strategies can be employed to help these children?

Thank you.

Appendix 4: Confirmation Letter from the Institution

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

P. Bag 1020
BINDURA, Zimbabwe

Tel: 263 - 71 - 7531-6, 7621-4

Fax: 263 - 71 - 7534

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date: 17 FEBRUARY 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer:......*Rumbidzo Chakuwana*..........
Student Registration Number:...B2102528..who is a **BSc SOCIAL WORK** student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area/institution.

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

Yours faithfully

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
SOCIAL WORK CHAIRPERSON

17 FEB
1 6 JAN 2025

FACULTY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
PRIVATE BAG 1028, BINDURA, ZIMBABWE

MS E.E. CHIGONDO
CHAIRPERSON
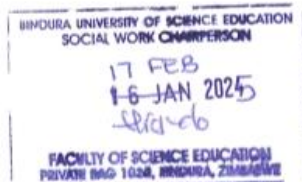
Appendix 5: Research Approval Letter from DSDO UMP District

Official Communication Should not be Addressed to Individuals

Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare

Department of Social Development
Post Office Box 205
Mutawatawa   Email: dsdoump@gmail.com
UMP District

19 February 2025

Dear Rumbidzo Chakuwana

REF: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA ON YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC IN UZUMBA MARAMBA PFUNGWE DISTRICT, MASHONALAND EAST PROVINCE

The above subject matter refers;

Following a minute dated 17 February 2025 from Bhindura University of Science Education requesting our office to permit you and assist you to collect data in relation to your research topic. The office of Social development is permitting you Rumbidzo Chakuwana to collect data. You are being urged to show high level of professionalism during your data collection exercise. Feel free to approach the office whenever you need assistance, and the office is wishing you the best during the exercise.

Your great cooperation will be greatly appreciated

Regards

Elvis Beni ....
District Social Development Officer – UMP

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT

19 FEB 2025

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MUTAWATAWA