



**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**
**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

Exploring the psychosocial and socioeconomic experiences of single-female parent
eMbumbulu

By

Philile Shezi

221108920

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Social Science

in the School of Social Sciences,

College of Humanities,

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Supervisor:

Dr Wellington Mthokozisi Hlengwa

Declaration

I, Philile Shezi declare that:

The information in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is original.

This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any university.

This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

This dissertation does not contain other persons' writings unless specifically acknowledged as deriving from another source. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

Their words have been rewritten but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.

Where their exact words have been used, their writings have been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.

This dissertation does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation and in the bibliography".

.....

Philile Shezi

.....

Supervisor

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank God, whose amazing and inextinguishable fountain of love and strength has inspired me all the way. My sufficiency is of Him and without Him taking control, nothing would have been possible.

With much honour and appreciation, I would like to give my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr Hlengwa, for all the support, assistance, guidance and encouragement. I would also like to thank my mother Engel Zanele Shezi for all the support she had rendered me, without her it would not have been possible to survive this journey.

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation to everyone who provided helpful suggestions concerning the study right from the beginning to the end.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father and brother, you are forever missed

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACRHR-	African Charter on Rights on Human and People's Rights
ACRWC -	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AIDS-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BEE-	Broad Based Economic Empowerment
CBO-	Community Based Organisation
CSG -	Child Support Grant
DOD-	Department of Social Development
DOE -	Department of Education
DHS-	Department of Human Settlement
DOL -	Department of Labour Support
GEAR -	Growth Employment and Redistribution
HIV -	Human Immune Virus
HSRC -	Human Sciences Research Council
ICPD-	International Conference on Population and Development
LGA-	Local Government Area
NGP -	New Growth Path
NGO -	Non-Governmental Organisation
RDP -	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SADC -	Southern African Development Community
UN -	United Nations
UNCRC -	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children

US -	United States
USA -	United States of America
WHO-	World Health Organisation

Abstract

The study explored social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu, which followed a qualitative methodology enquiry. Results of the study show that single mothers in uMbumbulu are faced with the daunting task of providing for their children, which therefore, carries psycho-social and economic experiences which they have to overcome. Financial challenges as well as community stereotyping coupled with difficulties in balancing social life and providing for the family are some of the challenges' single mothers in uMbumbulu face. This study therefore recommends that Single-parents must participate in support groups led by social workers and support one another in light of their shared circumstances. There is also need for increased social workers in uMbumbulu to conduct programs which help single mothers with information and space to freely express themselves so as to become better and cope with responsibilities of providing for their children

Key words: Unemployment, Single mother, parenting, socio-economic

Table of contents

Cover page	01
Declaration	02
Acknowledgements	03
Dedication	04
List of acronyms and abbreviations	05
Abbreviations	06
Abstract	07
Table of contents	08
Table of contents	09
Table of contents	10
Chapter one- introduction	11
Problem statement	12
Rationale of the study	13
Objectives of the study	14
Conclusion	15
Chapter 02- review of literature	16
Single parent socio economic issues	17
Single parent socio economic issues	18
Policies and legislations	19
Policies and legislations continued	20
High rate of divorce in south africa	21
Overview of the literature	22
Positive societal perceptions of single mothers	23
Mental health status and financial strain of single parents	24
Quality of life for children under single parents	25
Single parents and home ownership	26
Positive self perceptions of single mothers	27

Positive self-perceptions of single mothers	28
The triple bind of single parent families	29
Inadequate employment	30
Inadequate policy	31
Implications of single household on welfare	32
Economic challenges on single parent households	33
Coping strategies of single parent households	34
Theoretical framework	35
Conclusion	36
Chapter 03- research methodology	37
Data collection	38
Data analysis	49
Credibility	40
Ethical considerations	41
Chapter 04- introduction	42
Psychosocial stress	43
Interviews	44
Interviews	45
Difficulty making decisions	46
Interviews	47
Interviews	48
Shame and guilt	59
Difficulties getting new partners	50
Coping mechanisms	51
Dead social life	52
Family support	53
Responsibilities	54
Income and expenditure	55
Education for children	56

Society stereotyping	57
Loss of parental support	58
Remarrying	59
Chapter 05	60
Difficulty making decisions for the family	61
Sense of shame and guilt	62
Children as primary concerns	63
The role of family support	64
Society stereotyping	65
Conclusion	66
Chapter 06- introduction	67
Recommmendations and limitations	68
Conclusion	69
References	70
References	71
References	72
References	73
Refereces	74
References	75
References	76
References	77
References	78
Appendix 01- interview schedule	79
Appendix 02- gate keepers letter	80
Appendix 03- ethical clearance	81
Appendix 04- informed consent 01	82
Appendix 05- informed consent 02	83
Appendix 06- turnitin report	84

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Literature suggests that, there are various types of families that exist (Freeman, 2017). These include nuclear, child-headed and single-mother households amongst other, which comprise of a mother and dependent children (Freeman, 2017). According to Kruger, Fitzgerald and Peterson, (2010), a single female household is a nuclear family where one or more children are nurtured by a woman which is one representation of a range and diversity of family units in modern society (Golombok, Zadeh, Sophie, Imrie, Smith, Venessa & Freeman, 2016). According to Agnafors, Bladh, Svedin and Sydsjö (2019), single-female parent households face many unique challenges, regardless of whether the causes are related to divorce, separation, and loss of a spouse, migration, choice, or teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, Agnafors et al (2019) continues to say, key challenges female headed families face, are social and economic in nature, due to the need to provide for children. In agreement to this, Williams (2011) further notes that parenting role is a hard responsibility which in this instance proves twice as hard for females. This submission therefore, marks that parenting is associated with challenges and stereotypes attached by the society. Challenges faced by such households, according to Freeman, (2017) usually are economic in nature due to one or no source of income. In addition, “single mothers often experience economic inches include amongst others, wage inequality, precarious low-paid contract jobs, political and social stigma (Kroese, Bernasco, Liefbroer, and Rouwendal, 2021). This study therefore seeks to explore the social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu and their attempts to seek help to cope with the impact of being a single mother.

1.2. Study Background

Statistics South Africa (2021), report has revealed that black children aged 0–17 are staying with their biological father at home compared to their peers of other races. Furthermore, Stats SA (2021) reveals that only 31.7% of black children stayed with their biological fathers, compared to 51.3% of coloured children, 86.1% of Indian/Asian children and 80.2% of white children. Furthermore Stats SA (2011) revealed that, more than 20 000 under 18-year-old children are affected by divorce whereas, 9 million children are growing up in households with an absence of the biological fathers, also, 98 000 children live in child-headed households, 81% of whom have a living mother. This therefore, brings a concern as it infers

that many South African children live in a crisis, (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). These statistics therefore, reveals that in black communities' the burden of parenting mostly remain with mothers, which then constitutes single-parent household family setting. The single-female households' family, are therefore fast becoming the new norm in South Africa (Ndlovu, 2013) which speaks to the socioeconomic challenges in single mothering this study aims to focus on.

In single mother headed family the link between financial hardship, poor health and poor mental health has been demonstrated in multiple populations (Golombok et al, 2016). Single females are likely to experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, and general stress, despite making extensive efforts to meet their financial obligations (Dlamini, 2015) as they are often without external support. Also, Dlamini continues highlighting that, social isolation, loneliness and withdrawal is often argued to corrode single mothers psychological wellbeing and mental health and Umbumbulu community is of no exception to such challenges (Dlamini, 2015). With all of the challenges that single mother face, Golombok et al. (2016) add that over and above them, they also are faced with stigmatisation in that they are in possession of a set of characteristics that convey a social identity that is often devalued within society (Golombok et al. 2016). What Golombok's argument suggests is the heteropatriarchal notions of womanhood in society which positions women to have husbands as a kneejerk necessity otherwise deemed to have failed this order. In addition, high levels of distress, low economic resources and a lack of stress buffering resources, lead to poor psychological coping strategies amongst single females (Sewpaul, and Pillay, 2011). This study therefore seeks to explore the psychosocial and socioeconomic experiences of single females in Umbumbulu and how these mothers can begin to disintegrate themselves from this societal expectation.

1.3. Problem Statement

Globally, single parenting has been a subject of research with separation and divorce being reported as major life stressors and causes of single parenthood (Ndlovu, 2013). In South Africa, 30% of households are single-parent households, with the figure being higher in rural areas (Statistics South Africa, 2013). More than 20 000 children under the age of 18 years are affected by divorce and since 2013 about 9 million children were reported to be growing with an absent biological father and the number rose with a 3rd by 2021 census. In such a setting,

Shefer and Clowes (2012) conclude that fathers are not playing their role and responsibility, such as nurturing and caring for their children which thus becomes a burden to women.

Historically, in KwaZulu, during the apartheid era, single-parent households have been attributed to political violence which led to many deaths, especially males (Mudau, Mukansi & Ncube, 2018). Pillay (2011) reported that “the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and divorce destructed the family structure and led to many single parents’ households.” The danger of this is that children end up growing up in less safe, insecure households and unpredictable future due to the absence of one parent.

The increasing phenomenon of single-parent households in a low income, predominantly rural community in KwaZulu Natal, has been recorded by scholars such as Ndlovu (2013) as well as Mudau, Mukansi and Ncube, (2018) that deep economic and psycho-social challenges have been recorded. According to Kroese, et al, (2021), socio-economic challenges that single mothers experience, also differ from society to society, as this is also determined by cultural and societal structures as well as how females are valued in that particular society. This study therefore seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of psychosocial and socioeconomic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu, indicate the causes but also provide alternative measures these single mothers can explore to lessen their burden.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

The key motivation for embarking on this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of psychosocial and socioeconomic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu. One of the main concerns was the increase in the number of single parent households in Umbumbulu which then experience challenges in coping with the socio-economic obstacles and reportage of psychosocial ills. In addition, the findings of this study would complement previous studies in highlighting the gaps pertaining to the support structures available for single-mother households in general.

1.5 Aim of the study

To explore psychosocial and socioeconomic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu.

1.5.1. Objectives of the study

1. To understand the psychosocial experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu.
2. To find out the coping mechanisms strategies of single mother's households in Umbumbulu.
3. To find out the socioeconomic challenges of single mothers in Umbumbulu.

1.5.2. Research Questions

1. What are the psychosocial experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of single mothers in Umbumbulu?
3. What are the socioeconomic challenges of single mothers in Umbumbulu?

1.6. Thesis Overview

This study is divided into (6) chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction, brief background of the study, statement of the problem, the main aim of the study, objectives, and research questions as well as the justification for the study.

Chapter (2) comprise the theoretical framework adopted for the study as a guideline and the literature review which reviews relevant social scientific literature in and outside South Africa, on social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu.

Chapter (3) provides research methodology and research design of the study, which unpacks plans on how information for the study was gathered, analysed and presented, whom to get information from, and when. The research follows a qualitative approach on the basis that qualitative research enables the researcher to construct meanings and interpret the social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu. The Chapter is divided into four main sections which include study area, research design, where the targeted population, sample size as well as sampling techniques used for the study is discussed. Methodological approaches which were used in this study make up the third section of this chapter. The methodology section, in addition, presents data collection and data analysis techniques that were used in the study. The last section of the chapter discusses limitations which were encountered during the study as well as ethical considerations that were observed in conducting the study.

Chapter (4) is the presentation, analysis, and Interpretation of findings of the study.

Chapter (5) is the discussion of findings presented, analysed and interpreted in chapter 4. The chapter discusses by reasoning, the data collected on the field while giving reasons why the collected data is as it is.

Chapter (6) provides conclusions, which is the summary of the study and the similarities which results of this study have with the existing theories adopted for this study. The last part of chapter 6 presents the recommendations made by the researcher basing on the findings and results of the study.

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter sets the roadmap for the study by showing objectives, aim, research questions and justification as well as the statement of the problem of the study. The chapter therefore

clearly shows why the social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu have to be investigated. The chapter also details how the thesis is structured in the chapters to follow by presenting the thesis overview

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1. Introduction

Single parenting is a phenomenon that is in the rise in South Africa (Mabuza N, 2014). The moving of men to work in mines weighs as both the historical but also the seminal argument for how and why women have experienced single parenting. This speaks to the urbanisation that took place and leaving many women with the burden of raising children alone (Mabuza, 2014). According to Agnafors, Bladh, Svedin and Sydsjö, (2019) challenges faced by single mothers vary in shape and form. With this, Agnafors et al. (2019) supported by Kroese, Bernasco, Liefbroer and Rouwendal (2021) note that, parents who find themselves in singlehood due to divorce are prompted with the task to redefine their definition of family. This chapter, therefore, presents literature on various aspects relating to single parent household and particularly focusing on female headed families.

2.2.2. Policies and support in Africa relating to single parenthood.

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACRHR) of 1981, Article 18, defines the family as "the natural unit and basis for society, which requires that states protect families and take care of families' physical health and morale". In Africa, female headed families remain critical due to the unique factors of their social, economic, cultural and traditional circumstances, natural disasters, exploitation and hunger and, on account of the child's physical and mental immaturity he or she needs special safeguards and care (Renzaho, 2020). Renzaho's submission is also a clear indication of how conquest influenced the African's family unit due to the destabilization it came with. In addition, article 20 (2) of the ACRHR obliges nation states to "render all appropriate support and assistance including material support, to parents, especially male and female single-parent households and others who are responsible for the well-being and development of children" (Renzaho, 2020). Nzima, and

Maharaj, (2020) argue that “African families have been negatively impacted through the scourge of HIV/AIDS and consequences of the legacy of apartheid, as it put additional pressures on the sustainability of families and households.” This directly speaks to South Africa as apartheid caused a lot of displacement due to the conflict between Whites and Blacks, prison confinement and the automatic single parenting women had to take upon. Elsewhere, a study in Kenya, by Renzaho, (2020), also shows that “the rapid increase in adult mortality due to the AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa raises a great concern about potential intergenerational effects on children as they grow in unsafe and vulnerable environments. Furstenberg and Harris, (2019) also gives evidence to the above concern by stating that “the two parent households are disappearing”. This is what my study aims to showcase, that there are many factors leading to a home to end up being run by a single parent although my study focuses to the single parenting of by mothers in Umbumbulu.

It is noted that there is another issue that is deterioration kinship-based family structures in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is the increase in single-parent households, especially among young urban people (Mansour, et al, 2020). “As increasing numbers of women have joined the labour force, single and female headed households have become a discernible pattern on the African society landscape” (Mansour et al 2020),). These authors highlight that as women are joining the labour movement by seeking green pastures especially in the metropolis, their children have had to suffer the consequences by experiencing being raised by not their parents. “According to the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) 2017 data from four countries (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe), indicate that nearly half of all women will have experienced at least one episode of single motherhood before reaching the age of 45,” (Jayawarna, et al, 2021,). Jayawarna, Marlow, & Swail, (2021: 1394) estimated that in all the abovementioned countries, the total likelihood of ever being a female single household by the age of 45 is quite substantial: 30.0% in Ethiopia, 59.5% in Kenya, 61.0% in Malawi, 51.7% in Tanzania, and 68.8% in Zimbabwe.

2.2.3. Single-Parent socioeconomic issues, policies and support in South Africa

Families in South Africa have been impacted by politics, urbanisation and industrialisation and they have evolved to form non-traditional families, particularly single mother families (Sithole, & Falkof, 2019) due to various contexts. However, to elucidate, children in South Africa grow up in a variety of families from these circumstances, which include families

formed by marriage, in cohabiting unions, in lesbian and gay families, and in single-parent families (Golombok et al. 2016). It is this family make that this thesis brings its divergence by indicating that in Umbumbulu there is a rise of children being raised by mothers and establishing a different family structure. The South African White Paper on Families Section 3 defines the family as, “the natural and fundamental group unit of society entitled to protection by society and the state”. This definition by the White Paper gives ideas of a family as a “group” which is more than one person but that is not the case in my area of focus as it means on one person is involved and female. In Chapter 2, principle 9, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Plan of Action (1994), and World Summit for Social Development (1995) assert that, “the family is a basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened in different cultural, political and social systems”. This definition by the World Summit still suggests that a family is more than one person, however, it opens channels for enquiry when it suggests that the idea of a “family” depends according to a particular context.

“One of the international instruments relevant for the family is the requirement that governments formulate family-sensitive policies, promote self-reliance and participation of families, and take consideration of the aspirations and expectations of families” (White Paper on Families, 2012). Sewpaul and Pillay (2011) critiques the South African Family Policy in that “it gives the impression of being uninformed by scrutinising how factors such as race, class and gender intersect to influence access to power, privilege, status, and resources in modern South Africa”. This critique is of interest for my study as it speaks to the fact that single parenting especially by mothers is often not a personal choice but due to unforeseen circumstances as migration, child neglect and abandonment by fathers and pursuing labour in the cities and leaving mothers to take up on the role of caring for children solely. Sewpaul and Pillay (2011,) further argues that “the policy does not pay much attention to the most limiting and destructive structural forces such as neoliberal capitalism and market-induced inequality on single-parent households in South Africa.” This is important to note as it accentuates the multi perspectives that influence single parenting although my study is focusing on the ways in which many single-parent households suffer financially and psychosocially and how this poses a great threat to the South African single-parent households as they are on the increase marking the need to discuss policies and the kind of support the South African government is offering to families in need (Kroese, et al. 2021).

2.2.4. Policies and Legislation which guide and offer support to single headed families in South Africa

This section will focus on the national legislation framework and policies, namely “the South Constitution of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996, White Paper on Families in South Africa October 2012, National Family policy (2005), Employment Equity Act No.55 of 1998 and Social Security Act (2004)” and how these policies guide and offer financial support to single female headed families. According to Gerard, Imbert, and Orkin (2020) government actions are essential to support families in responding to their crisis in this case single female headed families. The White Paper on Families’ main aim of promoting family life and strengthening the family; resonates with sections 26, 27, 28 and 29 of the Constitution of South Africa. Section 26 is concerned with the right to adequate housing, while Section 27 enshrines the right to healthcare, food, water, and social security. With Section 26 and Section 27, the Constitution of South Africa clearly notes that “the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures within available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of the rights” (The White Paper on Families, 2012).

Section 28 deals with the right of the child and Section 29 is regarding the right to education. According to the White Paper on Families Section 4 (2012) the basic approach adopted in developing the White Paper on Families was to consider the legislative and policy framework outlined in Section 3, to draw on the inputs from the consultative process on the Green Paper on Families (described in Section 1.2). The White Paper (2012:8) perceives the family as a key development essential for a productive family structure and seeks to mainstream family issues into government-wide, policy-making initiatives in order to foster positive family wellbeing and overall socio-economic development in the country.

National Family Policy focuses on the principle that families are the core of society (Chaudhary, et al, 2018). Its aim is to “protect and support the families through effective and efficient service delivery; the creation of an enabling environment geared towards the self-reliance of families and the promotion of inter-sectoral collaboration amongst stakeholders in the provision of services” (Chaudhary, et al, 2018). According to Sewpaul & Pillay (2011) National Family Policy is underpinned by a clear understanding of structural sources of privilege and of the forces of oppression, exclusion and poverty that bear on the lives of people, and that such policy aims at working towards justice. Sewpaul and Pillay (2011)

further argues that “the National Family Policy regulates job creation to the corporate sector, thus supporting the notion that unemployment is a private issue as in its description of the roles of the various government departments, nowhere does the report indicate the issue of job creation”. Family policy is perceived as a drive for assisting households such as single-parent households to prevent them from breakdown and vulnerability (Chaudhary, et al, 2018).

Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is a “coherent and integrated programme which is people-centred”. The RDP integrated the goals of growth, development, and redistribution. The RDP policy insisted that the democratic state must play a foremost role in guiding the economy and the market towards reconstruction and development. According to Ncube, (2021), the policy’s programmes focused on both the redistribution of wealth and the promotion of economic growth, on the supposition that if policy focuses merely on promoting economic growth, it will aggravate the existing inequalities, disseminate mass poverty and suppress economic growth as a result of monopolised economy.

The Department of Finance also introduced another strategy in 1996 which aimed at rebuilding and restructuring the economy in line with the goals of RDP and that strategy was the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. Ncube, (202,), states that GEAR policy was aimed at providing the country with a comprehensive and well-integrated macro-economic framework in order to confront the challenges of meeting basic needs, developing human resources, and increasing participation in democratic institutions of civil society. One of its initiatives is to help people acquire funds to open up their own businesses so that they can be self-reliant. (Ncube, 2021), argue that the bottomless levels of unemployment and poverty, coupled with the state’s failure to render basic services, can be traced to the conservative macro-economic policy of GEAR. As much as these policies steer towards an indication of supporting single-headed families especially those by women, they still do not address how they provide psychosocial support which thesis speaks to. Thus, the investigation this study poses is aimed at flashing out the gaps in single parenthood.

Although, it is vital to note that all single-parent households are regarded as part of the national economy and make contributions towards their growth. However, this calls for economic policy to be in line with the promotion of family life and strengthening of the family in South Africa. According to Tshabalala and Gunter (2021), GEAR policy restricted

government spending on social services and presented tax incentives to investors for them to draw the attention of corporate and factory investment. This negatively impacted some departments such as Department of Social Development as there was less funding directed towards public expenditure to address challenges of the society's single parents included (Ncube, 2021). The Department of Social Development has wonderful and beautifully visionary policies on paper, but the enforcement is often at a sluggish pace which leaves the citizens in desperate and destitute positions.

White paper on families (2012) ascertains that in 2001 the Department of Labour (DOL) sought to tackle unemployment by introducing the Skills Development Programme (SDP), which aims to provide skills to empower people for employment. Liang, Berger, & Brand, (2019), confirms that single motherhood has been identified as a challenging role in terms of financial hardships and poor mental health. Liang, Berger, & Brand, (2019) further argues that raising children is hard and being a single parent is twice as hard. While single-parent households have to play the role of both mom and dad, they also have to fight financial problems with only one paycheck, instead of two which, I argue, contributes to the psychosocial and socioeconomic difficulties that single mothers face.

2.2.6. High rate of divorce in South Africa

The rising divorce rate which contributes to high number of single-parent households is a concern (Golombok et al. 2016). According to South African Divorce Statistics (SADS) (2021), the provincial divorce rate distribution indicates that Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Eastern Cape provinces are with the highest number of divorces. Together the four provinces contribute 82,6% of the divorces. In South Africa there is an increasing number of people who are choosing to raise children on their own, however in most cases both mothers and fathers become single mothers through death and divorce. The quality of childcare or parenting is frequently compromised due to the length of time spent working in order to support children in single mother families. Single mothers may not have the choice of being stay-at-home parent if they are the sole providers in a family (Knijn, & Patel, 2018). Thus, single mothers may often suffer from strain and chronic fatigue which could result in ineffective parenting compared to parenting by married parents (Knijn, & Patel, 2018). The belief is that families in which two parents are present provide more stable environments for children compared to single-parent homes because two parents can assist

each other in rearing children. Furthermore, shared parenting rather than single parenting may increase the likelihood of positive developmental outcomes for children (Knijn, & Patel, 2018). These authors delve deeper into the ways in which single parenting can be constituted and the limitations it brings to both the child and the parent and in the context of this study, the single mothers. It is vital to also note how optimal mother-child interaction in single-parent families is predicted by fewer stressful life events, reduced social contact, increased parenting support, and the hours of maternal employment (Dlamini, 2015). To substantiate the predicaments that face single parented households, Dlamini makes the distinction by providing that optimal mother-child interaction in two-parent families is predicted by fewer stressful life events, satisfaction with emotional support, and the availability of household help. Social contacts, household help, and employment differentially predict mother-child interactions in both single and two-parent families (Dlamini, 2015).

2.2.7. Overview of the Literature on the Negative Societal Perceptions of Single Parents

As the number of single parents continues to rise, unfavourable depictions of these families remain (Parry, et al, 2020,). In their study Parry, et al, (2020) looking at portrayals of never-married single parents and divorced parents, found that while unfavourable depictions of divorced parents declined over the century, the portrayal of never-married single parents appears to be as unfavourable in the 21st century. Additionally, researchers have continued to document many negative or less positive views of single parents and compared single parents with other groups of parents (married parents and intact nuclear families) and other marginalized groups (gay and lesbian parents, people of colour, low income parents” (Parry, et al, 2020). Pitzen, (2021), reported that never married single parents were viewed more negatively on five scales that measured constructs such as stability, parental satisfaction, and personal characteristics and security. Similar findings were identified by Millings, Hirst, Sirois, & Houlston, (2020), who examined undergraduate students’ perceptions of five different parent groups (married, divorced, stepparent, never-married, and single adults without children) and revealed that never-married parents were perceived as most likely to have poor parenting skills and family relationships. These findings by the aforementioned authors are essential for this thesis for how it begins to showcase that “poor parenting skills” cannot be taken at first value without an in-depth understanding of the contexts like this study

aims at doing by studying the psychosocial and the socioeconomic experiences of single mothers at Umbumbulu.

In addition to the perceived negative attributes of single parent families as a group, Nieuwenhuis, and Maldonado, (2018), have found that while single parents are viewed as experiencing hardship, they are less likely to be viewed as victims of oppression. It is in these negative attributes that this study forms its departure by aiming to showcase that single parenting for mothers has so many factors that should not be seen as mothers being poor parents. In this study discussed by Nieuwenhuis and Maldonado speaks about the hardships faced by single parent families perceived by research participants as the result of individual choices, rather than the outcome of negative stereotypes around family structures, which disproportionately impacts single parents (Nieuwenhuis, and Maldonado, 2018). The failure to recognize social oppression as an incorporated force in the lives of single parents further vilifies their already tainted reputation.

2.2.8. Positive Societal Perceptions of Single Mothers

There is very little research that documents the perceived positive attributes of single mothers. It is important to wonder if this lack of documentation is due to the powerful socializing institutions (i.e., patriarchy), which fails to document the histories and experiences of women and fails to see women who exist outside of defined societal norms in a positive light (Nieuwenhuis, and Maldonado, 2018). It is important to note that the few research findings that do highlight the positive societal perceptions of single mothers continue to be driven by the “good mother” stereotype, which involves the culturally proscribed belief that in order to be successful in the role of a mother, a woman must spend time with her children and put others’ needs ahead of her own (Nieuwenhuis, and Maldonado, 2018). These findings additionally describe the powerful “myth of motherhood” which contributes to totalizing effects of mothers as either all good (loving, kind, patient) or all bad (cold, rejecting, controlling). This idea is particularly relevant to single mothers as they may experience additional stigmas related to performing the constrained gender norms of both “mother” (domestic responsibilities) and “father” (paid, occupational responsibilities) and thus, be labelled “all bad” for stepping outside of gender norms. While it is important to note that some of the researchers did not intend to search for positive societal perceptions of single mothers specifically, a few perceptions have been identified nonetheless. Kim, et al

(2018), reported that single mothers possess the ability to design their own plan for success and skilfully utilize various support networks as they balance work and family life. Furthermore, while the status of single motherhood continues to carry stigma, Pollmann-Schult, (2018) discussed that parental status should not be an over-determining factor for societal perception, which could suggest that never-married single mothers can be acknowledged and appreciated for other facets in their lives and that their status as single parents should not define them.

2.2.9. Mental Health Status & Financial Strain of single parents

Single mothers are at a greater risk for psychiatric distress when compared to the general population, with most women having experienced a DSM-III-R diagnosis of major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, agoraphobia or panic attacks (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Such rates are shown to increase within the non-working mother population and those who are receiving financial assistance (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Additionally, poor single mothers are at heightened risk for experiencing traumas such as rape, domestic violence and molestation, also increasing the likelihood of PTSD related symptoms (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018).

While single mother populations show increased presentation of psychiatric symptomatology than other groups of women, prevalence of mental disorders decrease with individuals' rising socioeconomic status (SES) (Liang, et al, 2019). Pollmann-Schult, (2018) found that those in the lowest SES groups are two and a half times more likely to have mental health related problems than those of highest SES membership. Current welfare reforms have aimed to increase self-sufficiency, but those with lower educational attainment have shown increased likelihood of hitting the time limit for receiving financial assistance (Liang, et al, 2019). While it is hoped that educational attainment would assist with raising families above poverty lines, little data has been collected on the financial strain and/or annual income rates of single mothers.

2.2.10. Quality of Life for Children under single parents

According to Liang, Berger, and Brand, (2019), poor parental mental health is documented as a consistent risk factor for less optimal parenting and poor developmental outcomes for children in low-income families. The results of a three-year longitudinal study on single

mothers with young children served to support the idea of educational/employment development as a means for positive family and financial life change. Participants were composed of employed and unemployed current and former welfare recipients both before and after the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The study focused on the prevalence of depressive symptoms within this population as well as parenting style patterns. Results of this study showed positive association between educational attainment, employment, and positive parenting. While single mother employment at the onset of the study was positively connected with fewer depressive symptoms, the presence of job-attainment at the outset of this study appeared connected to less negative parenting style. Such results leave room for consideration on part of social work professionals to consider increased advocacy for “policies allowing welfare recipients to be supported in getting as much education and training as they need to pursue the jobs that they want” (Pollmann-Schult, 2018).

Therefore, policies and programs supporting higher educational and job-level attainment should be supported, while keeping in mind the immense barriers to self-sufficiency that are highlighted in mental-health statistics for this population. “The need for effective intervention and treatment efforts to improve economic and social outcomes” cannot be met without such knowledge and sensitivity (Pollmann-Schult, 2018).

2.2.11. Common Challenges & Parental Concerns

It is clear that the challenges single mothers face goes beyond than the stereotypical image of a poor, publically assisted parent – even those who obtain economic stability as head of the household face immense challenges (Cheesman, 2019). Cheesman’s submission is important as indicates that parenting takes more than economic means but requires psychological strength as well. Those who find themselves in singlehood due to divorce must redefine their definition of family, and single parents must extend their responsibilities in terms of managing time, money, and energy available to support this role (Pollmann-Schult, 2018). In addition to the common experience of single mothers being disproportionately represented in low-paid service sector jobs and working long hours, single mothers must worry about resources available to care for their children while they are at work, as oftentimes these women are the custodial parent for their children (Liang, et al, 2019).

Regardless of financial resources, a common theme for parental concern involved worry about the quality of life for their children (Van Gasse, & Mortelmans, 2020). Parental fear of compromised time availability to participate in activities with their children, including school involvement, appeared to be a recurring worry for parents, as well as a risk factor for lack of sleep. However, mothers' desires for the improved wellbeing of their children appeared to be the most identifiable strength and source of motivation for these women (Van Gasse, et al, 2020).

Maintaining success at providing financial support for family, actively managing dual responsibilities of work and at home obligations, communicating with support systems, and sustaining pride for their children's successes were the most noted reasons parents endured throughout their experience as head-of-household figures (Van Gasse, et al, 2020). Additionally, many women view themselves as survivors, having endured a situation that they had never expected to experience in such a manner (Liang, et al, 2019). Although individual experience of stress, support, and level of predisposed risk (mental health status, financial strain) varies within the single-mother population, noted commonalities in the lives of single-moms provide important implications for the field of social work considering the high probability of serving these women. Supporting work policies that provide benefits to families such as flexitime, childcare provision and support, as well as paid leave/time off would help advocate for the already documented needs of the single-parent population (Liang, et al, 2019).

2.2.12. Single parents and homeownership

For single parents, and low-income households in general, homeownership may cause particular difficulties (Penne, & Goedemé, 2021). According to Penne, and Goedemé, (2021), low-income households have more difficulty in maintaining ownership status. They have less ability to deduct mortgage interest and property taxes from taxable income (Van Gasse, et al, 2020). When taking loans, there are systematic differences in terms and conditions, depending on income, which may also affect the financial return. There is a wider variation in mortgage terms and pricing than ever before, and an extensive literature documents an increase in subprime lending to minorities and (albeit to a lesser extent) low-income borrowers and communities (Liang, et al, 2019). In addition, low-income homebuyers may be more likely to purchase homes in poor conditions and are therefore exposed to greater risks

of high maintenance and repair costs. They may also be more likely to purchase homes in neighbourhoods with less potential for house price increases.

According to Cheesman, (2019), there is discrimination based on gender and marital status when it comes to lending in the housing markets. This may result in different rates of homeownership and different levels of home equity, with lower rates of homeownership and lower home equity for single-mother households and unmarried couples, *ceteris paribus* (Van Gasse, et.al, 2020). It is important to note that homeownership may also become burdensome for single parents, as they solely provide the maintenance on the home without the support of a partner, which may become a substantial liability for those with limited income and significant home expenses (Van Gasse et.al, 2020).

2.2.13. Positive Self-Perceptions of Single Mothers

While this proposed study is on psychosocial and socioeconomic experiences of single mothers, it is also important to be cognizant of the positive self-perceptions that single parents report. Researchers who have studied the positive self-perceptions of single mothers and fathers are often prompted by the primarily negative and problem-focused literature on single parent families (Knijn, & Patel, 2018). As previously mentioned, the lack of strength-based literature on single parents may be due to the societal emphasis on the two-parent, opposite gender family as ideal (Liang, Berger, & Brand, 2019). Nonetheless, literature has shown that single mothers and fathers have held onto positive self-perceptions despite the stigmatizing environment surrounding this family structure (Knijn, & Patel, 2018).

In spite of the judgment that often accompanies women who bear children outside of marriage, single mothers maintain the beliefs that not only are they responsible caregivers to their children, they are also competent mothers who do not need a man's assistance in order to be an effective parent (Pollmann-Schult, 2018). This is important to note for this study as it gives an opportunity to further question what constitutes these psychosocial and socioeconomica experiences single mothers experience. Pollmann-Schult further notes that some women report their ability to manage multiple obstacles of single motherhood under the adverse conditions of poverty actually raised their status, despite the stigmatizing environment (Pollmann-Schult, 2018). Additional self-perceptions of single mothers have been reported which include positive attitudes regarding personal and ideological dimensions; as they have a high potential for happiness and experience decreased stigma (Liang, et al,

2019). Single mothers perceive that economic well-being, employment, and self-esteem facilitate their positive self-perceptions (Liang, et al, 2019). Independent single mothers report emotional gains in terms of independence, self-esteem, confidence, and the pride felt in successfully parenting their children by themselves (Liang, Berger, & Brand, 2019).

In addition to the emotional gains successful single mothers experience a negative psychological sense of community is actually adaptive and has led to positive outcomes for single mothers who perceive their community to be a threat (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Thus, the unique ability for single mothers to form meaningful relationships also means discerning when networks may not be as helpful (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Positive self-perceptions of single parent families also extend to the children of single parents, as Pollmann-Schult, (2018) found that adolescents living in single parent families report experiencing higher levels of autonomy than adolescents in other family types and were more likely to assume household responsibilities.

The development of autonomy is especially relevant given that independence is a highly valued personal trait and can be viewed by single parent families as an important survival skill (Liang, Berger, & Brand, 2019). In addition, Leban, and Gibson, (2020), explored the strengths that make single parents unique and distinct and reported that single parent families, as a group, identified having less conflict and tension in the home as a result of two adults no longer living together. Single parents' families are more cohesive, flexible and adaptable to change (Leban, & Gibson, 2020). Single parents are also found to be actively engaged in renegotiating their status in society as single parents and are dedicated to challenging the negative societal perceptions associated with single parenthood (Leban, & Gibson, 2020).

In addition to positive self-perceptions of single parents as a group, Simmons-Hall, (2018), found that single fathers perceive that society views them favorably, despite the high frequency of negative societal perceptions about single parents which are documented in the literature. In addition, the self-reported well-being of single parents has been found to be directly positively affected by economic status, which could highlight a significant gap in wage earnings between single mothers and fathers. Simmons-Hall, (2018), has noted that children in single father families have a higher standard of living than children in single mother families, suggesting that single mother families appear to be even further marginalized, in addition to their status as a single parent due to the intersectionality between gender and class (Sithole, & Falkof, 2019). Moreover, single fathers positively describe their

relationship with their children as being close and affectionate (Liang, Berger, & Brand, 2019). Thus, if single fathers do perceive that society views them positively, the existence of these negative perceptions may not impact the single fathers as personally. Finally, this self-perception literature may or may not mirror research exploring positive societal perceptions of single mothers and fathers; however, given the lack of empirical research on positive societal perceptions, these studies provide some insight for this proposed thesis (Sithole, & Falkof, 2019).

2.2.14. The triple bind of single-parent families

Single-parent families face challenges that are constantly evolving: changes in single parenthood, changes in the labour markets in which they work and changes in the social policies that aim to address their needs. We refer to the challenges that arise from the combination of these developments as the triple bind of single-parent families: single parents and their families are disproportionally caught in the interplay between inadequacies in resources, employment and policies.

2.2.14.1. Inadequate resources

Single parents and their families lack the additional resources of a partner who lives in the household (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). The lack of a potential second earner makes it more difficult for single-parent households to have adequate earnings, but also makes the single-parent household more vulnerable to the consequences of (temporary) unemployment (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Without a second caregiver in the household to fall back on, even if it is in the form of tag-team parenting, work–family conflict can be more pressing for single-parent families (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). In short, the absence of a partner living in the household limits care, income, time and flexibility. However, with single parenthood being more common in recent decades in many countries have different forms of co-parenting.

Increasingly, the ‘other partner’ (in many of the cases the father) remains actively involved in the lives of their children, which represents an alternative way in which parental resources are provided (Jayawarna, Marlow, et al, 2021). Children living in shared residence (that is, living for about equal time in both parents’ homes) experience fewer psychosomatic problems and better wellbeing compared to children living with only a single parent (Nieuwenhuis, &

Maldonado, 2018). These findings are in line with evidence suggesting that lower levels of wellbeing among single parents and their children are not inherently associated with family composition, but rather and to an important extent with single parents' disadvantaged economic position.

2.2.14.2. Inadequate employment

Employment is positively associated with wellbeing in ways that extend far beyond the earned income – particularly when supported to be possible, feasible and paying well (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Employment is associated with many beneficial outcomes, including reduced risks of poverty and material deprivation; investments in future employability; access to insurance-based social security and pensions; self-realisation; self-efficacy, social networks and health (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Employment can be a resource, but it is given more weight as one of the three central challenges of the 'triple bind'. Employment involves at least two actors – the employee and the employer – and often more when considering labour market institutions, regulations and unions.

Employment rates among single parents tend to be fairly high across countries. Yet, in addition to their limited resources, there are at least two important reasons to believe that employment is less adequate for single parents than for other workers: gendered inequality and increasingly precarious employment conditions (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Gendered inequality in the labour market is very consequential for single parents. The gender wage gap the result of factors that include occupational segregation, differences in human capital and working conditions, motherhood penalties, fatherhood premiums and discrimination may have diminished somewhat but still puts women, particularly mothers, at a disadvantage in terms of earning adequate earnings (Liang, et al, 2019).

Part-time employment is still more common among women, for which they face a wage penalty in most countries (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Flexible working schedules, a potential strategy for dealing with work–family conflict, were found to benefit the wages of fathers over those of mothers (Lohmann & Marx, 2018). Even though this literature on the gender wage gap often does not explicitly differentiate between single parents and other family types, much of these inequalities resonate among women after they separate, and thus among single parents. (Lohmann & Marx, 2018). Prior employment experience is an important resource for future employability (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). This, too, demonstrates how single parenthood is strongly gendered. Women not only make up the

majority of single parents but are also substantially more likely to exit the labour market in association with motherhood

The rise of in-work poverty, to varying degrees across countries, shows that earnings from employment are more commonly inadequate in ensuring household incomes exceed the poverty threshold (Lohmann & Marx, 2018). Single parents face in-work poverty more often than coupled parents, as dual salaries seems to be an increasingly necessary condition to secure economic wellbeing (Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado, 2018). In-work poverty is driven not only by low wages but also by employment conditions.

2.2.14.3. Inadequate policy

A variety of social policies have been documented to benefit the wellbeing of single parents, and often adequately so (Nieuwenhuis, & Maldonado, 2018). Many studies have examined the impact of redistributive social policies on reducing the economic insecurity of single-parent (Liang, Berger, & Brand, 2019). Child benefits were found to be effective in reducing single-parent poverty, particularly when their design is targeted towards single parents (Lohmann & Marx, 2018). Childcare and housing costs have a sizeable impact on single parents' disposable household budget, particularly when they are on social assistance policies can help compensate some of these costs (Lohmann & Marx, 2018).

A policy reform to expand public childcare subsidies increase the employment of single mothers. Single mothers receiving childcare subsidies are more satisfied with the quality of the care their children receive though it is not enough (Liang, et al, 2019). By facilitating employment, childcare reduces single-parent poverty (Munir, et al, 2021). Countries with extensive work–family policies and welfare policies have better education outcomes for children living in single-parent families (Munir, Rani, Ali, & Afzal, 2021). Both work–family policies (such as parental leave) and financial support policies (such as family allowances and tax benefits to single parents) were found to reduce the performance gap in science and maths between children of single parents and coupled parents (Liang, Berger, & Brand, 2019).

Yet, despite these many examples of how social policy adequately benefits the wellbeing of single parents and their children, current and ongoing developments in social policy need to be critically addressed (Liang, et al, 2019). Facing budget constraints, welfare states develop new strategies to maintain performance at adequate levels, while responding to the

labour market and so-called ‘new social risks’, which include (among other risks) the rise of single parenthood (Munir, et al, 2021). This prompts the adoption of ‘active’ social policies that seek to achieve welfare provision by facilitating employment. This includes active labour market programmes, including job-search assistance, public employment and training programmes (Munir, et al, 2021).

It remains to be seen to what extent the social investment perspective on social policy making, with the emphasis on stimulating employment rather than providing cash transfers, will result in policy solutions that are adequate for single parents (Liang, et al., 2019). On the one hand, the emphasis on facilitating employment through either education and training skills, or policies to improve job searching and reduce work–family barriers – may be especially beneficial to single parents, with their limited resources (Munir, et al, 2021). Social policies can be considered inadequate related to various design characteristics that include generosity, means testing, the distinction between contributory and non-contributory benefits, and conditions of eligibility and conditionality (Liang, et al, 2019).

2.2.15. Implications of Single-Parent Households on Welfare

The roots and drivers of single-parent households present with unique challenges, however, whether the root of single-parent household is divorce, separation, widowhood, loss of spouse parenthood, migration, choice or teenage pregnancy presents with lots of challenges. Yuliandi, et al, 2018), affirms this by stating that being a parent is hard; however, being a single parent is at least as twice as hard. Keswet and Dapas’s (2010) study revealed that some challenges of single parent households include; childcare and training needs, child support enforcement, loneliness, and psychological problems and we cannot leave out the economic challenges faced by single parents. Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009) states that the role of single parents is a challenging one especially when the family is headed by a woman, as single mothers tend to suffer from a feeling of rootlessness and lack of identity after divorce or widowhood. The sections below discuss the economic, psycho-social experiences and coping strategies of single parent households.

2.2.16. Economic Challenges of Single-Parent Households

Globally and in South Africa it is acknowledged that single-parent households experience deep financial challenges. Family breakdown and the resulting single-parent household status

often lead to financial hardship and have highlighted that approximately 70% of single-parent households live in poverty, (Mudau, Mukansi, & Ncube, 2018). Mudau, Mukansi, and Ncube, (2018), complement the above statement that single-parent households have been associated with challenging roles, with disadvantages including financial hardship, and poor mental health (Mudau, et al, 2018). In addition, single-parent households have to grapple with meeting the needs of the household financially, which usually presents as a challenge. While single-parent households have to play the role of being both mom and dad, they also have to fight financial problems with only one paycheck, instead of two. Ding, Gale, Bauman, Phongsavan, and Nguyen, (2021), argues that single-parent households who bring up children alone have to avoid becoming possessive and to some extent have to assume the dual role of mother and father. There is never enough time for their job, child, or children, and finally, for themselves (Ding et al, 2021). Employment stress is higher on both male and female single-parent households, than two parent households. Sewpaul, and Pillay, (2011) argues that the growing levels of unemployment and inequality in South Africa mean that the country is faced with two options that have an impact on the quality of families. She says the first is to increase labour-absorbing capacity and ensure gainful employment for people. Sewpaul, and Pillay, (2011) sees this as unlikely to happen. According to Mudau, et al, (2018), opportunities have arisen from considerable socioeconomic changes that continue to alter the structure of the family away from traditional patterns, to new ones generated by the expansion of education, health care, employment and migration. They also critique this statement by saying the same forces that prompt momentous vistas for households have also produced multiple constraints among people.

2.2.17. Psycho-social Experiences of Single-Parent Households

Single-parent households lack social and psychological support from their immediate environment (Keswet & Dapas, 2010). Keswet and Dapas, (2010) confirms that single-parent-households reported less perceived social support, lower levels of social involvement and less contact with friends than married couples. Nevertheless, Mudau, et al, (2018), finds extended family to constitute a legitimate system of social, psychological, and often economic support for the single-parent household in general. Mudau, et al, (2018), argues that single-parent households often exhibit marked emotional liability, characterized euphoria, and optimism alternating with anger, irritability, anxiety, loneliness, sadness,

depression, and suicide and associated changes in self-esteem, and it is important to note that both female and male single-parent households may experience the same situation.

Cheesman, (2019), state that the role of a single parent household is challenging, and these single parents tend to suffer from a feeling of rootlessness and lack of identity after divorce, separation or widowhood. Single parented households that are through divorce, separation and death are confronted by numerous challenges of single parenting at a time when the parents themselves are going through their own private trauma. These authors cited also states that female single parent households are significantly more depressed than male single-parent household (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009). Ndlovu, (2013) states that single-parent households experience more stressful life-events and increased mental health issues when compared to married couple.

Ndlovu, (2013), argue that although divorce, separation and death of a spouse lead to an increase in stressful life events, such as poverty, psychosocial and health problems in parents, and inept parenting, it also may be associated with escape from conflict, the building of new more harmonious fulfilling relationships, and the opportunity for personal growth and individuation. Hence this study is also aimed at seeing the similarities and contrasts with other previous studies done on the similar topic.

2.2.18. Coping Strategies of Single-Parent Households

Ndlovu (2013), states that coping with the circumstances of family disruption in most African countries has entailed single parented households to be among lower-income groups that resorts into taking their children to live with relatives. In South African countries, childcare challenges and restrictions by many employers on children of their workers residing on their premises, has strengthened the role of African grandparents in caring for their grandchildren, Ndlovu, (2013). According to the White Paper on Families, (2012,) and the Children's Act 38 of 2005; developmental social welfare services recognise that the family is the basic unit of society and plays a vital role in the survival, protection, and development of children.

A study by Cheesman, (2019) shows that social support comes from a few friends or co-workers that contribute to single parents on their well-being by providing the opportunity to socialise and be involved in a network of peers with discussion of similar experience.

Cheesman, (2019) further noted that extended family constitutes a legitimate system of social, psychological, and often economic support for the single-parent household in general.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. Social constructionism as theoretical framework

Constructionism is of the view that the human world is different from the natural and physical world (Andrews, 2012). Constructionism assumes that there are multiple realities, which influence people's lives and interaction with others (Galbin, 2014). People seek to understand the world they live in and they develop subjective meaning of their experiences directed towards certain objects or things; these experiences are unique to individuals, in this case, experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu. These meanings are constructed through interaction with others and within cultural settings (Andrews, 2012). Consideration of participants' perceptions and social realities is therefore necessary (Galbin, 2014). Reality is constructed in 3 moments: 1) externalisation, the way cultures, societies and social groups make sense of their social worlds; 2) objectification refers to how those constructs and social institutions are perceived as being naturally given; and 3) internalisation, the way in which the objectified social world becomes known and understood through the process of socialisation and enculturation (Creswell, 2013). For this study this relates to how society views single mothers. As has been revealed by this study this can be in line with how society treats and view single females and how stereotyping controls single mothers' behaviours.

Social constructionism regard individuals as integral within a cultural, political and historical evolution, in specific times and places, and so resituates psychological processes cross-culturally, in social and temporal contexts as a perspective social constructionism thus denotes that a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences (Gergen, 1985). Although genetically inherited factors and social factors are at work at the same time, social constructionism does not deny the influence of genetic inheritance, but decides to concentrate on investigating the social influences on communal and individual life. Social constructionism involves challenging most of our common-sense knowledge of ourselves and the world we live in. This means that it does not just offer a new analysis of topics such as 'personality' or 'attitudes' which can simply be slotted into our existing framework of understanding (Burr, 1995). The framework itself has to change, and with it our understanding of every aspect of social and psychological life (Burr, 1995).

Social constructionism takes a critical stance in relation to taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world, which are seen as reinforcing the interests of dominant social groups. As such social constructionism upholds the belief that the way we understand the world is a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people. This further shows that social constructionism maintain that the goal of research and scholarship is not to produce knowledge that is fixed and universally valid, but to open up an appreciation of what is possible. Finally, social constructionism represents a movement toward redefining psychological constructs such as the “mind,” “self,” and “emotion” as social constructed processes that are not intrinsic to the individual but produced by social discourse related to norms, stereotypes and positionality.

An integration of the existing literature on social constructionism (Gergen & Davis, 1985; McNamee and Gergen, 1992; Cojocaru, 2013) shows that there are several cardinal principles emphasized in social constructionism. These include realities that are socially constructed, constituted through language, knowledge is sustained by social processes, and reflexivity in human beings is emphasized. Society is viewed as existing both as a subjective and objective reality (Cojocaru & Bragaru, 2012).

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the literature on social and economic experiences of single mothers in diverse contexts. The presentation commenced with focusing theoretical framework and on single-parent households: Global trends, the plight of single-parent households in Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. The discussion also focuses on the impact of single-parent households on welfare. The economic challenges and psycho-social experiences of single parent households which form the foundation of this study were presented and critiqued. Finally, the coping strategies of single-parent households were also discussed.

Chapter 3

Research methodology and instruments

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in conducting the study. The chapter covers the research design, study area and the targeted population, sample size as well as sampling techniques used for the study is discussed. In addition, this chapter presents data collection and data analysis techniques that were used. The last part of the chapter discusses limitations which were encountered during the study as well as ethical considerations that were observed in conducting the study.

3.2. Methodology

3.3. Study design

The study utilized qualitative design. The qualitative design considers and explains the logic behind research methods and techniques (Welman, Kruger & Mitchel, 2012). In this case, a qualitative methodology was used because it allows a better understanding of the research problem by giving a dense and rich lived experience of participants (Creswell and Plano, 2011). According to Creswell (2013), the qualitative research approach utilizes various methods and techniques that are flexible, simple and easier to understand when conducting an exploratory or investigative study that seeks to understand life experiences in a certain context. Creswell (2014) further emphasises that qualitative research methodology happens in a natural setting to capture the real experiences of people and outline the key issues affecting them.

3.4 Sample

A sample is a subset of the whole population which is being investigated by the researcher and whose characteristics are generalized to the entire population (Bless & Higson, 2013). According to Strydom (2005) a purposive sample is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher. Therefore, the sample for this study comprised 5 female single-parents aged between 30—45 years from Umbumbulu who were selected using nonprobability purposive sampling with a specific purpose (Neuman, 2007). Only single female who are heading their families were considered for this study. Only those who stay with their children with no help of a father figure in the house were selected for the study.

3.5. Data collection

There are different methods of data collection in each study. The methods differ depending on the approach used to conduct the research. In this study, data was collected using semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Semi structured interviews are often open ended, allowing for flexibility for comparison between respondents. Having less structure can help you see patterns in the responses of interviewees (Tegan George, 2022), Interviews allowed the researcher to gather qualitative data and gain insight into the thoughts and behaviours of participants.

For this study, an announcement was made at my church St Murumba Catholic Church that I need single mothers between the ages 25-45 to take part as interviewees for my MA study. The announcement indicated the time and place I would conduct the interview. There were no challenges to acquiring participants as they showed up at the stipulated venue and time for the interview. The interview was conducted in English, participants were able to understand the questions and also engage in the conversation in English.

Data was thus collected in February 2021, the researcher made application with the universities ethical committee where the researcher was given instructions to gain gate keepers letter (see appendix 2) before the commencement of research. After obtaining the gate keepers letter the university then granted the researcher ethical clearance (see appendix 3) to proceed with research.

The researcher then sourced the interviewees and asked to meet with them at the local catholic church where interviews were conducted in English. The researcher was guided by a semi structured interview schedule. The interviews took between 30 and 45 minutes over a period of 3 days to complete.

Data is kept in a locker where only the researcher and supervisor have access to. Recorded interviews are kept and will be in a locker for a period of 5 years. Coded information after transcribing has been encrypted with a password known to the researcher and supervisors.

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the reduction of large amounts of information from primary or secondary data (Bryman, 2012). The primary data collected from the respective participants was coded and analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing

qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Bryman, 2012). The six-step thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2008), was followed for this study. This include Step 1: Familiarization · Step 2: Coding · Step 3: Generating themes · Step 4: Reviewing themes · Step 5: Defining and naming themes · Step 6: Writing up. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were read multiple times to facilitate familiarity with the data, and coding was conducted systematically across the data set by the primary researcher. Potential themes were abstracted from the codes, with themes being representative of repeated patterns of meaning across the data set. Themes were reviewed for coherence through an examination of all coded text segments for each candidate theme. To ensure criticality and integrity, all transcripts, and emergent themes were reviewed for coherence and agreement. Any disagreements were resolved following in-depth discussion and re-examination of the data set. All participants were assigned a pseudonym.

3.7. Data quality control

Data quality control was achieved by considering trustworthiness and credibility. Trustworthiness and credibility were important factors that are taken into consideration when ensuring data quality control in a qualitative research.

3.7.1 Trustworthiness

According to Anney (2014), trustworthiness is a methodological instrument which measures accuracy and adequacy of the research inquiry. It uses criteria like dependability, transferability and confirmability to measure the accuracy and adequacy of research findings. In this study trustworthiness was demonstrated by ensuring that the findings presented are genuine. The findings were a true reflection of what participants provided during the course of the study. Also, the trustworthiness was used to determine the applicability of the findings of the study with other participants. In addition, trustworthiness was determined by ensuring that the findings are repeated consistently with the same participants in the same context. Furthermore, trustworthiness was demonstrated by ensuring the findings solely came from the participants. Trustworthiness was also achieved through the verification of the accuracy of the transcriptions and the presentation of all information in a transparent manner even if it disagreed with the themes of the research.

3.7.2 Credibility

Anney (2014) argues that credibility is one of the criteria of ensuring data quality control in a qualitative study. Guba and Lincon (1985), describes credibility as the confidence that can be placed in the truth regarding the research findings. Credibility was used to determine the extent to which the research findings represent plausible information that was obtained from the participants' original data and the true interpretation of the participants' actual opinions. In this study, credibility was demonstrated by ensuring the findings of the research actually represent the original views of the participants. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the transcripts from the interviews are free from errors and bias, distortion in during transcription, proper and examination of codes was adopted by different experts.

3.7.3. Dependability

This shows that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. To achieve dependability, researcher ensured the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented. When readers are able to examine the research process, they are better able to judge the dependability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way that a research study may demonstrate dependability is for its process to be audited (Koch, 1994), which this study follows all research process in order that is logical, traceable.

Confirmability Confirmability for this study refers to the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of this study was shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Confirmability is concerned with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached (Tobin & Begley, 2004). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. Koch (1994) recommended researchers include markers such as the reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study, so that others can understand how and why decisions are made.

3.8. Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for the research study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethics committee. Participants were informed about the research study, the purpose and benefit of it. Participants were further informed that participation is voluntary hence they are not indebted to participate in the study and have the right to withdraw from the study at any

time. No harm was brought upon the participant and no forms of dangerous experiments were conducted. Participants were further informed and given assurance of confidentiality of the information that they share with the researcher. Anonymity was also guaranteed, hence not revealing the identity of the participants.

Data obtained from the study is stored in a safe place for a period of no more than five years (Arifin, Siti, 2018). Upon the completion of the five-year period, it will be disposed. In the case of the data findings being published anonymity of the participants will be maintained thus not revealing the participant's identity. Feedback of the results obtained will be given to the participants and informed consent from the participants will be obtained. Participants will further be informed that the research findings will be viewed by the researcher, supervisor and assessors only (Arifin, Siti, 2018).

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the research methods that were used by the researcher to gather the necessary data. Furthermore, the data collection instruments, the sampling method used, and the steps on how the data was analysed. In addition, the researcher's critical reflections statement was included. The next chapter is data presentation and interpretation.

Chapter 4

Data presentation

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the analysis of data that emerged from the in-depth semi-structured interviews with five single mothers. It comprises five female participants who were heads of their households. The findings of this study are presented in two main sections. Section one begins with a demographic profile of the five single mothers. The Second section presents main themes that emerged from the data analysis and are closely interconnected. All names used to identify participants are pseudo-names.

4.2. Demographic characteristics

Table 1 below presents demographic characteristics of the interviewed participants. It should be noted names appearing are not real names of participants, they are pseudo names. As shown in the table, all participants were female aged between 30 –45 years. All participants reported that they were unemployed and all at least 2 children or more. Reasons for being single as reported by participants included Separation, Divorce, Death of husband.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Pseudo-name	Gender	Age	Number of children	Employment status	Reasons for being a single parent	Period being single
Amanda	Female	39	3	Unemployed	Separation	5
Ayanda	Female	43	4	Unemployed	Death of husband	10
Asanda	Female	35	3	Unemployed	Divorce	7
Andile	Female	33	2	Unemployed	Separation	6
Avuzwa	Female	45	4	Unemployed	Death	14
Akhona	Female	35	2	Unemployed	Divorce	5

Thando	Female	37	3	Unemployed	Death	7
Taku	Female	30	2	Unemployed	Separation	3
Andile	Female	39	3	Unemployed	Death	5
Aguzwa	Female	30	1	Unemployed	Separation	2

4.3. Psycho-social stress

Findings of this study shows that single mothers in Umbumbulu face psychosocial stress associated with their roles and responsibilities as single mothers. This thus seeks to mark that single motherhood and care giving roles results in lots of psychosocial challenges. This study also shows that some of the psychosocial challenges are within one's personal mind and others are caused external forces due to relationships created with the broader community.

All the participants reported that they face social dilemma of hurting in their single-mother houses. This was pointed to stress women face on the basis of being single parent. The stress as reported by all participants was related to the provision for the family and how to best look after their children. In line with single mothers' stress, all women also reported lack emotional support from a father figure to support in looking after children. All the participants commented on the stress that is caused by single parenting which some of the participants reported end up drinking beer excessively to cope with the stress of being a single with no enough resources to look after their children. This study thus reveals that being a single mother leading a house entails that the mother takes on all the responsibilities that may have been shared by their partner if they were together. In line with challenges single mothers in Umbumbulu face, one of the participants had this to say:

It is not easy being a single mother especially with more than 2 children to feed. It is stressful and really stressful. You are the mother, the father and you are everything. What's more stressful is the burden is too heavy for a woman alone. The mind is never settled thinking about your children and what to do to make sure they have everything. Sometimes I fail and I find myself crying, some I end drinking just to momentarily forget what I am going through (Ayanda, aged 43, separation by death)

Another participant also said:

The stress of trying to cope, being alone and being single, is just stressful. No day passes without stressing over something. If it is not money, it is food, if not these you definitely stress over the future of children and what tomorrow holds for them (Andile, aged 39, separation by death)

Echoing closely related sentiments, another participant also said

Being a single mother, we just supposed to be labelled, stressed women. Sometimes I cry, and worry too much over my children. I always worry if I am doing enough and making them feel like other children in the society (Crying) it is just too much for me (Thando, aged 37, separation by death)

These findings also seek to show that single mothers, are always stressed and most of their time they are thinking about their children. This seeks to be a daunting task and stressful and the weight of all family responsibilities is on one person. This is further exacerbated by being unemployed with no proper income source which is guaranteed. These findings also reveal that single mothers have poor mental health expressing depressive symptoms, which researchers like Mkhize, & Msomi, (2016), normally lead to alcoholism amongst single parents. Echoing similar sentiments Raniga, Boecker, & Mthembu, (2019), also reported that due to high levels of stress, single mothers end up opting to drunkards as a way to relief stress levels. These findings also reveal that single parent may feel overwhelmed by the

responsibility of juggling caring for the children, maintaining a job and keeping up with the bills and household chores.

Another participant also said

I am always stressed, my mind is never at easy, it is not kids play to be a single mother. The money is never enough, no emotional support, the father we no longer together but he doesn't ever support his children, if only he knew how much we need his support but he is pout there with his girlfriends. It is not easy, it is straining, draining and depressing sometimes, being a single mother and having all this burden upon shoulder with no one supporting you. I am unemployed, I do domestic work and grant money is never enough to give my children the life they deserve, but regardless I am managing my children have food on the table all the time (Amanda, aged 39, Separation)

These excerpts further seek to mark that the responsibilities of being a single mother are straining physically, emotionally and psychologically to single mothers. This also seeks to mark that depression is prevalent among single mothers and produces negative psychosocial and health outcomes for the parents, their children and their families. The above excerpts thus seek to mark that though as single mothers they are surviving but it is difficult cope since the ability to function well depends on his or her holistic well-being (physical, social, emotional and mental).

4.4. Difficulty making decisions

Findings of this study also shows that it is difficult for single mothers to sometimes make a decision without a second opinion to support it which thus becomes a psychological issue if there is no one to communicate with. One of the participants had this to say:

Not to say women we are inferior or something, but to be honest being single mother with no one to consult with when making decision is not easy at all. The psychological battle is just too much before that decision is made, and sometimes if it is about the child that's when I miss their father too much, for I

won't be knowing whether I am doing is right or wrong, but having someone to enquire with is good. But eish their father is as good as dead to me though he is still alive (Avuzwa, 45, separation, Death)

These findings however seem to mark that single mothers also find it difficult to make decisions that impact their lives. This however can be attributed to the fact that women are naturally treated like little submissive people in their families, thus marking reason why they need second opinion on decisions they make. These findings seek to reveal that maintaining a work/life balance is a challenge for single mothers. This also reveal that, balancing work and leisure time can be difficult because single mothers are expected to provide for their children, thus they experience emotional struggles and lack support which thus pile pressure on decision making. One of the participants in support had this to so say.

My sister, I do not have a proper job, I have 3 children, I can't even breathe or think anything about myself. It is my children first all the time. Sometimes I feel like they no longer truly know mother's love because most of the time I am always out looking for ways for us to survive. Thinking of leisure times is literally difficult, to be honest with sometimes I do not even know if I am doing right or wrong, or making good or bad decisions. It is just too much for me. Andile, aged 33, separation

Another participant also said.

Being a woman and being the head of the family, it is stressful encounter which I do not wish for anyone. You really need a partner, I am always stressing all decisions I make most often it is done under pressure, and it is difficult to judge if I am doing right or not Akhona, aged 35, divorce

These findings seek to reveal how being a single mother deprives mothers to live for themselves. The need to provide for their families take centre stage and due to psychological issues single mothers are never sure if they will be making right decisions in their families. This also seeks to show the importance of second opinions and the need of a father figure in the families of single mothers.

Difficulties in making decisions by single mothers also reveals a sense of self-doubt which they seek for a 2nd opinion on decisions they make as noted by one participant that

Being a woman and being the head of the family, it is stressful encounter which I do not wish for anyone. You really need a partner Ayanda aged 39, separation

These seeks to mark that single mothers having someone who agrees or disagrees to their methods giving approval and disapproval to their methods help them to validate if they are making and taking right decisions.

Another participant also had this in line with difficulties to make own decisions and also self-doubt.

It is so difficult to know if you're doing a good job. In a relationship, you have a partner who can help you appreciate the value in your successful parenting moments and guide you toward improvement where you fall short. But you must do that alone as a single parent, and it's not always simple. Amanda, aged 40, death

Another participant also said:

There is no escape. All the time I am alone, I got no one whom I can say please take over when I am tired. And being alone all the time I feel like it is depriving these children of the love they deserve which might have effects on the future. They have a lot they are missing put like other kids with both parents together Akhona aged 35, death

The above excerpts further reveal inferiority complex as well as self-doubt amongst single mothers in uMbumbulu. In addition, these findings also reveal negative effects single parent households have on the upbringing of the children, hence the need for support structures to single mothers heading their families.

All the single mothers interviewed for this study, reported that becoming a single mother was unexpected and came with it with heavy stressful acculturation challenges to cope with responsibilities of being the sole provider of the family. However, all participants were proud of how they have managed to look after their families and making sure they balance from the little they are getting. One of the participants had this to say:

My husband died and It has not been easy and it is not easy, but however it has been a decade now but I am able to feed my family, for that I am proud of myself. Things are difficult for everyone, but we have been managing, imagine being a woman and single and with children to feed, but here we are surviving Andile aged 33, separation

Another participant also said:

If I look at myself, I tell myself that, Amanda you are a man in a women's body. I hustle my sister. It may not be enough but my children are living ok. Yes, it challenging but I am proud of myself, how I did it or I am doing that's another story but fact is I am managing as a single mother, to me that makes me to be proud of myself (Ayanda, aged 43, Separation by death)

4.5. Shame and guilt

All interviewed however also reported that losing their partners, especially those who separated has a certain level of shame and guilt it brings with it and coping with the situation is dependent on an individual. However, they all reported that the psychological effects of

losing partners are not easy to overcome. The participants expressed a persistent feeling of loss when talking about their partners and some of the participants openly cried while talking about their partners. One of the participants had this to say:

Losing your partner and be left as a single is difficult to cope. Sometimes personally I find myself asking myself so many questions on how people think or see me out there. I have lost trust in men I fear being dumped again, at the same I have to think of feeding my children. Sometimes I breakdown but my children are my source of strength. Sometimes I feel guilt maybe I should have done better maybe he shouldn't have left me. Avuzwa, aged 45, death

These findings seek to mark that being a single mother is not by choice.

Another participant also said:

After separating and being with children there is always that guilt and shame you feel, sometimes wonder and worry of who else will marry while you have more than 2 children. You start feeling like you aren't worthy being loved and if really, I will find someone who will truly love me at my age and with 3 children like this (Amanda, aged 39, Separation)

The above excerpts also seek to show that single mothers sometimes feel lonely and worry of their future and they are also afraid of engaging in intimate relationships thus ending up losing the sense of self. Of importance to note is that single mothers though challenges they face are similar, they respond and react differently to situations.

4.6. Difficulties getting new partners

It is also of importance to note that all participants reported they are felt uneasy to introduce new partners to their children. Some had fear of unknown, for instance, they are uncertain whether they are ready to move on or not. They sometimes fear that they might also lose the new partners like they lost them before. They say once beaten, twice shy. One of the respondents had this to say:

My children are growing, yes I have someone whom I have been seeing just for satisfaction, but I am afraid of introducing someone into my children's life. Their father was so abusive so I still have that trauma which I do not know if that won't repeat again. So I am ok with the young man I am seeing when I need a man and it ends there (Asanda, aged 35, Divorced)

Another respondent also said

I am now afraid of being used again if I consider someone serious now. My children I do not think they would tolerate that if I openly do it in front of them. I was once hurt and to be hurt again is my greatest fear (Ayanda, aged 43, Separation by death)

4.7. Coping mechanisms

All participants interviewed reported that they were not employed but rather rely on several piece jobs within the society to survive. To cope and survive all participants reported that they have to do more than 2 jobs so as to supplement grant money they receive from the government. However, it should be noted that all participants reported lack of proper emotional support from the society and also government. Some reported that they are now vulnerable and victims of man's abuse as well as abusive names from the society. As reported by all participants they have all gotten used to the idea of being a single mother regardless of name calling and any other challenge they face within the community. One of the respondents had this to say:

I was left with these children, I fend for them alone, and I have to do more than just 2 piece jobs to fully make sure they have everything they want. Definitely the society now sees me differently, but that does not matter because they do not give me anything after all, so I have to do what I have to do to survive with my children. After all nobody cares what's happening with us and what we eat or wear. So yes they may call us names and being like man, but I think that's the only

option we have. We need to survive, we need to feed our children (Ayanda, aged 43, Separation by death)

Another participant also said:

As a lady I don't want to lie it is difficult, but well we are surviving with my children. The whole community knows me now, if they want someone to wash do piece jobs and other menial jobs, they call me. With the grunts supporting yes we are surviving with my children. Emotionally it is draining and the burden is so big, sometimes I miss my husband because for real a man's support is needed. However, we have literally become victims, these man because we are single mothers and living here they think we are just sex toys. However, I could say that's how it is, and we know we just have to work for ourselves and our families (Avuzwa, aged 45, Separation by Death)

Echoing similar sentiments another participant also said:

If you do not work extra hard, you end up sleeping with everyman around here to survive. I sell and I do other things in the community for people and that has kept me going. Definitely grant money is never enough and that forces us to work extra hard. So to cope with the pressures of being a single you just have to work and work (Asanda, aged 35, Divorced)

4.8. Dead social life

All participants also reported that their social life is now dead as their focus is just to work for their family and feed the children. This also speaks to the limited support which they all reported that there is close to none support they receive from family members or the children's paternal side to look after the children. One of the participants had this to say:

I no longer have time to visit my friend's; some possibly think I will be there to ask for help so I have learnt to distance myself. To be honest I ask myself why my husband had to die, I feel like

that's the day I also died and all my social life also died with him. I am now so busy that I no longer have time for myself and social life, as the mind is always. For a women and being the head of the house it is really not easy (Amanda, aged 39, Separation)

Another participant also said:

Talking of my social life, I do not think I have any social life at all, that area is literally dead. Ever since their father left us, all I have been thinking is how best can I give the best to my children. I can't interact with people regularly anymore, I literally lost friendship with most of the people I used to play with. To be honest I no longer have that time (Asanda, aged 35, Divorced)

Another participant also said:

It is impossible, being a single mother and a single parent with more than 2 children to think that you can have a social life. With who and how if you are this broke like I am and the children are waiting for you and looking up to you to bring something (Andile, aged 33, Separation)

These findings revealed that single mothers in Umbumbulu lack support not only from immediate family members but from the society at large. These findings further reveal that playing both roles of being a mother and a father of the house is a challenging experience to single mothers in Umbumbulu. The above excerpts further shows that priority for single mothers is to look after their children more than other things thus depriving them from enjoying and being involved in any form of social life activities.

4.9. Family support

All participants also reported that they are having challenges to get support from family members, neighbours and the community at large. They highlighted the need for training and parenting workshop to help single mothers cope with the pressure which comes with looking after the family as a female single mother in the society. One of the participants had this to say:

I think there is need for parenting lessons especially for women who are left to look after the children on their own. To be honest this is a daunting task which changes a women's character and behaviour completely. If you are not careful enough it can be depressing because the demands are just too much (Avuzwa, aged 45, Separation by Death)

Another participant also said:

It is not easy for a single mother and being a woman to just be the head of a family of 3 kids. I think something must be done to help on issues related to parenting. Because if you are not careful the experience is never an easy one (Andile, aged 33, Separation)

Echoing closely related sentiments, another participant also said.

It took me time to adapt to it all. One you mourning and grieving losing your partner. At the same time reality on the ground is demanding you to provide for the children who are now looking up to you. I think there is need for counselling lessons to women left behind and also few lessons on life balancing being a parent and also have own time as a mother (Asanda, aged 35, Divorced)

The above excerpts bring to light psychological changes and challenges which single mothers have to fight and conquer so as to properly look after their families. As such these findings seek to mark the need for psychological help to single mothers.

4.10. Responsibilities

Though all interviewed mothers noted that they are the soul providers in their households, however they all reported division of labour within their households with their children. They all reported that though their children are still young but they all have duties and assist their mothers with duties within the house. One of the mothers had this to say

My children yes they are young, but they all know how to help their mother. Sometimes I go to work, when I come back they will have cooked and washed. They have come to understand that I can't do everything and it really touches me. Their age and what they do for me it is just too much, sometimes I cry looking at them and pushes me to work more just to at least try and give them what other children are getting but I always fail (started crying) (Avuzwa, aged 45, Separation by Death)

Another participant also said

It is painful to me, with the life have planned I could have and how I am living it way too different. It pains me to evenly tell that house chores are meant for my children while I go out to work. The other one is just 10, she is so young but the way she sweeps the house even without being told but through understanding that we have to help our mother makes me cry. But well that's the situation (Andile, aged 33, Separation)

The above excerpts however reveal that children under single parents are pushed by the situation around them to end up doing chores which are not meant for them. However, these further marks children who grow under single mothers mature faster than their counterparts.

4.11. Income and expenditure

Access to income was explored by this study. All participants reported overreliance on Child Support Grants. They all reported that they are not employed hence the reason to over rely on social grants. However, it also should be noted that all participants reported that they involved in menial jobs which they do to supplement income in their houses. The money they get according to all participants is specifically meant to buy basic needs for survival. One of the participants had this to say:

Main source of income obvious its social grants. I also do other small piece jobs; however, all this money is mainly for basic needs (Ayanda, aged 43, Separation by death)

Another participant also said:

All my kids receive the social grant and other things I do supplement the grant we get. Of interest the money we budget for it before we evenly receive, and most of the stuff we buy are basic needs (Andile, aged 33, Separation)

These findings seek to show that though social grants are assisting however they are not enough to cover all necessities hence the reason participants end up exploring other ways to supplement.

4.12. Education for Children

According to the South African Constitution under Section 29 (1) (a) of the Bill of Rights, grants children with the right to basic education. Education is the key to unlock the locked doors in the future and through it children can have a good and fulfilling future. Therefore, it is of critical importance that children access good education. Access to education for children should not be determined by any limitations such as financial constraints, thus we applaud the Government for granting children from disadvantaged backgrounds with free education.

However, it should be noted that single mothers are faced with the need for financial support as well as resources to support their children with school payments as well as uniforms. This is so as revealed by all participants interviewed for this study. They all reported they need extra support especially when it comes to education of their children. All interviewed mothers

reported they all wish to take their children to expensive schools, however due to financial constraints they are forced to take them to cheap government schools. Even though these children are attending government schools all participants reported that they need help with clothing their children as well as enough food. All participants reported that they cannot prepare enough food for their children like any other children. One of the participants had this to say:

It is the wish of every mother to take their children to a good school, but as for me I cannot do anything. See here I am failing to properly provide food for them and that also tells I cannot give all that they need for their school (Amanda, aged 39, Separation)

Another participant also said:

The money is never enough but I strive so hard for my children to attend school. I wish for the better but eish things are never in my favour to give them all they need. To be honest financially I need help. But everyone is struggling one way or the other, so we just have to work (Avuzwa, aged 45, Separation by Death)

The excerpts above, reveals how finances can hinder proper progress of children in acquiring best education. This further marks that children from single mother headed families are more likely to fail and do not have access to proper education due to financial constraints. The above extracts also illustrate that being a single parent, having nobody to support you financially, has negative impact on children's educational aspect. Free education aims at tackling educational inequality and to give greater power to parents and learners to choose a good school. Based on the finding of this study, all participants reported that their children are struggling to properly attend school because they are struggling financially thus questioning the free education policy.

4.1.3. Society stereotyping

Findings of this study also show that society view and treat single women differently. This is related to married women not being comfortable seeing us close to their husband. Most common stereotype sense help revealed by this is that single mothers are prostitutes and husband snatchers. One of the participants had this to say:

It is so surprising how women in this society become so serious each we greet their husbands even innocent greetings. People think a single woman means you are a husband snatcher and that is not the case. I work for myself and my family but not through snatching people's husbands. Being a single parent does not mean ii have become a prostitution

These excerpts reveals that single women in the society are labelled husband/boyfriend snatchers and other women in the society are not so friendly and do not feel comfortable with single women being around their husbands/boyfriends

Another participant also said

Men in this society think since I am now single, so I am now a prostitute. I have lost count of meant in this society who have tried to sleep with me. This thing of people thinking because I am a single so anyone and anyhow can try his luck to use me just like that.

Another participant also said:

Men in this society think because you are single, so you automatically become a prostitute and they can try their luck anytime. I do not want to lie with hardships we face you are tempted to consider them since most of them offer money. But I have a family I have children I cannot be sleeping around

These findings seek to reveal that financial hardships and challenges push single mothers into prostitution or sleeping around for money.

4.14. Loss of Parental Support and Supervision for children

Findings of this study, single mothers monitor their children less closely which might directly affect the children wellbeing and character. Participants all reported that they are less involved in their children's lives. One of the respondents had this to say:

I do not have time with my children. When I come back from work, I do not even know if they really know what mother's love is. What scares me is, as young as they are they understand why I no longer spend time with them. Normal monitoring to my children I have lost it, sometimes changes in them scares me. I literally discover things because I no longer spend time with them.

Another single mother also said

Seems I have lost connection with my children. Close monitoring as a mother has been lost and we no longer spend much time together something which as a mother is worrisome.

Another participant also said:

Being a single mother and also trying to balance life, you lose your children along the way. I'm more focused on how I can get food on the table on my own, however I have lost touch and close control of my children

These findings seek to reveal that being a single mother is also associated with poor parenting. This is so as excerpts above shows that single mothers do not spend enough time with their children.

4.15. Remarrying

Mixed feelings were presented when it comes to remarrying. Participants were asked if they can marry again. Some of the participants viewed marrying again as a way imprisoning themselves and also selling own freedom. One of the participants had this to say:

I am now used being a single mother, it may not enough what I am getting but I am free from being a wife, now make own decisions, with no one questioning my choices.

Another participant who was against re-marrying also said:

I can't find myself being a subordinate to anyone again. It may not be enough but I hustle

Participants who reported that they wish to re-marry also said:

The burden of being a single mother is too much and being the head of the family is too much, I will surely marry again if the right suitor comes

Another participant also said:

My children need a father figure; sometimes I don't even trust my decisions so yes given a chance to marry again I will wholeheartedly do

These findings seek to show that, the fact single mothers are solely responsible for their children are also source of emotional stress, and they must deal with society's ambivalent attitudes.

4.16. Conclusion

This study reveals that single women in uMbumbulu are faced with the daunting task of looking after children. This however in relation to this study, as single mothers reported that children are deprived of basic things they are supposed to be having but financial constraints. The next chapter focuses on the discussion of findings

Chapter 5

Discussion of results

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of findings of the study based on responses given by participants. Findings of this study are also weighed against the research aim, and objectives to identify differences and similarities of this study's findings and existing literature. This chapter also focuses on systematic synergy of literature, theoretical frameworks and findings.

5.2. Psychosocial issues amongst single mothers

Although divorce, separation and death of a spouse lead to an increase in stressful life events, it is the psychological stress which affects the remaining partner with children's custody (Leban & Gibson, 2020). The psychosocial stress is usually associated with roles and responsibilities involved in parenting. Some of these stressors are related to being able and having means to provide for one's own children. This is also coupled by society's stereotyping as well loneliness of not having a partner to assist in decision making. Stressors which affect single mothers also involve society's expectations and also ways of making children fit into the society. In relation to this, Sewpaul and Pillay (2011), further argue that amongst the host of psychological stressors, the inability to provide supersedes most stressors. In their accession, financial stressors are the main drivers for most of mental health related issues where parents are concerned. Therefore, the role of being the sole provider, proves being a major psychological challenge for households with a single parent, especially a mother (Leban & Gibson, 2020). What is most prevalent in these cases is that, fathers are not usually supportive once they separate with the mother. The burden of care thus becomes the sole responsibility of the woman. The burden of care according to Akintola, Hlengwa and Dageid (2013), in many a times, leads to burnout, therefore, parenting activities become a daunting task for most women. The presence of a male figure in the family therefore, brings about some sort of emotional stability to women. This is the process that Radford (2002) terms "Objectification" which is the this social process of people becoming aware of the things that are in existence before them, that is, if something is in front of us we become aware of it and then give it meaning. It is this act of noticing that shows itself through counting and signalling gestures. Further to this, Radford (2002) states that, it is the act of noticing

something or change in our selves or change that is projected onto us as individuals. This can also be a change manifesting in the form of signs or movement or a change in the “self” thus transitioning from one person to the other, in terms of social structures, relating to this study the transition from being a woman with not children to being a single woman with children that are solely dependent on you. Once we are aware of these changes we can then obtain autonomy (Radford, 2002).

5.3.2. Difficulty making decisions for the family

In a nuclear family setting where both parents are around, the decision making process around major issues that affect the household, becomes easy to make (Shozi, 2020). What became clearer with participants is the lack of confidence in one’s ability to make those tough decisions when it comes to parenting. Decision making is not an easy task especially to single mothers; it incorporates determinants that need to be considered such as household decisions, health decisions, retirement, school choices for children and financial implications (Donnelly, 2008 et.al). These elements force parents to construct new realities to accommodate themselves, in light of the above, Shozi (2020) adds that, the decision making process overwhelms single parent particularly on matters where they have to have that introspection of self-care. Many women find it difficult to navigate between their self-care and caring for their offspring without having to feel guilt for doing so. It is at this point where the concept of self and individuation is sometimes lost. Many a times Shozi (2020) argues, women lose sight of their individualism and become an extension and/or identity of being a mother than of being “self”. The creation of this new reality, social constructivism looks at this as social constructivism. Social constructivism concentrates on the importance of understanding culture within its context in which it exists. It further states that, knowledge is constructed based on the understanding of what happens in society (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997). It can then be concluded that, social constructivism is embedded on how we view our reality, knowledge and learning to understand instructions. Reality therefore, must be understood through the process of human engagements and activity (Ernest, 1999; Gredler, 1997; Prat & Floden, 1994). In this context, women find themselves having to re-engineer their perception of self to the extent of being confident enough to make constructive decisions relating to their families.

5.3.4. Sense of shame and guilt after losing a partner

Majority of single-parent households are mostly headed by divorced mothers and there is an increasing prevalence of such households (Rawlings & Saluter, 1995; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995), according to Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Walters-Chapman, Price, and Serovich, 1995; Weiss, 1975) a variety of sources revealed that many custodial mother still continue to experience feelings of guilt. Parenting ideology according to (Arendall, 2000) biological and heterosexual relationships are mostly viewed as the desired and effective family structures where children should be raised. Postmodern approaches suggest that truth is socially constructed, which means that individuals can construct their own realities and therefore multiple family structures can exist as a result (Nichols and Schwartz, 2000). Separation and divorce are the most common contributing factors of female headed family structures, it is prevalent that in the past three decades research has been focussed on how children and women had adjust to divorce and the end result of single female headed households (Bianchi, 1995). Divorced mothers often experience guilt and in the development of a woman's sense of internal responsibility and personal conduct. Gender plays an important role, thus mothers feel a responsibility to care for their offspring's and this reveals to be an emotional task for them because nurturing and maintaining relationships within the family is conceived as their responsibility. Therefore a woman's sense of self and wellbeing is defined in the context of wife and mother (Gilligan, 1979; Walters, Carter, Papp, & Silverstein, 1988).

Carter and McGoldrick (1999) Emphasizes that, there are differences in gender role socialization, as a result, guilt appears to be more gender specific in that women experience emotions quite often compared to men (Izard, 1977; Pinto & Priest, 1991). Mothers experience guilt through divorce and respond to perceived violations of their moral and social codes, these moral and social codes may be influenced by ones family and reinforced by dominant social and religious norms and or by economic or institutions (Arendall, 2000). Thus an unsettling cycle of negative self-evaluation by the divorced mother may be reinforced both interpersonally and intrapersonal and contributing to this, the numerous losses she has suffered (Ausubel, 1955). Guilt may be manifest as public embarrassment, and lead to feelings of personal inadequacy and lowered self-esteem (Walters-Chapman et al., 1995). Guilt is an affective dimension, for it awakens emotional tension incongruence or discrepancy within an individual and this can be deemed as internal punishment (Mosher, 1965; Walters et al., 1988; Gilligan, 1979). Women are perceived to see themselves in the context of their relation to others, rooting their self-value on how well they nurture their

children and spouse. This may leave divorced mothers vulnerable to the experience of guilt thus, a vicious cycle may ensue whereby a divorced mother's negative evaluation of herself and her circumstances is reinforced by both intrapersonal and interpersonal sources of guilt.

5.4.1. Children as primary concern for single mothers

Little research has been conducted concerning stable single parent households that had undergone metamorphosis as the result of divorce or that of engaging with new romantic partners.

Working mothers reaffirmed clear distinctions of the roles as parents and those of their children and protected them against role boundaries becoming complicated by exercising their authority and managing children's roles to household responsibilities (Amato, 2001; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Pryor & Rodgers, 2001; Weinraub, Horvath, & Gringlas, 2002). Power relations between parents and their children do not show a stagnant hierarchical or vertical structure wherein parents have power over their children and the children are subjective to such powers. Rather, there is balanced power distribution where parents and children have different resources and mechanisms to draw on in their relationship, despite their differences in power. Both children and parents understand their roles on how they each construct meanings from their interactions and negotiate and understand to accommodate each other's perspectives (Kuczynski, Harach, & Bernardini, 1999). Well-functioning families are characterized by set boundaries and age appropriate authority hierarchies which allow family members to engage age-appropriate roles and provide a clear sense of belonging and uniqueness for family members (Minuchin, 1974). Nock (1988) has argued that single-parent families lack the generational and hierarchical boundaries characteristic of two-parent families, thus there is no balance between roles and responsibilities within the family structure. In support of this perspective, it has been found that single mother are less authoritative and they engage less disciplinary measures and supervision as when compared to mothers in wedlock (Avenevoli, Sessa, & Steinberg, 1999; Baumrind, 1991; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Thomson, McLanahan, & Curtin, 1992).

5.4.2. The role of family support

In studies by (Blanc & Lloyd, 1994; Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987; Sear & Mace, 2008; Sear, Steele, McGregor, & Mace, 2002; Verhoef, 2005) it was revealed that Single mothers often have the privilege of looking onto their extended kin for financial assistance and also for the caring of the child. Support of this nature is often fundamental in areas where high poverty and poor environmental conditions are prevalent. Support is also highly dependent on kin's employment status, geographic proximity, and age. Grandmothers are usually considered as the primary caregivers of their grandchildren, entrusted with the protection of their wellbeing (Adams, Madhavan, & Simon, 2001), whereas other kin, also play a huge responsibility in the caring and rearing of the child (Blanc & Lloyd, 1994; Sear & Mace, 2008; Weinreb, 2002). Kinship support is therefore very important to single mothers especially if the mother has other fundamental responsibilities to see to. In Africa, research has revealed that single motherhood is most prevalent given that there is a high rate of premarital births, divorce and widowhood, thus ,more than half of the women in Tanzania (52%), Kenya (60%), Malawi (61%), and Zimbabwe (69%) have experienced at least one episode of single motherhood before the age of 45 (Clark & Hamplová, 2013). Single mothers living in urban slum areas are facing a variety of challenges such as high levels of unemployment, extreme poverty; dangerous neighbourhoods and some are not at the privilege to afford basic necessities which is fundamental for the health and wellbeing of their children. Children living in such contexts require to be monitored because the environment is not fulfilling with exceptional dangers resulting from poor sanitation, accidents, and violence (Ernst, Phillips, & Duncan, 2013). Children living in slums also suffer from poor nutrition (Mutisya, Kandala, Ngware, & Kabiru, 2015), Socioeconomic factors influencing kin support. Several characteristics of single mothers are likely to influence their need for financial support thus if a mother is unemployed the kin may be then motivated to support the child financially and supplemental child care. Mothers with limited education, insufficient household income can be said to be in greatest need of financial assistance and, is most likely to receive support from kin (Kasper & Borgerhoff Mulder, 2015).

5.4.4. Society stereotyping and treatment of single mothers

Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) define stereotypes as “a set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people”. Various stereotypes that people use include occupation,

marital status, age, sex and/or ethnic origin . (Blalock & DeVellis, 1986). No matter the stereotype, nor how simplified it may be, the fact that it exists, means people form a certain perception of the matter and thus process all information relating to that, in a particular way. This also applies to how the society view and /or see single parenting or single headed households (Ganong, Coleman, & Mapes, 1990).

While they are not intrinsically harmful, stereotypes have some noticeable negative potential which thus translate to negative implications socially (Ganong et al., 1990). Depending on position or the perspective one is from, stereotypes about members of a group affect the cognitive processing of information of the out-group member which may lead to discrimination of members that fall within the stereotype. Single mother therefore, goes without saying that, they suffer various types of stereotyping from sometimes within close relations and society at large (Snyder & Cantor, 1979; Snyder & Swann, 1978). Stereotyping therefore, impact on relationships and perceptions that the society have towards single mother. These perceptions ranging in severity, in that, some involves insult (in relation to sexual promiscuity .) and other to plain ridicule of not being able to keep a man (in relation to divorced women) (Ganong et al., 1990).

According to Dowd (1995) Families headed by single parents are rapidly growing, a study conducted shows that this phenomenon has risen up by twenty six percent. Recent studies have revealed that, single-parent families were known as "broken" or "fatherabsent" families. Dowd (1995) further states that, families with parents who are not married, were not considered to be real families, therefore, the only parent that was recognized was the mother, who was labelled an "unmarried mother," while the children were referred to as "bastards" or "illegitimates". However, over the years, we have now shifted to a more sound and respectful term "single parent" or "single-parent family", instead. Although the term that relate to the children remains stagnant. These new terms appear to remove the condemnation of family form and explicit gender reference, yet their meanings and connotations still suggest the presence of stigma. (Nancy, 1995) Poverty is amongst the many contributing factors to hardship on single parent headed families thus poverty of single-parent families is tied not only to family structures, however the negative financial position of mothers heading such families. Gender discrimination and insufficient coping mechanisms also play a role.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter addressed various themes that emanated from results. These we done in a bid to synergise what the study aimed to achieve (i.e. the socio-economic experiences of single mothers). Furthermore, the theoretically framework of social constructivism was also utilised to locate and embed findings on how new realities are constructed within single parenting.

Chapter 6

Major Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections that present the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The first section presents the conclusions of the study, which is the summary of the study, and the second section part presents the recommendations of the study, and third section is the summary of the study.

The study set out to explore social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu. One of the main concerns was the increase in the number of single mother parents in Umbumbulu who are experiencing challenges in coping with socio-economic obstacles and reporting psychosocial ills. With the realisation that single mother challenges differ from society to society, there have been a noticeable increase number of female single-parent households in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. Being a lone mother in an African society you may be subject to psychological and renegotiation of one's status in society. These include various layers of self-realisation and actualisation. These layers and experiences are better explained through the lenses of social constructivism theory. The study established twelve themes that emanated from results, which speaks directly the single mother's psychosocial and socioeconomic factors that shape the reality and identity (Leban & Gibson, 2020). The major finding that the study established is that, single mothers are faced with the daunting reality of psycho-social and economic challenges which they have to overcome. The psychological challenges deal with challenge of self-identification and actualisation as a person and that of being a stigmatised single parent (Leban & Gibson, 2020). Therefore, trying to balance the pressure of being the sole provider of the family with limited financial resources as well as dealing various stressors resulting from perceptions and stigmatisation coming from both the society and family (at times), demands that single mothers constantly need to re-evaluate their realities and identities within the society (Nancy, 1995).

The study also concludes that, there also financial stressors associated with being the sole provider with no support from the father. Due to this, the value and presence of close family ties and support is noted as a buffer that mitigates the gap identified.

6.3. Recommendations

Study findings reveals that single mothers experience psychosocial stress associated with their roles and responsibilities as single mothers. This study recommends the need for increased social workers in uMbumbulu to conduct programs which help single mothers with information and space to freely express them as to become better and cope with responsibilities of providing for their children.

With the realisation that single mothers end up doing extra menial jobs for people in the society, shows that the support they are getting from the government is not enough. This study therefore a review of grants being provided especially to single mother headed families to improve their financial statuses so as to properly provide for their children.

The overreliance on social grants also reveals the need for government and NGOs as well as community leaders to create skills development schemes for women to create jobs for themselves for self-reliance

Study findings also reveal stereotyping by society members towards single mothers in uMbumbulu. There is need also for social programmes and outreaches dealing with teaching and enlightening societies on kind of support single mothers need.

6.4. Limitations of the study

- The study was only focused on females as single parents, men who are heading families alone had no voice, therefore, their experiences are not known and cannot be explored in this study.
- The study made use of qualitative research technique which required the researcher to source a small sample size. The results do not represent the whole population of single mothers of Umbumbulu.
- The study population was limited to Black Zulu single mother and did not include other racial groups whose experience might be different. A holistic view is therefore needed in order to complete the puzzle.

6.5 Conclusion

The study explored psychosocial and socioeconomic experiences of single mothers in uMbumbulu utilizing qualitative methodology. Results show that single mothers in uMbumbulu are faced with the daunting task of providing for their children, which in turn carries psycho-social and economic experiences which they have to overcome. Financial challenges as well as community stereotyping coupled with difficulties in balancing social life and providing for the family are some of the challenges' single mothers in uMbumbulu face. This study therefore recommends that Single-parent must participate in support groups led by social programmes so they may learn from and support one another in light of their shared circumstance

References

- Agnafors, S., Bladh, M., Svedin, C. G., & Sydsjö, G. (2019). Mental health in young mothers, single mothers and their children. *BMC psychiatry*, 19(1), 1-7.
- Akintola, O., Hlengwa, W. M., & Dageid, W. (2013). Perceived stress and burnout among volunteer caregivers working in AIDS care in South Africa. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 69(12), 2738-2749.
- Anderson, H. (1997). *Conversation, language, and possibilities: A postmodern approach to therapy*. Basic Books.
- Ashmore, R., & Del Boca, F. (1981). Conceptual approaches to stereotypes and stereotyping. In D. L. Hamilton (Ed.), *Cognitive processes in stereotyping and intergroup behaviour*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Babbie, E. R., and Mouton, J. (2005). *The practice of social research*. Cape Town, RSA: Oxford University Press.
- Bauserman, R. (2002). Child adjustment in joint-custody versus sole-custody arrangements: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of Family psychology*, 16(1), 91.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The qualitative report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Beall, A. E., & Sternberg, R. J. (1993). *The psychology of gender* (New York. *Siti Rahayu: Performance Difference Between Woman Cooperatives and Men-Woman Cooperatives*.
- Blalock, S. J., & DeVellis, B. M. (1986). Stereotyping: The link between theory and practice. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 8(1), 17–25. doi:10.1016/0738-3991(86)90023-6
- Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C., & Kagee, A. (2006). *Fundamentals of social research methods: An African perspective*. Juta and Company Ltd.
- Bless C and Higson S.C (2013) *Fundamentals of social research methods, an African perspective*, Juta co ltd, Cape Town South Africa
- Burrows, S., and Laflamme, L. (2005). Living circumstances of suicide mortality in a South African city: An ecological study of differences across race groups and sexes. *Suicide and Life-threatening Behaviour*, 35, 592-603. Sage.
- Chaudhary, S., McGregor, A., Houston, D. and Chettri, N., (2018). Environmental justice and ecosystem services: A disaggregated analysis of community access to forest benefits in Nepal. *Ecosystem Services*, 29, pp.99-115.

- Cheesman, J. E. (2019). *Parenting a child with ADHD: Exploring the experiences of single mothers with ADHD* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Cresswell, J.W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Cresswell, K. M., Bates, D. W., & Sheikh, A. (2013). Ten key considerations for the successful implementation and adoption of large-scale health information technology. *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*, 20(e1), e9-e13.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Zhang, W. (2009). The application of mixed methods designs to trauma research. *Journal of Traumatic Stress: Official publication of the international society for traumatic stress studies*, 22(6), 612-621.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in mixed methods research. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4(1), 269-284.
- Cronje, F. (2012). A colourful hierarchy: Masculinity and fatherhood in South Africa. In *5th Global conference, inter-culturalism, meaning & identity, A diversity and recognition project* (pp. 1-18).
- Cronje, F. (2012, March). Masculinity and Fatherhood in South Africa. A Colourful Hierarchy. In *Ponencia presentada en Interculturalism, Meaning & Identity 5th Global Conference, Praga* (pp. 9-11).
- Daiute, C., Beykont, Z. F., Higson-Smith, C., & Nucci, L. (Eds.). (2006). *International perspectives on youth conflict and development*. Oxford University Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2009). *Ground rules for social research: Guidelines for good practice*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Ding, D., Gale, J., Bauman, A., Phongsavan, P., & Nguyen, B. (2021). Effects of divorce and widowhood on subsequent health behaviours and outcomes in a sample of middle-aged and older Australian adults. *Scientific Reports*, 11(1), 1-10.
- Dlamini, S. N. (2015). *The Relationship Between Single Mothering and Adolescents' Sexual Behaviour in Black Families in Urban South Africa: A Retrospective Analysis of the Birth to*

Twenty Cohort (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Health Sciences).

Fancy, C. (2016). Single parenting: A challenge to the family in the contemporary society. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 21(10), 31-37.

Fielding-Singh, P., & Cooper, M. (2022). The emotional management of motherhood: Foodwork, maternal guilt, and emotion work. *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

Freeman, A. L. (2017). Moving “up and out” together: Exploring the mother–child bond in low-income, single-mother-headed families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 79(3), 675-689.

Freeman, A. L., & Dodson, L. (2014). Social network development among low-income single mothers: Potential for bridging, bonding, and building. *Family Relations*, 63(5), 589-601.

Furstenberg, F. F., & Harris, K. M. (2019). The disappearing American father? Divorce and the waning significance of biological parenthood. In *The changing American family* (pp. 197-223). Routledge.

Ganong, L. H., Coleman, M., & Mapes, D. (1990). A meta-analytic review of family structure stereotypes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 52, 287–297. doi:10.2307/353026.

Gerard, F., Imbert, C., & Orkin, K. (2020). Social protection response to the COVID-19 crisis: options for developing countries. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 36(Supplement_1), S281-S296.

Golombok, S. Zadeh, Sophie, Imrie, S, Smith, Venessa, Freeman V, (2016). "Single mothers by choice: Mother–child relationships and children’s psychological adjustment." *Journal of Family Psychology* 30(4): 409.

Hakovirta, M., & Jokela, M. (2019). Contribution of child maintenance to lone mothers’ income in five countries. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 29(2), 257-272.

Hakovirta, M., Meyer, D. R., & Skinner, C. (2022). Child support in shared care cases: Do child support policies in thirteen countries reflect family policy models?. *Social Policy and Society*, 21(4), 542-559. Holborn, L. and Eddy, G., (2011). *First steps to healing the South African family*. A research paper by the South African institute of race relations sponsored by the Donaldson Trust. South African institute of race relations

Hunt, V., Prince, S., Dixon-Fyle, S., & Yee, L. (2018). Delivering through diversity. *McKinsey & Company*, 231.

- Hussein, A. (2009). The use of triangulation in social sciences research. *Journal of comparative social work*, 4(1), 106-117.
- Jayawarna, D., Marlow, S., & Swail, J. (2021). A gendered life course explanation of the exit decision in the context of household dynamics. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 45(6), 1394-1430.
- Kendig, S. M., & Bianchi, S. M. (2008). Single, cohabitating, and married mothers' time with children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70(5), 1228-1240.
- Keswet, L. A., & Dapas, A. E. (2010). Challenges and Coping Strategies of Single Parents: Case Study of Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State.
- Kim, H. J., Min, J. Y., Min, K. B., Lee, T. J., & Yoo, S. (2018). Relationship among family environment, self-control, friendship quality, and adolescents' smartphone addiction in South Korea: Findings from nationwide data. *PloS one*, 13(2), e0190896.
- Kim, J. E., Lee, J. Y., & Lee, S. H. (2018). Single mothers' experiences with pregnancy and child rearing in Korea: Discrepancy between social services/policies and single mothers' needs. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 15(5), 955.
- Knijn, T., & Patel, L. (2018). Family life and family policy in South Africa: responding to past legacies, new opportunities and challenges. *Handbook of Family Policy*, 249-260.
- Kotwal, N., & Prabhakar, B. (2009). Problems faced by single mothers. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 21(3), 197-204.
- Kroese, J., Bernasco, W., Liefbroer, A. C., and Rouwendal, J. (2021). Growing up in single-parent families and the criminal involvement of adolescents: a systematic review. *Psychology, Crime and Law*, 27(1), 61-75.
- Kruger, D. J., Fitzgerald, C. J., & Peterson, T. (2010). Female scarcity reduces women's marital ages and increases variance in men's marital ages. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 8(3), 147470491000800309.
- Kruger, J. (1998, January). From single parents to poor children: refocusing South Africa's Transfers to poor households with children. In *Paper to ISSA's 2nd International Research Conference on Social Security. Summing up the Evidence: The Impact of Incentives and Targeting on Social Security. Jerusalem*.
- Layne, L. L. (2015). "I Have a Fear of Really Screwing It Up" The Fears, Doubts, Anxieties, and Judgments of One American Single Mother by Choice. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(9), 1154-1170.

- Leban, L., & Gibson, C. L. (2020). The role of gender in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and delinquency and substance use in adolescence. *Journal of criminal justice*, 66, 101637.
- Lemmer, C. (2011). Sampling method impact on research: An African Perspective. 3rd ed. Cape Town: Juta Education.
- Liang, L. A., Berger, U., & Brand, C. (2019). Psychosocial factors associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress among single mothers with young children: A population-based study. *Journal of affective disorders*, 242, 255-264.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1990). Judging the quality of case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 3(1), 53-59.
- Lipman, E. L., & Boyle, M. H. (2005). Social support and education groups for single mothers: a randomized controlled trial of a community-based program. *Cmaj*, 173(12), 1451-1456.
- Lohmann, H., & Crettaz, E. (2018). Explaining cross-country differences in in-work poverty. In *Handbook on in-work poverty* (pp. 50-69). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Mansour, S., Al-Awadhi, T., Al Nasiri, N., & Al Balushi, A. (2022). Modernization and female labour force participation in Oman: spatial modelling of local variations. *Annals of GIS*, 28(2), 229-243.
- May, T. (2011). Social research: issues, methods and process, Maidenhead. *McGraw-Hill/Open University Press*. doi, 10, 2348595.
- Meier, A., Musick, K., Flood, S., & Dunifon, R. (2016). Mothering experiences: How single parenthood and employment structure the emotional valence of parenting. *Demography*, 53(3), 649-674.
- Millings, A., Hirst, S. L., Sirois, F., & Houlston, C. (2020). Emotional adaptation to relationship dissolution in parents and non-parents: A new conceptual model and measure. *Plos one*, 15(10), e0239712.
- Mkhize, N., & Msomi, R. (2016). African single mothers' experiences of work and career in South Africa. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 47(3), 323-342.
- Mudau, T. J., Mukansi, L. E., & Ncube, D. (2018). The effects of single parenting on raising teenagers: A case study of the Hasani Dakari village Vhembe district in Limpopo province, South Africa. *Gender and Behaviour*, 16(2), 11728-11739.

- Munir, H., Rani, H., Ali, M.M. and Afzal, A., (2021). Single Parenting And Its Effects On The Academic Performance Of Students'at University Level In Southren Punjab. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(4), pp.851-859.
- Ncube, M. E. (2021). Developmental Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Perspectives in Building Healthy Human Relationships in South Africa. In *Promoting Healthy Human Relationships in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (pp. 201-211). Springer, Cham.
- Ndlovu, C.S., (2013). Understanding the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in Umbumbulu (Doctoral dissertation).
- Nelson, M. (2014). *The social economy of single motherhood: Raising children in rural America*. Routledge.
- Neuman, B. M., & Fawcett, J. (1989). *The Neuman systems model* (2nd ed.). Norwalk, CT: Appleton & Lange.
- Neuman, L.W., (2007). Social research methods, 6/E. Pearson Education India.
- Neuman, W.L. (1994). Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. (2nd ed). Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon
- Neuman, W.L. (2000). Social Research Methods Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. 4th ed. Boston. Allyn and Bacon.
- Neuman, W.R. (2011). Social Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative approaches 7th edition
- Nieuwenhuis, R., & Maldonado, L. C. (2018). The triple bind of single-parent families: Resources, employment and policies. *The triple bind of single-parent families: Resources, employment and policies to improve wellbeing*, 7, 1-30.
- Nzima, D. and Maharaj, P., (2020). Long-term care for the elderly in sub-Saharan Africa. *Health and care in old age in Africa*, pp.41-60.
- O'Leary, Z. (2014). The essentials guide to doing your research project. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Parry, L. Q., Davies, P. T., Sturge-Apple, M. L., & Coe, J. L. (2020). Coparental discord and children's behavior problems: Children's negative family representations as an explanatory mechanism. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 34(5), 523.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. sage.
- Penne, T., & Goedemé, T. (2021). Can low-income households afford a healthy diet? Insufficient income as a driver of food insecurity in Europe. *Food Policy*, 99, 101978.

- Pitzen, J. L. (2021). *Understanding the Parental Mind: Examining the Stability of Parental Reflective Functioning Across the Birth of a Child and Associations with Maternal Mind-Mindedness* (Doctoral dissertation, Eastern Michigan University).
- Pollmann-Schult, M. (2018). Single motherhood and life satisfaction in comparative perspective: Do institutional and cultural contexts explain the life satisfaction penalty for single mothers?. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(7), 2061-2084.
- Punch, F. K. (2005). *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Raniga, T., Boecker, M., & Mthembu, M. (2019). Economic experiences and sustainable livelihoods of single mothers employed in the formal work sector in Germany and South Africa. *Social Work*, 55(4), 379-390.
- Renzaho, A. M. (2020). The need for the right socio-economic and cultural fit in the COVID-19 response in sub-Saharan Africa: examining demographic, economic political, health, and socio-cultural differentials in COVID-19 morbidity and mortality. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(10), 3445.
- Republic of South Africa. *Children's Act No. 38 of 2005*, Government Gazette, Vol, 492. Cape Town
- Richter, L. (2010). Social cash transfers to support children and families affected by HIV/AIDS. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 5(sup1), 81-91.
- Richter, L., & Morrell, R. (2006). *Baba: men and fatherhood in South Africa*. HSRC Press.
- Rubin, A., and Babbie, E. (2005). *Research methods for social work* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Schrag, A., and Schmidt-Tieszen, A. (2014). Social support networks of single young mothers. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 31(4), 315-327.
- Segal-Engelchin, D., & Wozner, Y. (2005). Quality of life of single mothers by choice in Israel: A comparison to divorced mothers and married mothers. *Marriage & Family Review*, 37(4), 7-28.
- Sewpaul, S., and Pillay, A., (2011). *Household and family structure: A basedline study among primary school learners in Chatsworth, South Africa*. A Professional for social
- Sewpaul, V., (2005). *Structural social justice approach to family policy: critique of the Draft South African Family Policy*. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 41 (4):310-322.
- Shefer, T. and Clowes, L., (2012). *Talking South African fathers: A critical examination of men's constructions and experiences of fatherhood and fatherlessness*. *South African Journal*

of Psychology, 42 (4). Safety and Peace Promotion research unit, Medical Research Council, South Africa.

Simmons-Hall, E. L. (2018). *Age, gender, income, and social support as predictors of single parent resiliency* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).

Sithole, C., & Falkof, N. (2019). Mothers, Cousins, Sisters, Friends: Black South African Relations in Date My Family. *International Journal of Critical Diversity Studies*, 2(2), 22-36.

Republic of South Africa. (1996). Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. *Government Gazette*, 378(17678).

South African Institute of Race Relations, 2011 report

Statistics South Africa, (2009). *The Mid-year population estimates*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

Statistics South Africa, (2010). *Millennium Development Goals Country Report*. Pretoria:

Statistics South Africa, (2020). *The Mid-year population estimates*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

Strydom, J. ed., (2005). Introduction to marketing. Juta and company Ltd.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Plan of Action (1994)

Snyder, M., & Cantor, N. (1979). Testing hypotheses about other people: The use of historical knowledge. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 15, 330–342. doi:10.1016/0022-1031(79)90042-8.

Snyder, M., & Swann, W. (1978). Behavioural confirmation in social interaction: From social perception to social reality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 14, 148–162. doi:10.1016/0022-1031(78)90021-5.

Tomaro, Q. P. V., Genon, L. J., Amod, A. F., & Palomares, P. P. (2021). Singled Out: Invisibilization of Single Mothers in Social Welfare and Protection Policies. *Jurnal Studi Pemerintahan*, 12(2), 132-155.

Tshabalala, S., & Gunter, A. (2021). Technologies of Government and Policy Implementation in Small Towns Economic Development Plans in Mpumalanga, South Africa. In *The Routledge Handbook of Small Towns* (pp. 361-372). Routledge.

Van Gasse, D., & Mortelmans, D. (2020). With or without you—starting single-parent families: A qualitative study on how single parents by choice reorganise their lives to facilitate single parenthood from a life course perspective. *Journal of Family Issues*, 41(11), 2223-2248.

Wachege, P. N., & Omwoyo, M. L. (2018). Investigation of Under-Age Single Mothers In Reference To Christian Perception Of Family In Thogoto Village, Kĩambu County-Kenya.

Wilson-Strydom, M., Thomson, J., & Hodgkinson-Williams, C. (2005). Understanding ICT integration in South African classrooms: research: information and communication technologies. *Perspectives in education*, 23(1), 71-85.

World Summit for Social Development (1995) report

Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European journal of education*, 48(2), 311-325.

Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research: Design and methods. Thousand Oaks. Sage. Young, LC and Wilkinson, IR (1989). *The role of trust and co-operation in marketing channels: a preliminary study. European Journal of Marketing*, 23(2), 109-122.

Yoosefi Lebni, J., Mohammadi Gharehghani, M.A., Soofizad, G. and Irandoost, S.F., (2020). Challenges and opportunities confronting female-headed households in Iran: a qualitative study. *BMC women's health*, 20(1), pp.1-11.

Yuliandi, S., Sabri, M. F., Rahim, H., & Osman, S. (2018). The mediation effect of self-coping mechanism between financial strains and financial security of single mothers in Malaysia. *Malaysian Consumer and Family Economics Association*, 21, 102-123.

Zuo, L., & Miller Juvé, A. (2021). Transitioning to a new era: Future directions for staff development during COVID-19. *Medical education*, 55(1), 104-107.

Appendix 1: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

The interview guide will include the following themes

1. Family demography

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Employment:

Receipt of state grant:

Number of children living in the household:

Age of children living in the household:

Family background (as a single mother):

2. Economic factors

- Will you please share with me if there is any household income you generate to support you in raising your child or children as a single mother?
- If there is, does it meet the needs of your household?
- Tell me about your household expenditure.

3. Psycho-social experiences

- How long have you been a single mother?
- What are reasons for being single mother?
- Tell me about your experiences of raising children without his or her father?
- How has life been affected by being the single mother? (probe: psychosocial aspects and emotional)

4. Coping strategies

- Tell me, how have you been coping with raising a child or children on your own?
- Let say the money that you get does not satisfy the needs of the household, what do you do?

- What are the available support networks you have as a single mother? (probe: extended family, neighbours, community, members, service providers, Lifeline services)

Appendix 2 gate keeper's letter

SOBONAKHONA TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

ENQUIRIES:INKOSI KS MAKHANYA
 SECRETARY KG MAKHANYA
 FAX:0319150032
 TEL: 0319150032

P.O BOX
 UMBUMBULU
 4105

Sobonakhona Traditional Council grants the studentophile
Singuyi Shari ID NO 9906200588085 permission to conduct
her exploration study on social and economic experiences of
single mothers of umbumbulu community as per the university
requirements.

[REDACTED]

SOBONAKHONA
 UMBUMBULU
 0319150032
 BOX 148 UMBUMBULU, 4105
 TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

Appendix 3 ethical clearance



16 February 2022

Miss Phillie Sinegugu Shezi (221108920)
School Of Applied Human Sc
Howard College

Dear Miss Phillie Sinegugu Shezi,

Original application number: 00015958

Project title: Social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu

Exemption from Ethics Review

In response to your application received on 14 Dec 2021, your school has indicated that the protocol has been granted **EXEMPTION FROM ETHICS REVIEW**.

Any alteration/s to the exempted research protocol, e.g., Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment/modification prior to its implementation. The original exemption number must be cited.

For any changes that could result in potential risk, an ethics application including the proposed amendments must be submitted to the relevant UKZN Research Ethics Committee. The original exemption number must be cited.

In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE:

Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Prof Johannes John-Langba.

Prof Johannes John-Langba
Academic Leader Research
School Of Applied Human

UKZN Research Ethics Office
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54061, Durban 4000
Website: <https://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>
Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Informed consent letter appendix 4

Informed consent 1

APPENDIX 3

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant

My name is Philile Sinegugu Shezi and I am conducting a research study as part of my Master's in Health Promotion degree. The research study is aimed at understanding social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu. Ethical clearance will be requested from the University of Kwazulu-Natal ethics committee and gate keepers will be requested from Umbumbulu community leaders.

The duration of each interview will be approximately 30 minutes and with your informed permission the interview will be audio recorded. Participation in this study is completely voluntary therefore should you agree to participate you will be allowed to withdraw from the study at any given time. The refusal to participate in the study or withdrawal will involve no penalty whatsoever. I want to assure you that all information you provide will be kept confidential and that you will remain anonymous. All collected data will be stored in a safe place for a period of five years after which it will be destroyed.

For any further information please feel free to contact me

Contact Details

Philile Sinegugu Shezi

DR Hlengwa

Tel: 0760140858

0781849204

Email: philileps1@gmail.com

Hlengwam1@ukzn.ac.za

Regards

Philile Sinegugu Shezi

Appendix 5

informed consent 2

INFORMED CONSENT

I (full names of participant) consent that I have been informed about the study entitled "Social and economic experiences of single mothers in Umbumbulu" that will be conducted by Miss Philile Sinegugu Shezi

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study and therefore agree to participate knowingly.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time if I feel the need with no consequences.

I understand that my identity will be anonymous and the information that I give will be kept confidential and stored in a safe place for a period of 5 years.

I have been informed that access to the information will not be given to anyone except the researcher, the supervisor and the assessors.

I hereby provide addition consent to: Audio- record my interview **YES/ NO**

I have asked all necessary questions and have been provided with clarity.

If I have any further questions/ concerns related to the research study, I understand that I may contact the researcher or the Supervisor at:

Contact Details

Philile Sinegugu Shezi

DR Hlengwa

Tel: 0760140858

0781849204

Email: philileps1@gmail.com

EMAIL- Hlengwam1@ukzn.ac.za

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix 6 turnitin report.

Dissertation

ORIGINALITY REPORT

0%

SIMILARITY INDEX

0%

INTERNET SOURCES

0%

PUBLICATIONS

0%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

researchspace.ukzn.ac.za

Internet Source

<1%

2

Submitted to University of Central Lancashire

Student Paper

<1%

3

Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal

Student Paper

<1%

Exclude quotes On

Exclude matches < 10 words

Exclude bibliography On