UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Family sanctioned child *kuchaya mapoto* (cohabitation) in Zimbabwe: Lived experiences of young people as child cohabiters.

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work

By

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08 January 2020

DECLARATION
PLAGIARISM

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As candidate supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission

Dr. MAUD MTHEMBU

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08 January 2020

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to God Almighty, who is the Alpha and Omega of my life. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, Tecla Zhoya, who could not live to see her son graduate with his doctorate. I know she is looking down proudly. I also want to dedicate this dissertation to all those children in Zimbabwe who are in forced child cohabitation unions.

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Abstract

Even though the phenomenon of child cohabitation is becoming widespread in Zimbabwe, very little is known about the drivers and the lived experiences of children cohabiting. Child cohabitation infringes on the fundamental rights of children that include the right to education, health, personal development, and undermines the best interests of the children involved in such a union. The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of young people as child cohabiters in Zimbabwe. It is essential to highlight that all the young people who participated in this study started cohabiting when they were still children. The thesis strived to answer the following research questions (1) what are the lived experiences of young people as child cohabiters in Zimbabwe? (2) What are the drivers and consequences of *kuchaya mapoto* union amongst children in Zimbabwe? (3) What are the perceptions and views of parents concerning *kuchaya mapoto* unions involving children in Zimbabwe? (4) What are the intervention strategies to curb *kuchaya mapoto* unions in Zimbabwe?

The study adopted a qualitative research design positioned within the interpretivist paradigm. Data was collected from a sample of 9 young people between the ages of 18-22 who explored their experiences as child cohabiters, 10 parents with children who are cohabiting, two social workers with experience working with children, one teacher, and one religious leader from the community of Dzivarasekwa. Data were analysed using both the thematic content analysis and discourse analysis.

The findings indicated that young people do not cohabit willingly. Poverty, cultural beliefs, and practices when teenagers fall pregnant underline the decision for parents to enforce cohabitation as a precursor for future marriage. However, cohabitation undermines the health, and educational rights of young people, undermining their care and protection. The findings further demonstrated that the burden of managing parental responsibilities was overwhelming because of being young and inexperienced. Hence, it was difficult for the young male participants to provide for their families, which forced them to do strenuous odd jobs to be able to take responsibility for their families' upkeep. The young female participants, on the other hand, felt exploited and abused because they were forced to do all the household chores in their in-laws' household. Feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and regret contributed immensely to mental health issues for the young people.

Apart from the challenges that the participants experienced as child cohabitors, some of the participants demonstrated resilience and a sense of agency not to remain as victims of their

circumstances. These young people are taking care of their children and providing for them without adequate support from their respective families. Deconstructing the notion that teenage mothers and fathers are not capable of stepping up and taking responsibility for their children. They demonstrated that they were able to rise above dominant discourses that not only marginalize and disempower them but sees them as irresponsible individuals who are not capable of taking care of their children.

The recommendations include the need for parents to monitor and supervise their children and be involved extensively in their lives. Additionally, the school and the community play an essential role in the reduction of teenage pregnancy, which was a significant contributor to child cohabitation in this current study. Hence, the need to create effective after school programmes such as sports clubs, scripture union clubs, debate clubs, and writing clubs in communities is important because these can provide a safe environment for children to be nurtured and disciplined. Teenagers are having sex, hence the distribution and availability of condoms in schools in Zimbabwe is critical in reducing the high rate of teenage pregnancy. Prioritising support for school-drop out is important, and the Zimbabwe government should put in place tangible mechanisms that support school re-entry for teenage girls that drop out of school due to pregnancy. Lastly, aligning laws relevant to children with the Constitution of Zimbabwe is fundamental in the protection of children from the repercussions of child cohabitation.

Key Words: *Child cohabitation, teenage pregnancy, cultural beliefs, exploitation, resilience, parental responsibilities, social stigma, school drop-out, mental health.*

ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
HIV	Human Immune Virus
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
ZESN	Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network
ZIMSTATS	Zimbabwe National Statistics
ZNASP	Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Child marriage is a global predicament affecting young girls and boys throughout the world. This practice is a human rights violation that not only robs both girls and boys of their childhood but also jeopardizes their future and general well-being. Whether child marriage occurs to a girl or a boy, the bottom line is that it is a gross violation of human rights (UNICEF, 2001). Child marriage has received overwhelming attention in Zimbabwe, but sadly the same cannot be said for those children who are cohabiting or in *kuchaya mapoto* unions. Just like child marriages, *kuchaya mapoto* unions undermine almost all the fundamental values of child rights that include non-discrimination, the right to life, survival and development, participation, and the child's best interests. There is little documented information on the extent and the factors influencing cohabitation among the youth in Zimbabwe (Svodziwa and Kurete, 2016). Similarly, Manning and Cohen (2015) state that despite cohabitation being an important part of family research, cohabitation studies among teenagers is scarce.

As such, this study was important in bridging this existing gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of young people who cohabited as children in Zimbabwe. *Kuchaya mapoto* is a Zimbabwean Shona term meaning two people who are not married to each other living together as a couple but without the payment of lobola (NN Law, 2016). This term refers to the illegitimate use of the woman's domestic and reproductive services, i.e. literally her 'pots' (Jones, 2009). Besides, Muzvidziwa (2002) defines *kuchaya mapoto* as loosely structured unions involving men and women. For this study, the term *kuchaya mapoto* was used to mean children who are involved in cohabitation in Zimbabwe. It is essential to highlight that the terms *kuchaya mapoto* and cohabitation mean the same thing as such, they were used interchangeably in this study.

Most literature on cohabitation focuses on children living with parents who are cohabiting, however, this study shifts from that normative focus and explores the experiences of young people as child cohabiters. *Kuchaya mapoto* is fast becoming very common amongst children under the age of 18. Majaka (2014) states that *kuchaya mapoto* unions are increasingly becoming the first co-residential union formed among young adolescents in Zimbabwe.

Cohabitation is neither recognized as a form of marriage in Zimbabwe, nor is there a specific law that protects the rights of persons in such unions, yet it is increasing and has become common (Moyo, 2016). Even the Herald of Zimbabwe (2017) acknowledges that in the past, the term *kuchaya mapoto* was derogatory and tantamount to promiscuity, but nowadays it is a common practice that is subtly gaining social acceptance. Moreover, Kang'ethe and Mafa (2014) further highlighting that cohabitation is gaining social mileage and recognition in Africa.

Regardless of the lack of ready statistics to back the sudden rise of this practice in Zimbabwe, there is a general acceptance that it is increasing. According to Majaka (2014), Zimbabwe does not have ready statistics for young people that are cohabiting. However, it has become a common practice in the country. Just like in Zimbabwe, there has also been a steady rise in cohabitation in South Africa, regardless of insufficient demographic evidence to confirm this (Mashau, 2011). It is problematic to ascertain the prevalence of this practice in Zimbabwe, because statistics do not offer definite proof of this trend, given that figures relating to cohabitation or *kuchaya mapoto* are drawn from marriage data. Studies in Sub-Saharan Africa often combine married and cohabiting unions due to the difficulty in distinguishing local perceptions regarding these types of unions (Muthengi and Austrian, 2015). Likewise, Dodoo (2007) highlighted that marriage and cohabitation unions are hard to differentiate in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Nevertheless, ZIMSTATS (2016) puts the percentage of Zimbabwean young people aged 15-19 years married or in the union at 24.5% for women and 1.7% for men. The provinces of Mashonaland Central with 48.9%, Mashonaland West 44.1%, Mashonaland East 37.5% and Harare 20.8% shows the percentage of women who entered in a marital union before their 18th birthday (ZIMSTATS, 2016). While Mashonaland Central province with 10.1%, Mashonaland West 7.1%, and Harare 3.1% indicate the percentage of women who entered a union before their 15th birthday (ZIMSTATS, 2016). These statistics are problematic as they do not specify fully and clearly the percentage of those children who are cohabiting but without any other statistics, they somehow provide some evidence of the increase of this practice in Zimbabwe. Muthengi and Austrian (2015) in a Kenyan study found that the probability of cohabiting was 10.1% for adolescents. The study by Moore and Govender (2013) in South Africa indicated that within the younger age groups (15-19 years), the rate of cohabitation is more or less the same for both Black and White South Africans and that cohabitation rates for women are

substantially higher than for men. Pollard and Harris (2007) study further found that 10% of males and 16% of females under the age of 19 were previously in a cohabiting union.

The sudden rise in *kuchaya mapoto* has been attributed to the high incidences of teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe that forces girls to elope or *kutizira* to their boyfriends. The link between teenage pregnancy and cohabitation has not received much attention in the literature as indicated by Santelli and Melnikas (2010) that extensive research has focused on teenage fertility, but little attention has focused on cohabitation as a relationship context for teenage pregnancy. A more significant share of teenage mothers had their child while cohabiting, in part because most births to teenagers occur outside of marriage (Martinez, Daniels, and Chandra, 2012; Mincieli, Manlove, McGarrett, Moore and Ryan, 2007). At times after a teenager falls, pregnant parents force her to leave the house and go live with the owner of the pregnancy as such fuelling child cohabitation.

Elopements are necessarily a shortcut to *kuchaya mapoto* unions that teenagers embrace, and families from both parties are arm-twisted to sanction with the hope of them becoming fully-fledged marriages where the bridewealth (roora) is paid. Africans are significantly more accepting of cohabitation with marriage intentions than of cohabitation as an alternative to marriage (Posel, Rudwick and Casale, 2011). Many girls under the age of 18 in Zimbabwe are cohabiting "via a process of elopement that is culturally recognized" (Jones, 2009:5). According to the Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey (2010), 46.5 % of adolescents aged 18 years have children or will be pregnant. Zimbabwe DHS (2005/06) also reported a high prevalence rate of 20% adolescent pregnancies (Gandanga, 2009). According to the Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS) of 2010 and 2011, the fertility rate among teenage girls aged between 15 and 19 years increased from 99 per 1000 girls to 115 per 1000 girls between 2005 and 2010.

Zimbabwe, a developing country, has not been spared from the problem of teenage pregnancies, which are leading to child unions (Mutanana and Mutara, 2015). In most cases, child pregnancies have resulted in child unions with parents playing a more prominent role in fuelling the development through arranged unions (Chimhau, 2016). The Zimbabwe Youth Council (2014) study found that the majority of girls eloped to their boyfriends when they get pregnant. Likewise, in Jones's (2009) study in Zimbabwe, one of the participant Okocha indicated that his girlfriend, who was 17 years old, had eloped to him because she was pregnant.

Jones (2009:12) further states that "this sort of *fait accompli* (something beyond alteration) union, established in the wake of an unplanned pregnancy, is so common for township residents that it is arguably the statistical norm." Not all the pregnancies are unplanned, but, in some instances, the boys impregnate the girls willingly to counter any threats from other suitors. This was highlighted by Jones (2009), who highlighted how young boys compete for beautiful girls, and ultimately, getting the girl pregnant is a way to ensure that no one else takes her. In most cases in Zimbabwe, impregnating a girl by a boy is regarded as an achievement and is celebrated by their peers as one would have shown that he is a man. Consequently, giving rise to unplanned pregnancies, which ultimately cascade into child cohabitation.

Not only is pregnancy one of the drivers of *kuchaya mapoto* unions amongst children in Zimbabwe, but there are also other reasons girls elope to the house of their boyfriends. For instance, girls claim that they may elope (*tizira)* "to escape a bad home situation with poverty topping the list as well as sexual and physical abuse" (Jones, 2009:20). In other instances, when a girl returns home late at night, the parents or guardians force the girl to return to wherever she came from, and the girl is forced to elope to his boyfriend's homestead. Additionally, when a girl is seen at night with her boyfriend, she can also be forced to go and live with her boyfriend. This is supported by the Zimbabwe Youth Council (2014) and Jones (2009) that girls are being chased away from their homestead for coming back late or simply being seen with a boyfriend, which contributes to the formation of *kuchaya mapoto* unions. This only confirms the acceptance or sanctioning of *kuchaya mapoto* unions by family members with the understanding that marriage will follow immediately, however, in most cases, it does not pan out that way.

The consequences of family sanctioned child cohabitation are quite disastrous as the children are exposed to HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, and other social ills. The phenomena of cohabitation need to be seriously discussed, especially today when the world, particularly the developing part of the world, is under the weight and fire of HIV/AIDS (Ramphele, 2008; Barnett and Whiteside, 2006). Cohabitation is associated with domestic violence, as it is believed that cohabitating couples may be more susceptible to abuse due to lack of commitment to one another (Kang'ete and Mafa, 2014). Other consequences of child cohabitation include ending the child's ability to continue education, exposing mostly girls to domestic and sexual violence, and increasing their risk of contracting HIV infection (Odhiambe and Mavhinga,

2015). Early childbearing contributes to pregnancy-related deaths and births complications that are the leading causes of mortality for girls aged 15 to 18 years (Myers and Harvey, 2011).

Kuchaya mapoto unions are family sanctioned because there is some form of involvement by one or both partners' families in their establishment. According to Jones (2009), since elopement takes place with the consent of the boys' family and with the full knowledge of the paternal aunt, they are thus family sanctioned *kuchaya mapoto* unions. As *kutizira* or elopement refers to the girl becoming pregnant and then eloping to her partner's family and start living with them. The involvement of the families in *kuchaya mapoto* unions that result from an elopement in most cases is done with the idea that lobola negotiations will follow suit as soon as possible, but that is rarely the case as the bride price at times never gets paid.

The rapid increase in cohabitation unions continues to occur on the backdrop of inadequate scholarly attention to the sources of influence that support such growth levels. Social context determines the acceptability of *kuchaya mapoto* unions. Regardless of this, there has been little attention to how social context may shape a couple's cohabitation attitudes (Manning, Cohen, Smock, and Ostgaard, 2009). Certainly, the decision to begin cohabitation requires the involvement of both members (Manning et al., 2009). Additionally, prior research on union formation and transitions often fail to examine the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of both family members of a couple (Manning et al., 2009). Therefore, the inclusion of parents in this study was necessary because there is a general assumption that *kuchaya mapoto* unions are not accepted in most African societies by families. As such understanding, the perceptions of parents with children in *kuchaya mapoto* unions in Zimbabwe was essential to understand their opinions about this practice.

1.2 Motivation for the study

The primary motivation to do the study was influenced by my cousin's sister, who was forced into child cohabitation because she had fallen pregnant. Her father called a family meeting, and the decision was made to send my cousin sister to the owner of the pregnancy so that he can take responsibility. My cousin's sister's father, just like many fathers in Zimbabwe sends away their daughters when they get pregnant out of wedlock as they believe that the responsibility of raising a child should fall in the hands of the owner of the pregnancy. Forcing young girls to live with the owner of the pregnancy is taken without necessarily looking at other important factors such as them being children and still in school. Hence, the researcher was motivated to

conduct a study on child cohabitation in Zimbabwe to understand the drivers of this phenomenon and the experiences of children involved in this union.

Additionally, the researcher reviewed the literature on the phenomenon of cohabitation and found out that no research has been done, particularly on child cohabitation, not only in Zimbabwe but also in Africa. Therefore, this study was important in filling the gap that exists in the literature. There is also a dearth of social work literature on cohabitation (Kgadima, 2017), which also motivated the researcher to embark on this study. Hence this study was conducted to explore the experiences of young people as child cohabiters to proffer lessons learned and intervention strategies for social workers. The researcher believes that social workers should continually enhance their understanding and knowledge about the trends and dynamics of cohabitation (Murrow and Shi, 2010).

1.3 Problem Statement

The phenomenon of cohabitation is gaining popularity and becoming common amongst children in Zimbabwe with currently no research at all that deals with it. More focus is being given to the practice of child marriage in Zimbabwe, and this shows that the magnitude of cohabitation is under-recognised and under-researched despite its increase. Even though cohabitation is recognized as an important part of young adult family formation, the bulk of research has not considered cohabitation as a teenage activity (Manning and Cohen, 2015). Many girls under the age of 18 in Zimbabwe are cohabiting via a process of elopement (Jones, 2009). Unplanned teenage pregnancy is at the forefront of driving children to cohabit in Zimbabwe. This was confirmed by Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Honourable Dr. Dokora, who highlighted that at least 4500 grade 7 pupils with the majority of them being girls who dropped out of school after falling pregnant and getting into cohabitation unions or child marriage (Murwira, 2016). Likewise, the Zimbabwe Youth Council (2014) study found that there was an increase in teenage to teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe. There are also cultural practices that contribute to child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. Some of these cultural practices include *kuripa ngozi* which sees young virgins' girls being given away to appease a dead spirit that has been murdered by the family of the victim. According to traditional belief, a murderer's relatives need to appease a deceased person's spirit with virgin girls, sometimes as young as six years old (Kachere, 2009). This might contribute to family sanctioned *kuchaya mapoto* unions involving young girls with older men.

This study aimed to understand the experiences of young people as child cohabiters in Zimbabwe as there was a dearth in the literature on this practice as most studies on cohabitation focused more on young adults neglecting the plight of children. Pollard and Harris (2013) state that despite the prevalence and patterns of cohabitation being well documented, there is very little known about the outcomes of cohabitation for young adolescent participants, despite the increasing significance of cohabitation at younger ages. The continued focus on young adults and treating the experiences of cohabitation the same at all ages (Pollard and Harris, 2013) creates a challenge as the experiences of other age groups, especially children under the age of 18 remain unknown. Examinations of cohabitation routinely treat cohabiters at all ages the same (Light 2004). This means that the experiences of children who are cohabiting and for this study those in family sanctioned *kuchaya mapoto* unions remain relatively unrecognized and unknown. Children involved in *kuchaya mapoto* voices are mostly muted, and their experiences remain hardly researched and hidden in Zimbabwe.

Meekers (1994) bemoaned the lack of studies in Zimbabwe on alternative unions such as *kuchaya mapoto*, and even two decades after his assertion, there is still dearth of research on this practice. This made this study necessary in filling this glaring gap as relatively little is known about how young children decide to enter into cohabitation when in their relationships, such a transition occurs, and what such a step means to them (Sassler, 2004). Hence, Manning (2010) recommended that further research should investigate teenagers' understandings and perceptions of the broader meaning of cohabitation.

Over and above, many studies on cohabitation have been done in developed countries with few studies in Africa. This sentiment is shared by Kamgno and Mengue (2014), who state that several studies on cohabitation are found in Western countries with just a few in Africa despite the increase of this phenomenon in Africa. Not only that, but most studies on cohabitation have also been quantitative with what is mostly known about meanings and motives to cohabit largely drawn from quantitative analyses of surveys with close-ended questions (Huang, Smock, Manning, and Bergstrom-Lynch, 2011). As such, this study aimed to move away from quantitative research and conduct qualitative research to explore the phenomenon of child cohabitation.

In 2016, the Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe passed a historical judgement on child marriage by stating that the age of marriage for both girls and boys should be 18. This Constitutional Court ruling, although plausible in child marriage discussions, should also have included those

children who are cohabiting with an older person or someone of their age. Without taking away anything from this landmark ruling towards the ending of child marriages in Zimbabwe however, this ruling left a lot of loopholes by ignoring the plight of other children who are in *kuchaya mapoto* unions as they also need protection from the law.
Against this backdrop, this study attempted to fill the above existing gaps by shedding light on the experiences of children who are in *kuchaya mapoto* union sanctioned by the family in Zimbabwe. To this end, a qualitative inquiry among young people who had cohabited while they were children was completed. The reason for choosing young people was that they were old enough to consent, and it would have been difficult to get consent from their parents if they were children as there is a lot of stigma surrounding kuchaya mapoto. To give this study more depth, parents or guardians with children who are in *kuchaya mapoto* also formed part of the sample to understand their perceptions towards this union.

1.4 Definition of Shona terms

Kuchaya mapoto- defined as two people who are not married to each other living together as a couple but without the payment of lobola (NN Law, 2016).

Kutizira- is an elopement that occurs in most cases when a girl runs to the family of the boy whom she considers having impregnated her (Jones, 2009).

Roora/Lobola- it is the payment of bridewealth which is called roora in Shona and lobola in Ndebele (Mawere and Mawere, 2010).

Kuripa ngozi- is a cultural practice in which young virgins' girls are deliberately given away as compensation to appease a dead spirit that has been murdered by the family of the perpetrator (Kachere, 2009).

1.5 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Dzivarasekwa Township in Harare. Dzivarasekwa constituency is located in Harare Province. It comprises Glaudina, Dzivarasekwa Extension and Dzivarasekwa and is situated to the north-western side of the City of Harare. The high-density suburb has experienced perennial problems of water supply, sewerage reticulation and an increasing number of road potholes due to reduced road servicing. The area has registered high unemployment levels among the youth. Most residents in this constituency live on buying and selling commodities on the black market. Jones (2009) states that amongst those living in

‘townships’, pregnancy-induced *kuchaya mapoto* unions are the most common among children.

1.6 Aim and Objectives of the Study

Aim

The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of young people as child cohabiters in Zimbabwe.

Objectives

1. To understand the lived experiences of young people as child cohabiters in Zimbabwe.
2. To explore the drivers and consequences of *kuchaya mapoto* unions amongst children in Zimbabwe.
3. To explore the perceptions and views of parents concerning *kuchaya mapoto* unions involving children in Zimbabwe.
4. To explore the intervention strategies to curb *kuchaya mapoto* unions in Zimbabwe.

Research questions

1. What are the lived experiences of young people as child cohabiters in Zimbabwe?
2. What are the drivers and consequences of *kuchaya mapoto* union amongst children in Zimbabwe?
3. What are the perceptions and views of parents concerning *kuchaya mapoto* unions involving children in Zimbabwe?
4. What are the intervention strategies needed to curb *kuchaya mapoto* unions in Zimbabwe?

1.7 Theoretical Framework of the Study

For this study, the social constructionism theoretical framework was utilised. To understand the experiences of young people as child cohabiters in family sanctioned *kuchaya mapoto* unions it was vital to understand how they constructed their worldview and how social forces influence their construction of *kuchaya mapoto* based on shared norms, values and experiences. Social constructionism supports the idea that reality can only be understood with the beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions of an individual (Sahin, 2006). Such an approach holds the opinion that widely accepted assumptions play an important role in reinforcing the interests of dominant

social groups, and the way we understand the world is a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation amongst groups of people (Sahin, 2006). As such, the reality is not independent of history, culture, and context; in contrast, it is socially constructed (Houston, 2001).

It was relevant first to understand the history of social constructionism to pave the way for the application of this theory in the current study. Social constructionism has its notions that people, in some respects, construct the truth, which can be found in many philosophical traditions (Kham, 2013). The work of social constructionism has been traced back to the sociologists of Chicago School, phenomenological sociologists and the works of William Isaac Thomas (Marshall and Scott, 1988). The breakthrough contribution to social constructionism by Berger and Luckmann is recognized in their book of 'The Social Construction of Reality' (Searle, 1995; Crotty, 1998; Hibberd, 2005). They contributed immensely to the school of thought and development of the theory of social constructionism. In *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1966) proposed that all knowledge is socially constructed, including our understanding of what "reality" is (Sahin, 2006). In as much the development of social constructionism was initiated from the 1960s, it became well known in the 1970s globally (Franklin, 1995). Thomas Kunh, the author of the famous book "The structure of scientific revolutions" in 1966, was considered as the most significant contributor to the development of social constructionism after Berger and Luckmann (Kham, 2013). According to Kunh (1996), knowledge is essentially the common property of a group. This culminated to the birth to the theory of social constructionism, which refers to a tradition of thoughts that looks at the origin of knowledge and meaning (Lisa, 2008).

Not only was it essential to understand the history and development of the theory of social constructionism, but it was also imperative to highlight the assumptions of this theoretical framework. There are four assumptions on social constructionism stated by Green and Blundo (2008:243), and they include:

1. The way people study the world is based on available concepts, categories, and of scientific or research methods; these categories are a product of language.
2. The various concepts and categories that people use vary considerably in their meanings and from culture to culture as well as overtime.

3. The popularity or persistence of certain concepts and categories depends on their usefulness rather than on their validity; ideas tend to persist because of their prestige or congruence with cultural values.
4. The way in which people describe or explain the world is a form of social action that has consequences.

According to Mcleod (1997) scholars have also identified the nature of social constructionism in aspects of:

1. Social constructionists reject the traditional positive approaches to knowledge that are nonreflexive in nature;
2. Social constructionists take a critical idea on relation to taken-for-granted assumptions about the social reality which are the significant ways to consolidate the interests of dominant social groups;
3. Social constructionists promote the belief that the way people understand the world is a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people;
4. Social constructionists maintain that the goal of research and scholarship is not to produce knowledge that is fixed and universally valid but to open an appreciation of what is possible;
5. Social constructionists represent a movement toward re-identifying psychological constructs such as the mind, self, and emotions as socially constructed processes that are not intrinsic to the individual but produced by social discourse.

Social constructionism suggests that changes do not occur as a result of natural processes, but instead as a result of the different ways in which meanings are built and reconstructed through the history of the people as they interact with each other (Alanen, 2015). The human being lives in the "world of daily life" (Schutz, 1990:213) makes different kinds of constructions that constituted reality, and this reality conforms to the "common-sense world" (Schutz, 1990: 208). Cohabitation in the Shona culture is constructed negatively and is seen as an abomination influenced mainly by the societal norms, and this becomes a reality for everyone. The roots for this socialisation are found in the culture and the religious doctrines that many Zimbabwean people believe in. Because people are born into a society and culture with existing norms and predefined patterns of conduct, definitions of "reality" are socially transmitted from one

generation to the next and are further reinforced by social sanctions, and these existing group definitions are learned and internalised through the process of socialisation (Sahin, 2006).

To support this, Vilches (2012) highlights that in the process of social interaction, the knowledge of the world is transferred from generation to generation. Barker (2010) also pointed out that social constructionism is a theoretical framework that underlines the cultural and historical dimensions of phenomena that are widely believed to be completely natural and the emphasis is on how meanings of phenomena are not necessarily inherent in the phenomena but evolve through experience in a social context.

Personal stories of children are time and again ignored, marginalised and denied in favour of the dominant belief system as such it was essential to work from a social constructionist perspective to give voice to, and validate children in *kuchaya mapoto* unions' meanings and narratives of this practice. In so far as questions of children's "voice," rights and empowerment have become a special concern, especially for researchers and professionals in the education and welfare fields, the constructionist perspective opens avenues for changing the situation of the disempowered (Alanen, 2015). Social constructionism may be an especially useful perspective for working with disempowered, marginalised individuals since it gives primacy to the relationship between the social and cultural context and disempowered individuals (Furman, Jackson, Downey and Shears, 2003). This is important to note as social workers believe that those who cannot express themselves and their rights, including marginal groups, possess valuable opinions that must be taken into consideration (Sahin, 2006).

The experiences of children who are in *kuchaya mapoto* unions are different and unique, meaning there is no universal experience for all children in *kuchaya mapoto* unions, and social constructionism posits that "human behaviour and functioning is not the same for each individual (Teater, 2010:75). Most literature on cohabitation presents a general perception that the experiences are similar for every age group. This generalisation is incorrect since individuals are different and, as such, might experience cohabitation differently due to their age and maturity. This theory emphasises the importance of social factors in the manner in which children construct their reality (Furman, Jackson, Downey and Shears, 2003), and this means that children in *kuchaya mapoto* unions are driven by social factors such as social customs that force them into such unions. Jones (2009:22) states that some people recognize that the practice of *kuchaya mapoto* "is not natural rather it is learned from the environment in which one lives and grows up". This means that children learn about this practice from their

elders or society in general. Hence, people in Zimbabwe often remark that 'you learn about the levirate by seeing others do it' (*kugara nhaka kuona Dzavamwe*). This Shona proverb suggests that young people learn about the possibility of elopement into *kuchaya mapoto* unions from their elders (Jones, 2009:20).

Social constructionism theory locates meaning in an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social and community context (Dickerson and Zimmerman, 1996). The environment and culture of individuals influence the belief and value systems of the individuals and hence affect how they view the world and process experiences (Teater, 2010). This means that for children in *kuchaya mapoto* unions their cultural beliefs concerning this practice can have a positive or negative influence on their perceptions and experiences that will be largely informed by their culture. If their culture condones or condemns *kuchaya mapoto* unions this might mean the children may have a negative or positive experience of this practice. Individuals function and act according to their beliefs and value systems and consequently understand the world through this lens (Teater, 2010).

Language is an important component in the theory of social constructionism. Language, the tool for communication, is the part of social construction as interactions between people determine how we understand and view the world (Kham, 2013). Sahin (2006) underlined that social constructionism approach gives significance to language, meaning, and constructivism as a means people use to interpret their experiences. It is a vehicle for the exchange of ideas, information and creation of meaning (Blundor and Greene, 2008). Such ideas are also emphasised as "When people talk to each other, the world gets constructed" (Burr 2007:8), "talk involves the creation or construction of particular accounts or stories of what world is like" (Eldly 2001: 437), therefore utilising language and focusing on the interpretation of stories and talks is a way of understanding the significance of context and research problem. Knowledge as created by the interactions of individuals within society is central to constructionism (Schwandt, 2003). Child cohabitation is mostly driven by teenage pregnancy, and the language used to portray these teenagers in the society paves the way for them to be forced into these unions. Thus, capturing the language used to portray pregnant girls is important. Getting pregnant out of wedlock is frowned upon and the girl is seen as immoral. Often, the families do not want to be associated with a tainted girl as such, they force the girl to go and live with the owner of the pregnancy.

The practice of *kuchaya mapoto* as this study posits is family sanctioned as such involving parents in this study was important to understand their perceptions regarding this practice because children's views towards this practice is socially constructed sometimes from their significant others. According to Furman et al. (2003), since the beliefs that adolescents hold are socially constructed, it is also important to include members of the systems that have been influential in their lives in the intervention process.

The inclusion and emphasis of multiple realities and personal stories make social constructionism relevant as a theory in understanding the experiences of young people as child cohabiters in Zimbabwe and the perceptions of parents on this practice. For social constructionists, each person has a unique view of the world in line with his/her knowledge and description of himself/herself and their reality, so the application of social constructionism has been used widely in various studies (Kham, 2013). However, this does not imply that social constructionism as a theory was the best framework as compared to others, but rather, it is a more appropriate and applicable theory for this study. Furthermore, social constructionism acknowledges the equal engagement of research participants and researchers as co-creators of a shared reality that was very important when the researcher conducted the interviews with the participants. The researcher created a space of understanding and was respectful and curious as a co-participant in the meaning-generating process, which aided in the exploration of the experiences and perceptions of both children and parents, respectively, with regards to the practice of *kuchaya mapoto* unions. Social constructionism exemplifies a collaborative and respectful framework that can give a platform for in-depth data collection.

Social constructionism is closely related to the value system and mission of the social work profession and discipline (Sahin, 2006). Social constructionism is useful in social work intervention with children who are in *kuchaya mapoto* unions. As it posits that the social worker and the client should maintain an equal relationship, and the social workers should not see themselves as experts but acknowledge participants as experts in their own experiences. With social work emphasis on individualisation, participation, self-determination, human rights, and social justice, a social constructionist approach was an important tool in enabling and empowering the participants. Additionally, by utilising the social constructionism framework, the social worker takes a position of curiosity in an attempt to discover and understand the reality of the experiences of children who are in *kuchaya mapoto* unions. This means that the social worker should be genuine in pursuing how clients view their life, their problems and their strengths (Teater, 2010). By taking a position of curiosity, the social worker is showing

the client that he/she truly values and is interested in the client (Greene and Lee, 2002). It was also vital to use the participants' language as it gives them the room to express their understanding of their experiences in their own words, thereby validating them as experts in their situations. Social constructionism, as a theoretical framework, was important for the researcher as it made it possible for self-reflexivity to assess the researcher's values and biases that would have impacted negatively on the study's objectivity. Teater (2010) states that social constructionism theory requires that social workers remove stereotypes and assumptions about clients and treat each client as a unique individual with a uniquely shaped reality.

1.8 Structure of the dissertation

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1 provided the background and rationale for the study. After the problem statement, the main aim, study objectives, research questions, and the location of the study were provided. The researcher also provided the translation of Shona keywords into English. The theoretical framework guiding the study was presented and discussed thereafter. Lastly, this chapter concluded by presenting the structure of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter is the first of the dissertation's two literature review chapters. It begins by looking at the definition of cohabitation and the early history of cohabitation. A review of the drivers of cohabitation follows, and lastly, the consequences of cohabitation sum up this chapter.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter is the second of the two literature review chapters. In this chapter, the researcher focuses mainly on child cohabitation, looking at the drivers and consequences of child cohabitation. Cultural practices that are harmful to children and act as drivers of child cohabitation was also part of this section. After that, the researcher focused on parents and religious influence on child cohabitation. A look at legislation both internationally and regionally relevant to children concluding this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

This is the methodology chapter and the researcher discussed the qualitative interpretive research methodology that was used to conduct the study. This chapter began with a brief presentation of the study context and a discussion of the qualitative interpretive paradigm. Thereafter, the researcher presented the exploratory-descriptive design, sampling methods which were purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The data collection method of semi-structured interviews is then presented, and after that, a presentation of the data analysis methods of thematic content analysis and discourse analysis follows. The trustworthiness of the study and a self-reflection by the researcher on his own biases, assumptions and attitudes is discussed. Subsequently, the researcher discussed the ethics that guided the study and study's limitations.

CHAPTER 5

This chapter is the first of four chapters on the presentation and discussion of the study's findings. Demographic characteristics of all the participants are presented first which comprised young people who cohabited when they were children, parents with children who cohabited when they were children and stakeholders such as two social workers, a religious leader and a teacher was presented. This chapter focused on the themes that applied to the first objective of the study that is of the drivers and consequences of child cohabitation. The themes are presented as such: Drivers of child cohabitation and the subthemes underneath it include the shame of teenage pregnancy, use of the body as a survival strategy (survival sex), child abuse in blended families, the influence of religion in promoting child cohabitation, parental influence on cohabitation, and lastly lack of parental care and supervision. The chapter concludes by presenting the theme on the consequences of child cohabitation with the sub-themes comprising health risks, recurrent physical and emotional abuse and school dropout.

Chapter 6

This chapter focuses on answering one of the research objectives on the views and perceptions of parents concerning child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. The themes that are discussed in this chapter include cohabitation as a preferred precursor to marriage, the significance of *lobola* as a cultural practice and the parental disappointment.

CHAPTER 7

This chapter is a continuation of the presentation and discussion chapter. The chapter presents themes that answer the third research question of the lived experiences of young people as child cohabiters. The topics that are presented and discussed in this chapter are: The living arrangements in child cohabitation unions, mistreatment from in-laws, the burden of managing parental responsibilities as a young parent, the instability of child cohabitation unions and family rejection and regret.

CHAPTER 8

This is the last chapter on the presentation and discussion of the findings section. The themes for this chapter are focused on answering the last research question of the study on the interventions to curb child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. The three themes discussed include parental responsibilities, school and community-based interventions, and lastly, the need for the alignment of laws in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER 9

Chapter 9 is the last chapter for this dissertation and presents a summary of the significant findings from this study in relation to the objectives and research questions set out at the beginning of the study.

CHAPTER 2
AN OVERVIEW OF COHABITATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by reviewing the literature on the definition of cohabitation and the last part highlight the definition of cohabitation that this study adopts. The early history of cohabitation discussion follows, which then is preceded by a review of literature on the drivers of cohabitation. And these drivers include the breakdown in cultural practices, urbanization, convenience and cohabitation as a stepping stone to marriage. A discussion on the consequences of cohabitation concludes this chapter.

2.2 An overview of cohabitation definition

The term cohabitation carries stigma, and couples in such a union tend to shy away from using this term when referring to their union. Waite and Hughes (1999) highlighted that couples who are cohabiting rarely refer to their arrangement with this term and prefer to say they are living with someone. Additionally, Kgadima (2017) study on cohabitation in South Africa found that cohabitation is a complex phenomenon with a multifaceted trajectory as it carries different meanings for couples. This means that defining cohabitation becomes difficult because after extensive literature review the researcher found that there is limited research on individuals' own reasons for cohabiting and how those reasons may be related to how they describe their relationships. To support this Schimmele and Wu (2011) point out that to date, conceptualizations of cohabitation focuses on relationship quality, which is primarily based on assessments of the relationship between cohabitation partners,however, the meaning of cohabitation outside the dyad is mostly ignored. Despite this, the literature defines cohabitation in several different forms, including as a precursor to marriage, an advanced stage of dating, an alternative to being single, and a viable alternative to marriage (Bianchi and Casper, 2000; Heuveline and Timberlake, 2004; Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel, 1990).

That said, the researcher believes that the definition of cohabitation is dependent on attitudes, characteristics, and behaviours of cohabiters themselves. However, the meaning/s attached to cohabitation also reflect societal norms, such as the level of acceptance of non-marital households, the integration of cohabiters into social networks, and the general "embeddedness" of cohabitation relationships (Schimmele and Wu, 2011). Hence, the social engagement of cohabiters partly determines the meaning of cohabitation because this is a broad indication of the interface between cohabitation and society. This conceptualisation resonates with the social

constructionism theory, a conceptual framework that emphasizes that the cultural and historical aspects of phenomena develop through interaction in a social context (Conrad and Barker, 2010). This is important to highlight as society plays a crucial role not only in the conceptualisation of cohabitation but also in the formation and even ending of this union. The cohabitation unions involving child participants from this study were socially constructed as a result of societal norms influencing parents to force their children into such a cohabitation union because of pregnancy, reinforcing the idea that cohabitation is linked to societal norms. In this study, child cohabitation is defined as a forced marital union with shared residence between a boy and a girl or a child and an adult sanctioned by both sets of parents.

2.3 Early history of cohabitation

Influenced by the general acceptance of cohabitation in most societies, Popenoe (2009) and Snyder and McLaughan (2006) argue that the emergence of cohabitation has been quite dramatic and rapid as compared to other family formations. In the Western countries' cohabitation was largely a marginal phenomenon for the marginalised such as older generations who were previously married (Murphy, 2000), widows who did not want to lose their pensions (Mynarska and Bernardi, 2007), the poor who could not afford a wedding. However, this changed, and cohabitation began to be socially accepted and not only confined to those people on the confines of society. In addition, since the 1960s cohabitation has been a growing trend that first came to scholarly attention because of the living arrangements of college students in Europe (Cherlin, 1992; Scherrera and Klepacki, 2004; Musick, 2007). When cohabitation emerged in the early 1970s, it was known as juvenile cohabitation (Kamgno and Mengue, 2014). This means that it involved young people under the age of 18, and this trend is growing tremendously amongst them. Although researchers treat cohabitation as a novel phenomenon, it is generally recognised globally that it has existed long enough to predate marriages (International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family, 2003).

2.4 Drivers of cohabitation

In the past, it was a taboo or an abomination to engage in a cohabitation union. Moreover, it came with shame, ridicule and stigmatization by the family and society in general. However, there is now a general approval of cohabitation unions as either a prelude or an alternative to marriage mostly among young people and teenagers. Cohabitation is gaining popularity and acceptance (Kang'ethe and Mafa, 2014). Today, most young people approve of nonmarital

cohabitation (Axinn and Thornton, 2000; Bumpass and Sweet, 1989; Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). As such, it is important to highlight some of the drivers of cohabitation.

2.4.1 Breakdown in cultural practices.

In African countries, there is a decline in traditional marriages, which have been influenced by the sudden rise in cohabitation. It is widely acknowledged that marriage has retreated in its centrality and relevance as the first step in family formation (Avellar and Smock, 2005; Dominguez-Folgueras and Castro-Martin, 2013). Marriage used to be the only viable option for couples however, its authority has diminished.

In the Zimbabwean context, colonisation played a significant role in changing the Zimbabwean marriage structure and patterns by outlawing polygamy as a legitimate marriage. According to Gaskiyane (2000:97), polygamy refers to "a culturally determined, socially acceptable and legally recognised form of permanent marriage where a man has more than one wife at a time." Before colonisation polygamy was considered an accepted marriage structure. Mukonyora (2007) highlighted that settler legislation such as the Native Marriage Ordinance and Native Adultery Punishment adopted in 1916 made it unacceptable to marry many wives, and it became prohibited to have more than one wife. This was done not only to enforce but reinforce monogamy while undermining the traditional way of marriage. The colonialists also used a powerful tool of religion to undermine and suppress African traditional cultural practices and marriage. The missionary teachings of Christianity emphasized monogamy and portrayed polygamy as immoral, oppressive, and shameful (Mutseta, 2016). Polygamy was criticised, despised, and made into a test of 'churchmanship' or commitment to Christ, with polygamous families becoming marginalised in church and denied sacraments of Baptism or the Holy Eucharist (Mbiti, 1973). By destroying polygamy, the colonialist and the missionaries contributed to the rise of other sexual relations such as *kuchaya mapoto* in Zimbabwe. This meant that a man would have one wife while maintaining sexual relations with other women without necessarily living with them. Hence, a man would have girlfriends dotted around, that his wife would not know about. Commenting further, Mutsetsa (2016) argues that the introduction of Christianity at the expense of the African Traditional Region also worked to the emergence of varying forms of sexual relations such as cohabitation.

Additionally, in Zimbabwe, the normative marriage customs of the Shona-speaking people are characterised by the negotiation and payment of bridewealth. In Shona society, the payment of bridewealth, the main part of which is called *roora* or *lobola* for the Shona and Ndebele people

of Zimbabwe respectively, is the basis of marriage and family obligations (Mawere and Mawere, 2010). Zvobgo (1996) states that *Lobola* is a custom in which the husband (or his family on his behalf) delivers or promises to give to the father (or guardian) of the wife, stock or other property. This has been the basis of marriage in Zimbabwe since time immemorial, but this type of marriage is losing its relevance and significance mostly amongst the young people who are opting for other types of union, particularly *kuchaya mapoto* unions. Despite the continuing emphasis on *lobola* payments in the ethnographic literature, studies suggest that 'deviant' types of union became increasingly common (Meekers, 1993). Mawere and Mawere (2010), acknowledge that there is a gradual erosion of normative marriage customs in favour of more informal types of unions. The gradual breakdown of the custom of *roora* in Zimbabwe can be attributed to the commercialisation of the bride price in which families are now charging exorbitant prices for their daughters' hand in marriage that makes it difficult for most young men to marry, hence, settling for other more accessible alternatives such as cohabitation. The payment of bride price has ceased to be a tool to unite families, but more of a get rich quick scheme, and it has contributed to the growing resentment of this practice by young people. One young participant in Jones's (2009) study highlighted that it is now rare for young people to follow the traditional ways of marriage, and he further states that in his prolonged interactions with young people only one in ten marries by paying *roora*.

Concerning structural changes, unemployment emerged as one of the main aspects that have helped the increased levels of cohabitation (Mokomane, 2004). Since most of the cohabitants are relatively young and unemployed, it means that they are not able to afford the exorbitant bride price of customary marriage, thereby settling for cohabitation hence fuelling its increase. The rise of cohabitation has occurred additionally, because of the gradual breakdown of the influences of the lineage and to changes in the relative status of socioeconomic transformations of men. The development of cohabitation and the delay of marriage reflects a decline in expected benefits of marriage and is due to the increased women's economic empowerment, resulting from better training and better salaries (Kamgno and Mengue, 2014). The realisation by many women that equal marital relations are almost impossible in the traditional form of marriage is contributing to an increase in *mapoto* unions (Muzvidziwa, 2002). Legal Assistance Centre (2010) further state that some women avoid marriage to escape male domination so often associated with marriage, thereby opting for cohabitation, which gives them some sense of autonomy.

Settling for alternatives forms of union which excludes roora payment can be viewed as an individualistic choice. This resonates with the rational choice theory, which is defined by Levin and Milgrom (2004) to mean the process of determining what options are available and then choosing the most preferred one according to some consistent criterion. Thus, young people may choose their most preferred union rather than being forced into the rigidities of paying the bride price. Lloyd and South (1996) argue that structural constrains most men experience when they want to get married affect their choice of a union. Financial constraints influence their decision of cohabiting as they are unable to afford the bride price.

Another theory to explain the reasons that prompt people to cohabit is the commitment theory. According to Baxter, Haynes, and Hewitt (2010:6), "commitment theory highlights the importance of understanding reasons for relationship transitions—interpersonal versus constraint commitment—as a means of explaining relationship quality and behaviours". The commitment theory offers an alternative lens to explain the reasons for entering and staying in cohabitation unions for young people. This theory seeks to understand the reasons individuals have to enter cohabitation (Baxter et al., 2010). The need to want to pool their resources together and the promise of this union becoming a fully-fledged marriage is a key factor that results in cohabitation. This reflects economic and financial factors as key in cohabitation and reasons for such entering or staying in these unions. However, Baxter et al. (2010) and Rhoades, Stanley, and Markman (2012) offer an alternative view, highlighting moral obligation to remain together, social pressure from friends and families and concern for children (if there are children) as the motivation to commit and stay in this union.

Some theories offer individualistic factors for entering cohabitation. For example, the self-determination theory assumes that people's choices and behaviours are consistent with their needs. In line with this theory, individuals make conscious choices driven by individualistic factors to enter cohabitation unions despite the social stigma associated with this union. This theory takes the view that young people cohabit without being driven by external factors such as finances. According to Hughes (2015), rather than relying on prescribed social norms, individuals have natural choices on how to construct their lives and identities. The self-determination theory supports individuals' full involvement in the relationship rather than feeling coerced, guilty, or not knowing the reason for being in the relationship (Knee, Hadden, Porter, and Rodriguez, 2013).

Furthermore, self-determination theorists' purports that individuals have moved away from traditional norms and expectations when it comes to romantic relationships. People, therefore, enter a romantic relationship for its own sake without any obligation (Smith, 2014:3). These theories do not provide the theoretical lens to analyse child cohabitation and its contributory factors.

The Social constructionism theoretical framework underpinning this study does provide a useful perspective on the factors influencing cohabitation. Social constructionism believes that a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences. Dominant beliefs within society, and also within ourselves, influence each individual's perception of what is "real" (White, 1995). Therefore, constructs, such as cohabitation, are not exclusive across a society. Each individual's experiences and influences from their societal beliefs create a unique understanding of cohabitation. Hence, society has a tremendous influence on one's views and expectations of cohabitation union. Each culture holds its own traditional values that a person must either accept or relinquish when deciding to cohabit.

2.4.2 Urbanisation

Commonly in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa, the practice of cohabitation was linked to the process of urbanization. Living in urban areas, increase the risk of cohabitation in Burkina Faso (Zourkaleini and Legrand, 2004) and Togo (Thiriat, 1999). This is consistent with Muzvidziwa's (2002) study, which shows that many urbanites were turning to alternative marital forms, especially to what is commonly referred to in Zimbabwe as *kuchaya mapoto* as the fluidity of urban situation made this union viable. In Zimbabwe, the practice of cohabitation was linked to the processes of urbanisation and the weakening of traditional institutional controls (Chavunduka, 1979). This means that cohabitation is more common in urban areas in which young people do not feel obligated to follow the traditional customary bridewealth marriage. This is in line with Kamgno and Mengue (2014) study which found out that in all the three periods (1991, 1998, and 2004), the proportion of cohabiting couples was higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Mangena and Ndlovu (2013) argue that many families in Zimbabwe urban areas are established without the payment of bride price; therefore these families could be considered cohabiting.

In South Africa, there has been a rapid increase of cohabitation as evidenced by the 1996 census. Almost 1.2 million individuals were reported in the 1996 census as living with a partner in a cohabiting relationship, and that number rose to 2.4 million in 2001 (White Paper on

Families in South Africa, 2012). South African scholars have noted the increase in cohabitation rates, specifically amongst Black South Africans (Hosegood, McGrath and Moultrie, 2009; Posel, Rudwick, and Casale, 2011). In 1995, 5% of Black South African women reported cohabitating with a partner, and by 2008, this had increased to 14% (Posel et al., 2011). This means that cohabitation rates have risen as marriage rates have declined in South Africa, and a more significant share of all African women currently cohabits with a partner compared to White women (Posel and Rudwick, 2012). Cohabitation in South Africa is predominantly a phenomenon practiced amongst young people and has increased by nearly 50 percent between 1996 and 2007 (Palamuleni, 2010). Even the 2011 South African Census confirmed the rise of cohabitation in this country (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Census 2011 – marital status: Statistics South Africa (2011)

Province	**Married**	**Living together like married partners (cohabitation)**
Eastern Cape	1,394,078	234,091
Free State	629,631	219,599
Gauteng	3,254,970	1,205,002
KwaZulu-Natal	1,925,927	549,654
Limpopo	1,058,047	313,551
Mpumalanga	764,968	325,617
North West	741,889	284,469
Northern Cape	247,083	91,248
Western Cape	1,767,230	384,452
South Africa	11,783,822	3,607,684

The numbers reflected on the South African Census of 2011 table indicate the rise in cohabitation, with urban areas such as Gauteng and Western Cape Province having the highest

cohabitation unions. Conversely, there are lower numbers of people in cohabiting relationships in rural environments (Limpopo, North West and Mpumalanga Provinces) (Williams, Kabamalan and Ogena, 2007). However, in most African countries, cohabitation seems to be more prevalent in urban areas in Africa (Calves, 2016).

Botswana has one of the highest rates of cohabitation in Africa, which has been confirmed by various writers. According to the 1991 census of Botswana, 12% of all people aged 15 years and above reported themselves as cohabiting. By the time of the 2001 census, this figure had increased to approximately 17% (Mokomane, 2005). Cohabitation rates have risen in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years, with some countries, such as Botswana, exhibiting dramatic growth (Mokomane, 2006). Cohabitation is also widespread in Namibia. National surveys in Namibia revealed that at least one-fifth of Namibians in their early adulthood live together without being formally married (Hubbard, 2010). The Namibia Demographic and Health Survey *2006-2007*, which is based on a national sample, found that about 15% percent of women and 13% of men between the ages of 15 and 49 were “living together” with a partner, without being formally married.

Strong evidence exists across the African continent that the prevalence of unmarried cohabitation in which urban young people choose to live together without performing any religious, traditional, or civil marital ceremonies has risen significantly in recent decades (Posel et al., 2011; Bocquier and Khasakhala, 2009). In Ouagadougou and Bobo-dioulasso, Burkina Faso's two largest cities, it has been recorded that more than a quarter (27%) of young women aged 15–24 started their first union in 2000 by living with their partner without being married, compared with less than 5% of those of the same age in 1980 (Calvès, Kobiané and Martel, 2007). There is a growing inclination among young people to live in cohabitation unions, however, this varies with countries (Adjamagbo, Antoine, Toudéka, Kpadonou and Fageac, 2014).

2.4.3 Convenience

In a survey study of 120 cohabiting couples in the USA by Rhoades, Stanley, and Markman in (2009), they found that most of the participants cohabited as a matter of convenience. For some, the driver of cohabitation is somewhat economical with the need to pool resources by the couples to sustain themselves. This can be termed a convenient cohabitation where couples live together as a means of sharing living expenses (Ojo, 2019). In reinforcing this further, Sassler (2004) argued that many cohabiters enter into joint living arrangements out of financial

necessity. In a study of 139 cohabiters by Murrow and Shi in (2010), their results reported that most cohabiters cited economic reasons as the accompanying reason for cohabiting.

This has given rise to cohabitation by university students globally. Students in higher educational institutions continue experiencing high excessive college costs (Aluko, 2009; Grossband, 2003). For most young university students, cohabitation becomes an alternative option to cope with the expensive accommodation fees at various universities. There has been an increase in the intake of university students by multiple universities in Zimbabwe despite the inability of the government to adequately provide the needed social infrastructures and funding of higher education, which has led to risky coping mechanisms among the students (Olson, 2000), such as cohabitation. The non-residential accommodation in many higher institutions tends to encourage this new trend of students cohabiting. Initially, all students were housed within the institution's halls of residence but because of the high numbers of students accepted, it means that accommodating all these students becomes a challenge.

According to Ojewola and Akinduyo (2017), Nigerian tertiary institutions are also experiencing the challenge of inadequate hostel accommodation because the population of students continues to grow without corresponding growth in the number of halls of residence and other physical facilities. Most off-campus decent accommodation is often less affordable than on-campus housing. Hence, a male and a female student usually rent a space and cohabit. Elise (2004) argues that cohabitants live together to save money, because of the convenience of living with one another, or a need to find housing. Goodwin; Mosher, and Chandra (2010) further agree that extremely high costs of housing and tight budgets of today's economy also account for cohabitation. Furthermore, undergraduate students indulge in cohabitation for pragmatic considerations to save money on rent and other living expenses (Manning and Smock, 2005; Lindsay, 2000; Sassler, 2004, and Arisukwu (2013). The implication for this is that they cohabit with those whom they perceive can solve their financial problems. In other instances, those migrating to other countries and with limited financial resources tend to choose to cohabit to combine their finances to cater for the living expenses in the host country. Zimbabweans migrating to South Africa in numbers are forced to cohabit, considering the horrendous and pinching effects of the economy of their country, options such as cohabitation becoming an attractive norm for economic survival (McDonald and McMillen, 2010). Legal Assistance Centre (2010) study in Namibia also found out that people cohabit to save costs on living expenses.

2.4.4 Cohabitation as a stepping stone to marriage

For some, the reason for cohabiting is to 'test drive' first before getting married to ascertain whether they can be able to live together in a permanent union of marriage. This practice is now the modal route to marriage in the United States, and it has become a prominent feature on the landscape of American family life (Smock, Huang, Manning, and Bergstrom-Lynch, 2005; Stock and Railey, 2008). The 2000 U.S.A census accounted for 5.5 million households consisting of a cohabiting couple, although this figure mirrors a considerable rise in the incidence of cohabitation over the previous 20 years, it still underestimates the true prevalence and impact of cohabitation (Stock and Railey, 2008). Data for 2002 indicate that 62% of women's first marriages are preceded by cohabitation either with their spouses or with someone else (Stock and Railey, 2008). The trends of cohabitation in the United States show an increase in the popularity of this phenomenon as compared to marriage mostly amongst young adolescents and young people.

In 1990, there were 2, 9 million cohabiting couples in the U.S.A, and in 1998, there were over 4, 2 million cohabiting households (International Encyclopedia on Marriage and Family, 2003). By 2009–2010, 60% of women ages 19–44 had ever cohabited, nearly double the proportion of 33% in 1987 (Manning, 2013). Over half of today's young people will live with someone in a romantic relationship before marriage (Stanley, Whitten, and Markman, 2004). There were 5.1 million cohabiting couples in 2004, representing a 170 percent increase from 1980 (Dolgin, 2011). This trend has continued, with over 7.5 million cohabitating couples in 2011 (Jayson, 2011).

Most of the literature highlights the ready acceptance of cohabitation unions by mostly young people. Most young people have cohabited or will cohabit as this practice has increased in all age groups and is becoming an arena for childbirth and child-rearing in U.S.A (Smock et al., 2005). Young people in the United States approve of cohabitation at much higher rates than their older counterparts, so cohabitation rates will likely continue to rise in the United States (Smock, 2000). In Latin America, cohabitation has a long history because informal unions have long existed as a prelude to marriage (Stock and Railey, 2008).

Cohabitation in the U.S.A and Europe is represented as the first stop to marriage and there is a certain belief that almost all cohabitations are temporary unions leading to marriage. Most recent marriages in the U.S.A were preceded by a certain period of cohabitation, with more than half of them (Raley, 2000). More than half of cohabitations eventually end in marriage

(Bumpass and Lu, 2000). In 1995, 58% of first cohabitations union had transformed to marriage within 3 years (Bramlett and Mosher, 2002), a rate that fell to 51% in 2002 (Goodwin, Mosher, and Chandra, 2010) and to 40% in 2006–2010 (Copen, Daniels, and Mosher, 2013). Frequent portrayals of cohabitation, reinforced by quantitative research strategies, have frequently viewed cohabitation as a precursor to marriage, mostly in developed countries (Sassler, 2004). Young people in the developed countries are believed to view cohabitation as a trial to assess the compatibility of their partner before marriage.

In the European context, cohabitation has increased dramatically, with some countries experiencing rapid increases. Moreover, childbearing within cohabitation is becoming common (Perelli-Harris, 2015; Hiekel, 2014). According to Perelli-Harris and Bernardi (2015), the rise in cohabitation, or two people living together in an intimate union without marriage, has been one of the most considerable changes to the Western family over the past few decades. Most European countries have seen a retreat from marriage, which is increasingly preceded by cohabitation (Baranowska-Rataj, 2013).

Most people eventually marry, with most cohabiting with their spouses before marriage (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Ellwood and Jencks, 2001). Studies focusing on cohabiters themselves also report that the majority have definite plans to wed their partners in the future (Brown, 2000; Lichter, Batson, and Brown, 2004; Manning and Smock, 2002). Cohabitation is the last and temporary phase before marriage (Manting, 1994; Carmichael, 1995; Smock, 2000). There is also a general perception that young white people see cohabitation as a trial before marriage, unlike young blacks who often view cohabitation as an end. According to Posel et al. (2011), for white women, cohabitation is more likely to precede marriage, rather than being an alternative to marriage, or the end state of a relationship, as may be the case among more African women. Cohabitation is now the first union for young people, and most marriages are preceded by cohabitation, however, fewer cohabitations unions' transition to marriage (Guzzo, 2014). Bumpass and Lu (2000) agree with this by stating that fewer cohabitations are transitioning to marriage. Sassler (2004) further supports this point by highlighting that some studies often convey the impression, perhaps mistakenly, that marriage is a clear goal for those entering cohabiting unions. Sassler's (2004) findings support her above assertion in which most of her respondents responded that cohabitation was not a 'test drive' for marriage.

2.5 Consequences of cohabitation

Despite cohabitation becoming very common mostly amongst the young generation, there are however, negative consequences associated with this practice. There are widespread repercussions linked with cohabitation amongst university students as they often engage in risky unprotected sex. Martin, Martin, and Martin (2001) validated this point that a considerable number of youths are engaging in premarital sexual behaviour and there has been an increase to 60 percent in the last 20 years. Additionally, the World Health Organization (2001) correspondingly highlighted that premarital sexual activities among young people are high and increasing in Africa. The negative consequence of this, as highlighted by Svodziwa and Kurete (2017) study on cohabitation in Zimbabwe among tertiary students, is unwanted pregnancies.

Consequently, it is the young females that bear the consequences of unwanted pregnancy, as this might disrupt their education aspirations. Not only are females exposed to unwanted pregnancies but also STIs and HIV/AIDS, as supported by Aluko (2011), who highlighted that the unintended consequence of cohabitation includes exposure to sexually transmitted infections. Cohabitation being in some cases a no string attached union with lack of commitment, there is a high likelihood of infidelity, which further exposes the partners to STIs and HIV/AIDS.

According to Arisukwu (2013), cohabitation has enormous health impacts on the female students who may use oral contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancy, which may shorten their educational aspirations. In instances that pregnancy occurs, such female students are more likely to seek abortion as an alternative (Arisukwu, 2013). This poses serious health difficulties for such students who may visit unqualified back door doctors without adequate experiences and qualifications (Ofoegbu, 2002). These unsafe abortions will have an impact on these females in the future, with a likelihood of not being able to conceive again.

Additionally, cohabitation unions have been associated with domestic violence mainly because these unions are temporary and unstable as the partners lack the commitment to each other. According to the American College of Pediatricians (2015), cohabiting unions are more likely to comprise of infidelity and violence. Nothing is tying the partners in these unions as compared to those married. Hence, the likelihood of cohabiting unions dissolving any time increases the risk of unfaithfulness and violence. Women are more likely to be affected by violence in a cohabitation union as compared to their male counterparts. Kenny and McLanahan (2006), in

their study of cohabitation unions in the USA, found that violence towards women was prevalent. And to some extent, this violence becomes fatal as women get killed. This sentiment was shared by Shackelford (2001) that women in cohabiting unions are about nine times more likely to be killed by their partner than women in marital unions.

Cohabitation unions are additionally associated with mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, because of their instability. Brown (2000) study found that cohabiting individuals reported more symptoms of depression as compared to married couples, mainly due to the uncertainty attributed to cohabitation. There is no guarantee that an individual will stay longer in a cohabiting union as such, it is always depressing to be constantly thinking about this. And additionally, with the high infidelity associated with cohabitation, there is a likelihood that the person being cheated on will suffer from depression and stress. Cohabiting couples have been found to show more conflict, less communication and commitment, feel less secure in their relationships, and encounter more infidelity than do married couples (Reed, 2006). And this contributes to mental health issues as a low-quality relationship leads to depression (Rhoades, Stanley and Markman, 2009).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion on the contentious definition of cohabitation, intending to get a proper definition that this study used. The difficulty of defining cohabitation emanates from the stigma associated with this union, and the literature reviewed how societal norms play an important role in its definition. It was also essential to get a sense of how cohabitation began thus, a brief history of cohabitation was provided, which showed how cohabitation was mostly associated with poor people at the margins of society and gradually became prominent amongst young people.

The review of literature on the drivers of cohabitation, which included the breakdown in cultural practices chief amongst them the payment of lobola with young people turning away from this cultural practice in preference of cohabitation was discussed. Other drivers of cohabitation reviewed in this part of the section include convenience in which couples are staying together to pool their resources together and this is mostly done in universities. Lastly, the repercussions associated with cohabitation were discussed and these included the risk of unwanted pregnancies and exposure to HIV/AIDS for females as nothing is binding the couples together and sometimes this practice is a no strings attached union especially for university

students. Additionally, cohabitation is associated with violence and instability arising from the temporal nature of such unions.

CHAPTER 3

AN OVERVIEW OF CHILD COHABITATION

3.1 Introduction

Not much literature explicitly focusing on child cohabitation is written. The available literature on cohabitation mostly focuses on young people, which means the research, particularly on children who are cohabiting, is scarce. This study fills this glaring gap as children are also cohabiting, but their experiences are largely ignored in the literature. Cohabitation is an integral part of family research; however, little work examines cohabitation among teenagers or links between cohabitation and teenage childbearing (Manning and Cohen, 2015). Similarly, many studies have included age in their analyses of cohabitation, but do not specifically consider early cohabitation. Such studies often note the percentage of those who have cohabited or are cohabiting among different age groups (Chandra, Matinez, Mosher, Abma and Jones, 2005; Kennedy and Bumpass, 2008). Yet to date, little work has focused on teenage cohabitation. This chapter focuses not only on the drivers and consequences of child cohabitation but also on cultural norms, beliefs, and legislation that conjoin to influence child cohabitation.

3.2 Drivers of child cohabitation

3.2.1 Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is a global problem affecting both developed and developing countries. Internationally, 15 million women under the age of 20 give birth, representing up to one-fifth of all births and 529, 000 women die due to pregnancy and childbirth-related complications every year (Dev Raj, Rabi, Amudha, Van Teijlingen and Chapman, 2010:4). This is a global concern and the USA tops the list with almost one million teenage pregnancies each year (Williams, 2010). The USA has the highest pregnancy and births among adolescents (Coley and Lansdale, 1998) cited in Chang'ach (2012:3). According to the Inter-press Service (2011), the global rate for teenage pregnancy for the year 2011 was 52, 9 pregnancies per 1,000 female adolescents. In, 2000 the total number of teenage pregnancies in the United States was 821, 81 (84 pregnancies per 1000 people), as compared to Canada, whose overall rate of teenage pregnancies in 2000 was 38,600 (38 pregnancies per 1000 people) (Chang‟ach, 2012:4). With England having a significantly lower rate of teenage pregnancies as compared to the USA. In England, there are nearly 90,000 teenage conceptions per year; around 7.700 to girls under the age of 16 and 2,200 to girls aged 14 or under (Holgate, Evans and Yuen, 2006:9). In developed

countries, the USA has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies as compared to other developed countries. This is confirmed by Cross-Tower (2007) and McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, and McWhirter (2007:160), who state that the United States has the highest teenage birth rate of all developed countries and is twice as high as Great Britain and ten times higher than the Netherlands.

In Asia, teenage pregnancies are on the rise because of early marriages. According to World Health Organisation (2008), in the Indian subcontinent, early marriage most of the time translates into adolescent pregnancies, particularly in rural regions where the rate is much higher than it is in urbanized areas. In some countries in Africa, young girls are getting married early either through child marriage or child cohabitation, and this exacerbates the rate of teenage pregnancy in this continent. Teenage pregnancy is correlated with an increased risk of maternal deaths in developing countries. For example, in Sierra Leone, 70% of teenagers are married, and teenage pregnancy accounted for 40% of maternal mortality (Inter-Press Service 2011; World Health Organisation, 2008).

One of the major causes of teenage pregnancy is the lack of adequate information on the sexual reproduction system and pressure from their peers. Adolescents tend to be naive and easily influenced by their peers to explore sex at a tender age without full knowledge of the sexual reproduction system. Some of the adolescents during this period become very experimental with sex, which may result in pregnancy (Lotse, 2016). Adolescents in a study in Ghana engaged in sex as a result of peer influence, which increased the rate of teenage pregnancy (Christofides, Jewkes, and Dunkle, 2014).

Lack of sexual and reproductive health information or education was another predisposing factor of adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood in both developed and developing countries. Dlamini (2016) highlights that some researchers have argued that early childbearing is a result of teenagers' inability to access sexual health and reproductive health facilities. As a result, much of early teenage childbearing is unplanned and unwanted (Richter, Norris and Ginsbury, 2006; cited in Makiwane, 2010:201). Adolescents in most of the developing world are denied access to comprehensive sex education (Asampong, Osafo, Bingenheimer, and Ahiadeke, 2013). Therefore, these adolescents know little or nothing about their sexual and reproductive health. Most adults in the African context are not keen to discuss sexual reproduction health with their children as they view it as an adult issue, and they do not want to acknowledge and accept that their children are having sex. As such, it becomes a challenge

for children to access condoms and contraceptives from public spaces such as clinics and hospitals as the staff tends to be hostile and judgemental towards them. Even in South Africa, findings by Macleod and Tracey (2010:18) confirmed that the attitudes of nurses at hospitals and other health centres ironically constitute a barrier to adolescents' access to contraceptives in South Africa. Conversely, this means that children will start having unprotected sex, which not only exposes young girls to teenage pregnancies but also sexually transmitted infections.

There is documented literature on the lack of access to condoms and contraceptives for young children. Zimbabwe is one of the countries which is very unreceptive to the distribution of condoms in secondary schools. Langa (2015) highlighted that The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) in Zimbabwe as opposed to condom advancement and distribution in schools. Children who are found with condoms in schools in Zimbabwe are punished and sometimes suspended from school. This is confirmed by Newsday (2015) that schools' punitive responses to pupils found in possession of condoms militate against adolescents' sexual and reproductive health practices. Distribution of condoms in schools will make it easy for this vulnerable and at-risk group to access them because in public places, it is rather challenging to access them. As reported by Shumba (2018) that not all clinics are youth-friendly.

Additionally, Muparamoto and Chigwenya (2009) highlight the judgemental attitudes of health professionals at health centres which often pose a barrier for youth to access condoms. There is an underlying assumption in Zimbabwe supported by some policies that abstinence for adolescents is the key to mitigating the effects of teenage pregnancy and HIV. However, the reality on the ground is that young people are sexually active. Shumba (2018) categorically state that young people in Zimbabwe are sexually active. Both public discourse and critical policies are swamped with unreasonable beliefs that teenagers are not sexually active (Casas and Amahuda, 2009; Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark, and Ahlberg, 2009). Furthermore, religious and traditional beliefs advocate for total abstinence for young people, and this places pressure on the government to support such ideologies.

Zimbabwe, as a Christian country, puts pressure on adolescents to abstain from sex entirely until they are married. Adolescents are confused about what to do; on one continuum, they are advised to abstain while policymakers promote calls to use condoms. In Zimbabwe, politicians, traditional and Christian leaders encourage abstinence as an exclusive strategy for all young people. In contrast, non-governmental organizations and the private sector promote condom

use" (Marindo, Pearson and Casterline, 2003:1). Likewise, the Nigerian society overwhelmed its young people with ambiguous mixed messages of abstinence and protected sex, which confuses the young people on the path to take (Titiloye, Agunbiade and Kehinde, 2009). One of the contradictions of teenage pregnancy is the conflicting messages surrounding sexual activity.

On the other hand, sexual exploration is considered a typical characteristic of this stage of development (sexual exploration is adult-like behaviour). Yet, adolescents are viewed as ignorant regarding matters of sexual activity (child-like) (Macleod, 1991). Therefore, talking about sex and sex education is encouraged, but then abstinence, morality, and the negative consequences of sexual activity are emphasized (Macleod, 1991).

These social structures mentioned above determine individual children's experiences, and they influence them by setting the boundaries of what is possible, appropriate, and expected. Children, as active individuals, are thus constrained by the various institutions, structures and cultures in which they find themselves in and this, in turn, shapes their experiences. This highlights the shared values and norms that society exerts on children and the general expectation that during their childhood, they should not be sexually active. There is a shared assumption in the society that teenage pregnancy constitutes some form of a social problem. Thus, teenage pregnancy becomes shameful, reflecting the expectations of a dominant culture.

The Education Management Information systems (EMIS) data for 2004-2008, registered 51 pregnancies for every 1000 female learners and that there was a steady increase in the proportion of learners who had become pregnant during the period in South Africa. Similarly, in South Africa, another study in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, found that 32 percent of 14-19-year-olds who have ever been pregnant were currently attending school (Grant and Hallman, 2006:3). Health Statistics (2007) showed that the teenage pregnancy rate in South Africa is 60 percent, and the implication thereof is that most teenagers do not complete their secondary schooling as some of these pregnant teenagers are forced to stay with the owner of the pregnancy. A more significant share of teenage mothers than older mothers had their child while cohabiting, in part because most births to teenagers occur outside of marriage (Martinez, Daniels, and Chandra, 2012; Mincieli, Manlove, McGarrett, Moore and Ryan, 2007). Likewise, Raley (2001) and Lichter (2012) found that pregnant single young mothers are increasingly cohabiting before the child's birth.

In Zimbabwe, the adolescent fertility rate for women aged 15-19 years was 115 births per 1,000 women of the same age in 2015 (National adolescent fertility study, 2016). As such, the high rate of teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe has given rise to child cohabitation. After getting pregnant, the teenager is forced to elope to her husband and start living with him in a cohabitation union. Referring to the Zimbabwean context, Jones (2009) notes that when a girl is pregnant, she is expected to 'run away to' the person she considers to be the 'owner' of the pregnancy. Africans are significantly more accepting of cohabitation with marriage intentions than of cohabitation as an alternative to marriage (Posel and Rudwick, 2012). Manning and Cohen (2015) study found that 22% of pregnant single teenage women usually cohabit before the birth of their child whilst 42% of unmarried pregnant teenagers were cohabiting when they either conceived or gave birth to their first child. These findings echo Raley's (2001) and Lichter's (2012) results that cohabitation has become an increasingly common response to pregnancy. This is important to note that there is a link between teenage pregnancy and cohabitation. Manning and Cohen (2015) share the same sentiments that much of the research on adolescent family formation centres on teenage childbearing without acknowledging cohabitation. The public discourse on teenage fertility often ignores the relationship context of teenage childbearing. It implies that most teenage mothers are living independently with their families taking care of them after they fell pregnant, ignoring that some teenagers start cohabiting with their partner, who made them pregnant. Overall, young teens experience some type of family formation activity (cohabitation, marriage, childbearing) during their teen years. Thus, researchers studying family formation need to acknowledge the subset of teenagers who form cohabitation unions and have children in these unions (Manning and Cohen, 2015).

3.2.2 Discourses of teenage pregnancy

Social constructionism theory underpinning this study highlights the importance of discourse as it forms the basis of understanding this theoretical framework. Parker (1992) defines discourse as meanings that construct a version of events. Burr (1995) states that discourses are connected to the way that society is organized, and accordingly, some discourses appear as truth and others as fiction. Discourses on teenage pregnancy tend to paint teenage mothers as loose and immoral and cultural and religious norms mainly influence this. According to Parker (1992), discourses play an essential role in structuring the identity of self, and personal experience and that different cultures will have different stances on discourses. Consequently, discourses are important in this study as teenage mothers' and fathers' experiences may be influenced by cultural practices, beliefs, and structure (discourses) in the society that they

belong to (Burr, 1995). Social constructionists argue that social processes and intuitions sustain dominant discourses.

Most societies associate teenage pregnancy with deviant teenagers who are immoral, as such, girls that get pregnant face stigma and are ostracised in society. Dlamini (2016) supports this notion that teenage mothers are stigmatised potentially on the basis that society has understood teenage pregnancy as a phenomenon associated with deviant teenage girls. These teenagers who fall pregnant will become largely alienated and isolated and they will not be able to access the health facilities due to this stigma. Similarly, social isolation and stigmatisation have been identified as major personal problems faced by pregnant teenagers (Bezuidenhout, 2004:27). Often teenage girls who fall pregnant fail to access health facilities due to the embarrassment and discrimination that young women face within the health care system and they suffer in silence (Kaufman, De Wet and Stadler, 2001; Varga, 2003, cited in Doe, 2008; Richter et al., 2006).

It is, therefore not surprising to note that school drop-out is common among teenagers who fall pregnant. Despite progressive policies that permit teenagers to return to school after giving birth, half of the teenagers drop out in South Africa (Manzini, 2001; Kaufman et al., 2001). With the factors that influence school drop-out being multifaceted. Runhare and Vandeyar (2011) study found that there were widespread affirmations that pregnant learners socially contaminated the school environment because they were sexually immoral and undisciplined children. Thus, some schools do not want to be associated with pregnant teenagers as they do not want to be viewed as schools that promote pregnancies among teenagers. Teenagers who are pregnant in school become primarily frustrated by the stigma and unreceptiveness from teachers and learners and end up dropping out of school. A study conducted by Bhana, Morrell, Shefer, and Ngabaza (2010) on the teachers' responses to teenage pregnancy and teenage mothers in schools reported that teenage pregnancy is often shamed and punished in schools. According to Bhana et al. (2010), teachers believe that teenage girls who fall pregnant in schools, bring a bad example to other girls and they, therefore, should not be allowed in schools. One of the participants a teacher in Bhana et al. (2010) study aptly said that:

> *I think they should not be in school. It encourages the other girls to do the same-if she can get away with it, why can't I do it? Although the education department is saying that we must accept them etc…. [They] should not be allowed in school.*

This also translates into the communities with some people viewing pregnant teenagers as careless as well as immoral, and not fit to mix with non-parenting learners or other children within the community (Skobi and Makofane, 2017).

One of the unintended consequences of teenage pregnancy is its link with child cohabitation. Families stigmatise girls who fall pregnant, and they are sent to men who impregnated them. In Zimbabwe, this practice unwittingly results in child cohabitation as the girl is forced to go and live with the owner of the pregnancy. The reason for this is that families are ashamed to be associated with a pregnant teenager. Additionally, the family of the girl that falls pregnant also forces the paternal relatives to assume all the costs related to childbirth. Nemutanzhela (2007) confirmed that teenage pregnancy comes as a shock and disappointment to most parents, and they stop supporting their children as a result both in terms of emotional and financial support. A qualitative study conducted by Skobi and Makofane (2017) in Zimbabwe indicated that most teenagers' reports suggested that after getting pregnant, their family members were not supportive because of the shame they have brought in the family. Consequently, parents may force their pregnant daughters to marry the owners of the pregnancy for fear of humiliation (Mulumeoderhwa, 2016).

Social constructionism plays a critical role in the formation of cohabitation unions. Chasing away pregnant teenagers from home is supported by cultural beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions that are socially constructed. Hence, the reality is not independent of history, culture, and context; in contrast, it is socially constructed (Houston, 2001). In addition, because people are born into a society and culture with existing norms and predefined patterns of conduct, definitions of "reality" are socially transmitted from one generation to the next (Sahin, 2006). Therefore, parents with teenagers who fall pregnant shape these young people's choices on what to do with the pregnancy. The teenager who is pregnant does not have a say on her pregnancy, and her parents decide on her behalf. Her agency is taken away the moment she gets pregnant. As a way to punish the pregnant teenager, parents send her away to the owner of the pregnancy as they are not at liberty to take responsibility for someone else's child. The teenage girl is powerless to stop this, and this powerlessness emanates from the stigmatization that is associated with teenage pregnancy.

Furthermore, when teenage girls find out that they are pregnant, their experience and thoughts are primarily influenced by their perception and expectation of what society's responses would be (parents, friends, and educators), rather than their own feelings. This expectation of

stereotypical reactions from others may have been informed by the teenagers' prior experiences of other teenage mothers or informed by widespread dominant discourses that stigmatize teenage pregnancy (Rolfe, 2008). This is linked to their fear of being judged and rejected by others. Hence, it is not surprising for some pregnant teenagers to consider abortion before their parents get wind of their pregnancy. However, living in a society like Zimbabwe with restrictive norms about pregnancy and abortion makes it difficult for pregnant teenagers to abort. It is important to indicate that abortion is illegal in Zimbabwe

Consequently, the moment a teenage girl finds out she is pregnant, she is faced with a difficult choice. She might be s perceived as deviant and be stigmatized for falling pregnant. On the other side, she might be blamed for murdering the unborn child if abortion gets known. Hence for pregnant teenagers, the induced fear of disclosure influences their decision to abort or not. Keeping the baby for the pregnant teenagers becomes the correct socially acceptable decision that supports the religious beliefs and societal norms. This does not mean that society does not judge a pregnant teenager for keeping the baby; she will be judged on having sex before marriage. Hence, notwithstanding the decisions that pregnant teenagers make, the bottom line is that pregnant teenagers will always be blamed, judged, and stereotyped in society.

3.2.3 Use of body as a survival strategy

Most families in the developing world are living in abject poverty, and this forces young girls and sometimes young boys to use their bodies to survive. Often driven by poverty and the desire for a better life, many young girls find themselves using sex as a commodity in exchange for goods, services, money, accommodation, or other necessities (Vunganai, 2013). There is documented literature on this phenomenon and is sometimes known as child prostitution. Child prostitution is not a new practice; however, not much has been written about it. Montgomery (2011) argues that child prostitution is an old tradition that has remained undocumented and underreported in most parts of the world. There are an estimated 10 million child prostitutes globally (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014). One of the reasons for the underreporting of child prostitution might be that it presents a serious violation of children's rights. This is highlighted by Mushohwe (2018), who states that child prostitution is one of the most sinister and horrific acts that children may endure. Surujlal and Dhurup (2009) further highlight that child prostitution presents severe violations of human and child rights on children who are among the most vulnerable and at-risk groups. Mabvurira, Chigevenga, Chavhi, and Nyoni (2017) argue that child prostitution exposes innocent children to all forms of exploitation, abuse, and

various risk factors. Over and above child prostitution is defined as the sexual exploitation of a child for remuneration in cash or kind, frequently but not always organized by an intermediary who may be a parent, family member, procurer, or teacher (Kembo and Nhongo, 2002).

In Zimbabwe, child prostitution is on the rise because of the continued economic instability, which has significantly increased the poverty levels of its citizenry. Mushohwe (2018) highlights that although it is difficult to ascertain the extent of child prostitution in Zimbabwe, nevertheless, this phenomenon is on the rise as evidenced by numerous stories in the local newspapers of young girls aged 12 involved in this practice. Furthermore, the Zimbabwe Youth Council (2014) highlighted that children under 15 years have been reported to participate in prostitution in Zimbabwe. There is a distinction between those children who voluntarily engage in child prostitution and those who are forced by either their parents or someone else. There are numerous reasons why children partake in child prostitution, and one of the main factors is poverty. Mushohwe (2018) claims that the underlying cause of child prostitution in Zimbabwe, as is the case globally, is poverty. Similarly, Kembo and Nhongo (2002) also argue that there is a strong correlation between poverty and the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Zimbabwe. As a result of poverty, there is need for the child or those forcing the child to gain financial rewards in exchange for sex with the child.

Child prostitution has three distinct categories which are: involuntarily forced child prostitution, voluntary child prostitution, and street children prostitution. Involuntarily forced child prostitution refers to a child who is forced to partake in prostitution by parents or handlers more predominantly in low-income communities. It is sufficient to say that the majority of child prostitutes are mainly forced to participate in this practice. A qualitative study conducted by Mulumeoderhwa (2016) in DRC reported as a result of poverty, some mothers encouraged and forced their daughters to engage in transactional sex to bring food home. Likewise, Montgomery (2011) notes that child prostitution may occur as a family trade where children live with their parents or guardians and sell sex as part of the household economy. In the most extreme, this involves child trafficking, with children being trafficked to become sex slaves. Due to poverty in Zimbabwe, some children are crossing the border of South Africa unaccompanied to look for better living standards, and they usually end up in the hands of traffickers who use them for sex. This is supported by Mushohwe (2018), who states that poverty in neighbouring countries also forces children to migrate to other countries in search of work. These children are vulnerable as they lack an adult supervisor to protect and guard them against traffickers

Furthermore, the lack of necessary documents to stay in South Africa keeps the trafficked children trapped in the sex industry with minimal opportunity for them to escape. Considering that these children often come from impoverished families, the fear of going back home and suffering the effects of abject poverty makes them endure the effects of the sex industry. Similarly, in South Africa, poor home living conditions drove children to the streets, with little or no parental supervision. McCoy and Keen (2014) and Cluver, Bray, and Dawes (2007) agree that these factors contribute to children's vulnerability to sexual abuse.

Extreme poverty is the primary driver of forced child prostitution. It involves a child individually venturing into selling sex to get monetary returns as a result of poverty (Mushohwe, 2018). Therefore, structural factors such as poverty fuel child prostitution. Furthermore, to survive, these children start living with a man who would take care of them and provide them with a livelihood. According to Vunganai (2013), young women often try successfully to improve their social and economic status by establishing various types of relationships with men. Likewise, Obbo (1986) argued that to access financial and material resources, some women live with their lovers even though this arrangement might not result in marriage.

Some of the children, because of lack of money, are forced to sell their bodies to survive. According to Hesselink-Louw, Bezuidenhout, and Boniface (2004), this group of children chooses prostitution as a career as a result of their unbearable circumstances at home. Equally importantly, Montgomery (2010) states that for most of these children, prostitution is not a viable choice; however, they are left with no other alternative to survive, and they end up in child prostitution. In Zimbabwe, these children tend to target border towns because truck drivers are frequent at the borders, and they offer them lucrative business opportunities. The study conducted by Mabvurira et al. (2017) found that the children believed that Beitbridge, as a border town, offers plenty of opportunities for them to make money through prostitution with truck drivers, clearing agents, and other people.

Street children prostitution involves children who would have run away from home for different reasons to live in the streets. According to Conte (2009), many of the victims of child prostitution are runaways, thrown away, or homeless children who survive on engaging in commercial sex work. Living in the streets is very tough for young children. Because of this, girls are the most vulnerable, and often, they must find protection from the older guys on the streets, and they will pay them through sex. Montgomery (2011) termed this street survival sex.

According to Rurevo and Bourdillon (2010), once girls are living on the streets, it is difficult to survive without help from men. In other instances, young girls on the streets sell their bodies to other street children to survive. Moreover, girls become an easy target for other men not living on the streets who prey on them by offering little money and food in exchange for sex. Mushohwe (2018) highlighted that there are men who frequent the streets to take advantage of young girls' vulnerability and desperation for money and food on the street.

Child prostitution has social and psychological repercussions on children. Children engaged in child prostitution may develop feelings of guilt, depression, and trauma. One participant in Spurrier and Alpaslan (2017) reported feelings of guilt, remorse, and sadness as a result of her experience as a child prostitute. Likewise, Lutya (2009) argues that childhood sexual trauma victims can experience feelings of guilt which undermine their ability to protect and defend themselves. Additional, health risks such as exposure to sexually transmitted infections such as HIV are common, and children may be unable to negotiate safer sexual practices

Child prostitution has not been dealt with accordingly, and the intervention to curb it has been rather slow because of various underlying reasons and chiefly among them is the underground nature of this practice. This means that it is challenging to criminalise and persecute the perpetrators of child prostitution. Furthermore, children participating in child prostitution are seen as willing participants. Mushohwe (2018) agrees with this by highlighting that there appears to be an unwillingness by authorities to act on child prostitution as they generally see the children not as victims of sexual abuse but rather as delinquent children who enter into prostitution on their own accord. Hence are not victims of any crime. This premise rises from the fact that the majority of children involved in child prostitution are voluntary child prostitutes as such, they cannot be categorised as victims of any sexual abuse.

Mushohwe (2018) further argues that if there is any abuse, these children are abusing themselves. This posits great challenges on how the law should be used to intervene in child prostitution. In Zimbabwe, it is not clear how the police should handle cases of child prostitutes on one hand whether to see them as victims of crime or as criminals themselves. Other reasons for the people of Zimbabwe's unwillingness to be associated with child prostitutes stems from the fact that Zimbabwe sees itself as a Christian country and, as such, paint the child prostitutes with a black brush as delinquent and immoral children. Mushohwe (2018) adds that society usually fears that these child prostitutes may have a negative influence on other *'normal'* children in society or that they may end up wrecking marriages.

However, this school of thought of viewing child prostitutes as willing participants is wrong. As discussed earlier, children do not just become child prostitutes but are driven by circumstances that they are not able to control. Those who sell their bodies for sex are characteristically forced by difficult conditions such as poverty, drug addiction, or the threat of violence (Mushohwe, 2018). And Hesselink-Louw, Bezuidenhout, and Boniface (2002) view such children *'victims of their circumstances, forced into prostitution to survive.* Additionally, children by law are not in a position to consent to sex as a result of or because of age and immaturity; hence such children cannot be categorised as willing participants.

3.3 Discourses of teenage motherhood and fatherhood

A teenager, according to World Health Organisation (2016) refers to persons between the ages of 10 and 19 years, in which the individual progresses from the initial appearances of secondary sexual characteristics to full sexual maturity. Egbule (2000) asserts that teenage pregnancy refers to pregnancies that occur when the girl child is below the age of eighteen years. Motherhood presents difficulties and challenges for most mothers; thus, for many teenage mothers, the experiences are somewhat negative mainly because they are still children. The significant dominant discourse of teenage pregnancy is the assumption that adolescent mothers are incompetent to be 'good' mothers (Macleod, 2001). The generalisation is that she is not yet physically and psychologically equipped to deal with parenthood (Cunningham & Boult, 1996). As a result of these discourses, teenage mothers are stigmatized, and their sense of responsibility, mothering skills, and maturity is questioned (Rolfe, 2008). The understanding of teenage motherhood is centered on the dominant discourses in society. This discourse, which suggests that women, in general, need 'skills' to be good mothers is inconsistent with the dominant discourse of mothering being inherently natural (Macleod, 2001). Nature gives the capacity for teenage mothers to conceive and give birth; therefore, mothering should come to them naturally.

The assumption that an adolescent mother is a child that lacks the mental and financial capabilities to raise a child compounds the problem (Chiazor, Ozoya, Idowu, Udume, and Osagide, 2017). Parenting for teenage mothers tend to be difficult and challenging because of lack of experience and support. Van Zyl, van der Merwe and Chigeza's (2015) study in Western Cape in South Africa found that adolescent mothers faced challenges of lack of support, poverty, and lack of parenting skills. Poverty and a lack of resources are the biggest obstacles to adolescent parenting in South Africa (Morrell, 2006:20; Swartz and Bhana, 2009:57). Thus,

it becomes difficult for most teenage parents to take care of their children without the support of their families. This creates a cycle of poverty for them and their children. According to Bissel (2000), teenage mothers were more likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged later in life when compared to women who tend to delay childbearing. Turner (2004) suggests that teenage pregnancy is linked to poor socio-economic backgrounds. Teenage mothers drop out of school to take care of their children, without education, they are unable to have the necessary skills to get decent employment. As a result of this socio-economic background, meeting the necessities of their children becomes a struggle.

Being a parent to a child when you are also a child presents multiple challenges for teenage mothers. Participants in van Zyl et al. (2015) study in Western Cape indicated the pressure and anxiety felt about their inability to raise their children correctly, as information regarding their children's health care and discipline was not readily available to them. The parenting journey of teenage mothers who are chased from their families is lonely because they are isolated from their families. Consequently, they may lack the experience of taking care of their children. Bunting and McAuley (2004:301) indicated that several adolescent mothers do not receive adequate support from their families in learning about parenting. Similarly, adolescent mothers in a study by Daniels and Nel (2009:67) expressed the lack of support from their biological mothers in parenting. The lack of support contributes to heightened stress and anxiety.

Teenage mothers are often compared with adult mothers, and the ideal adult who is perceived to be a competent mother is used as an unattainable measure of comparison for young and inexperienced mothers. Dominant discourses maintain that teenage mothers lack the adult capacity to take care of a child and are immature, unable to reason, lack knowledge, awareness, and goals (Boult and Cunningham, 1992). This implies that adults are more knowledgeable, goal-orientated, mature, and self-aware individuals; therefore, they can take care of their children (Macleod, 1991). The teenage mother is compared to the 'ideal' adult yet at the very same time, she is not considered an adult. In this discourse there is also an ideal adult that has power over teenage mothers. Educators and parents are perceived to be the rational (perfect) adult who is in a more powerful position than the adolescent and therefore is in the position (and expected) to infer knowledge to adolescents regarding motherhood.

Educators, parents, peers, and the media convey messages about gender roles and the role of women in society. Some of these messages reinforces the socialization of women to be nurturing and caring for the welfare of others from an early age (Durkin, 1995). When a woman

or girl has conceived and given birth, it is assumed that she will accept the burden of being the primary caregiver and will naturally feel fulfilled in her role (Phoenix & Woolett, 1991). The expectation is that the teenage mother will bring up her child in the correct way, instilling dominant ideologies underpinning society so that the child becomes a responsible and mature citizen (Phoenix & Woolett, 1991).

On the contrary, becoming a father for most teenagers starts initially as a shock after learning about the pregnancy of their partners. Madiba and Nsiki (2017) study in South Africa found that the news of the pregnancy evoked intense emotions for teen fathers such as shock, fear, disbelief, denial, and confusion. The general belief prompts this that they are still too young and mostly inexperienced to be fathers. This usually encourages some of the teenage fathers to initially deny the pregnancy as a way of not wanting to take responsibility for the upkeep of the child. However, some of the teenage fathers are forced to take responsibility by the girl's family as highlighted by Madiba and Nsiki (2017) that for most teen fathers, acceptance came after their parents were notified about the pregnancy either by the teen fathers or by the girl's parents.

Teenage fathers also face almost similar difficulties and challenges faced by their female counterparts however, the major problem for them is their lack of finances to provide for the upkeep of their children. In some instances, teenage fathers are forced to leave school to find a job to cater for their children. However, it is difficult for them to be employed because they lack the prerequisite educational standards to get employed, which makes it challenging to provide for their children without working. Smith, Guthrie, and Oakley (2005) view a lack of education as a contributing factor to unemployment youth and poverty. Having a child at a young age and being unable to complete high school are all likely to increase job instability, reduce income, and increase reliance on public assistance (Smith et al., 2005). As such, the teenage fathers are constrained to provide support and spend time with their children. Being a good father is mostly associated with being able to provide for your child. Good fathers are portrayed as breadwinners (Prinsloo, 2006), providers, protectors, and caregivers (Richter, 2006). Makusha, Richter, and Bhana (2013) also found that when fathers were unable to provide food, accommodation, school fees, health care, and bring joy to their children, they felt powerless and their manhood as fathers was challenged.

3.4 The health, socio-cultural consequences of cohabitation on children

A closer look at the literature on cohabitation shows that this practice has been painted with a black brush and seen as an unacceptable phenomenon bedevilled with various challenges and problems. This kind of thinking has been influenced by proponents of marriage who are against the idea that cohabitation is a permanent alternative to marriage as they would instead view it as a temporary precursor to marriage. There is a generalised assumption among the Shona, like in any other African society, that formal marriage is something exceedingly sacred and respected (Mawere and Mawere, 2010), meaning that any other alternative union is an abomination. Most of the literature see cohabitation as a temporary union that has a knack of high divorces because of the lack of commitment by the couples. Cohabitation is often characterised by lack of institutionalisation, limited economic resources, temporary or shortlivedness leading to its often unstable nature (Cherlin, 2004). Studies indicate that most cohabitations are temporary and transitory unions (Bumpass and Lu, 2000). This means that the individuals in these unions lack commitment and for children who are forced into these unions without their will there is bound to be instability in these unions. The fact that nothing is tying down the individuals to this union makes it temporary, unlike in marriage where the man would have paid the bride price.

Another negative consequence of cohabitation cited by various writers is that these unions are a breeding haven of HIV/AIDS and STIs. Mawere and Mawere (2010) contends that these informal marriages expose both partners to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Muzvidziwa (2002) states that in the light of the AIDS pandemic, the usefulness of *mapoto* or cohabitation relationships needs examination, as they are considered a death trap? The phenomenon of cohabitation is seen as a haven for HIV/AIDS (Ramphele, 2008; Barnett and Whiteside, 2006). Moreover, Kang'ete and Mafa (2014) state that cohabiting couples subject themselves to high risks of infection because it is rare for a couple living together to use protection every time. Another negative consequence of cohabitation that has been highlighted in the literature is that of domestic violence. Cohabitation is associated with domestic violence as it is believed that cohabitating couples may be more susceptible to violence due to lack of commitment to one another (Kang'ete and Mafa, 2014). A study of women in Windhoek found that the prevalence of violence was higher for young Namibian women who were cohabiting with partners without being married to them than for married women (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2003). A cross-country comparison indicated that living in a cohabiting union

rather than marriage increased the risk of intimate partner violence for women in Kenya, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe (Hindin, Kishor, and Ansara, 2008).

Besides, young girls cohabiting are at risk of dying in childbirth because they are still too young to be giving birth. According to the World Health Organisation (2012), most girls who are married at a young age normally face serious challenges in childbirth, and about 16 million girls aged 15 to 18 and some 1 million girls fewer than 15 give birth every year—most in low- and middle-income countries. Hence complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the second cause of death for 15-18-year-old girls globally (World Health Organisation, 2012). These circumstances pose severe threat to their health and also lead to high maternal mortality rates. For example, in 2014, Zimbabwe recorded a ratio of 614 deaths per every 100 000 live births, with 60 percent of them being girls under the age of 18 (World Health Organisation, 2015).

3.5 An overview of child's rights in relation to harmful cultural practices

There are cultural practices in Africa that are harmful to girls and boys as they force them into child marriage or cohabitation. The key feature of harmful practices is that they negatively affect the lives of children in particular (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014). Harmful social and cultural practices refer to all behaviour, attitudes, and or practices that negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls, such as their right to life, health, dignity, education, and physical integrity (African Union, 2003). Some of the cultural practices include ukuthwala (girl abduction), mostly practiced in South Africa amongst the Xhosa and Zulu people. Not only is it practiced in South Africa but other Southern African countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland. In Lesotho, it is known as *chobeliso* and in Zimbabwe, it is recognized as *musengabere*. *Ukuthwala* is described by Maluleke (2009:16) as a form of abduction which involves the kidnapping of a girl or young woman by a man and his friends to force the girl or young woman's family to sanction marriage negotiations.

Ukuthwala, in its old traditional customary sense, was harmless to girls as it was practiced sometimes with the knowledge of the girl, family, and community; however, that has changed these days as girls are being abducted unwillingly, intimidated and raped in some cases. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between ukuthwala in its traditional form and the harmful and somewhat distorted practice currently taking place in South African society. There are three distinctions of ukuthwala given by Mwambene and Sloth-Nielson (2011). The first form of *ukuthwala* is where the girl is cognisant of her abduction being planned by her suitor.

The different parties are in cahoots with one another, and the 'force' used serves as a cover-up for the girl's hidden consent (Mwambene and Sloth-Nielson, 2011). Secondly, *ukuthwala* can occur where the families would agree on the anticipated marriage, but the girl is unaware of such an agreement. This type of ukuthwala happened when the girl was against the choice of her suitor or in instances when the girl had no man at all.

The third form of *ukuthwala* as proposed by Mwambene and Sloth-Nielson (2011:7) occurs against the will of the girl. The third form of *ukuthwala* can give way to crimes such as rape and intimidation as well as various human rights violations such as the infringement of the girl's freedom and her security and a violation of her dignity and bodily integrity (van der Watt and Ovens, 2012). This third form of ukuthwala is the present practice taking place, which shifts from the traditional method to a kind of abuse and human rights violation of the girl child. According, to van der Watt and Ovens (2012) the value of understanding the pure form of *Ukuthwala*, is the description of *ukuthwala* where the family, and most probably the community, is involved in an organized attempt to bring together a man and woman. This means that individuals bent on exploiting vulnerable girls are using ukuthwala as a yardstick to justify their acts of taking advantage of young girls' innocence to force them into child unions. Regarding the abduction and rape of women and girls, the Commission for Gender Equality labels *ukuthwala* as an "unlawful practice disguised as a custom" (Commission for Gender Equality, 2010). This is in sharp contrast to the genuine form *ukuthwala* which is an act condoned by the parents of both parties and the parties themselves (van der Watt and Ovens, 2012).

The negative repercussions of ukuthwala on girls and conclusions drawn by Wadesango, Rembe, and Chabaya (2011:121) indicate that these practices have adverse physical and psychological effects on girls. The impact of this practice on the girl child includes health concerns such as HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's), and pregnancy-related difficulties (Maluleke, 2009). Additionally, amongst the factors that adversely affect human development in the child are early school drop-out and marriage (van der Watt and Ovens, 2012). The effects of sexual abuse on young girls can be particularly devastating and include fear, depression, low self-esteem and self-worth, poor social skills, anger and hostility, an inability to trust and build meaningful relationships, guilt, and shame (Dottridge, 2004).

Virginity testing is another cultural practice practiced in Southern African countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Swaziland, and others. In some African countries such as

South Africa, Swaziland, and Zambia, virginity testing is practiced and celebrated by many African people. However, others, including WHO, considers it harmful to children (Nkosi, 2013). A virginity test in Africa is a practice of determining whether a female person has had sexual intercourse (Vukunta, 2010). The test is viewed culturally as a celebration of the purity of the girls valued and validated as a preventative strategy for teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. However, the way or methods they use to verify the virginity for the girls causes more damage than good as they use fingers or sticks. Therefore, feminists and human rights proponents regard it as a violation of girls' bodies (Burch, 2016). Additionally, the Commission on Gender Equality (2010) describes this practice as unconstitutional, largely discriminatory, and invasive of girls' privacy by impinging on the dignity of young girls.

In Zimbabwe young girls in their puberty are taught how to please their husbands when they get married, a practice that views girls as ripe for marriage despite their young age. According to Kambarami (2006), in the Shona culture, once a girl reaches puberty, all teachings are directed towards pleasing one's future husband as well as being a gentle and obedient wife, and she is taught how to use her body for the benefit of the men. Girls are sent to traditional schools to be educated about pleasing men, and most of these girls that go to these conventional schools never return to school and are either forced into marriage or cohabitation. More common causes of girls getting married were due to traditional rites "komba" or traditional schools for girls and some teachers reported that typically girls are less likely to come back to school once they attend the traditional school (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014).

Other forms of harmful cultural practices in Zimbabwe include *kuripa ngozi,* which sees young virgins' girls being given away to appease a dead spirit that has been murdered by the family of the victim. In 1999, Felicitas Nyakama, Nesta Maromo, Juliet Muranganwa, Precious Maboreke, and Perseverance Ndarangwa, who were then between the ages of seven and 15, were handed over by their parents to the family of Gibson Kupemba as payment for the man's murder (Kachere, 2009). According to traditional beliefs in Zimbabwe, a murderer's relatives need to appease a dead person's spirit with virgin girls, sometimes as young as six years old. The virgin must live with the murdered person's family, no matter her age. When she reaches puberty, she is made the wife of one of the male members of her new family. *Kuripa ngozi,* or virgin pledging, is a punishable offence under Zimbabwe's Domestic Violence Act, however, the practice is rampant throughout the country with no perpetrator ever been prosecuted (Kachere, 2009).

In most Southern African countries, young boys are sent to initiation schools to be circumcised and taught to become a man. This is a valued traditional and cultural practice in which all men in their youth need to undergo in most ethnic groups (Madlala, 2016). This traditional practice of initiation practiced in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, and others is essential culturally but sometimes it acts as an instigator of teenage pregnancies. According to Rule (2004), young boys probably engage in sexual activities at an early age due to socio-cultural circumstances such as 'miss-guided' information given by the traditional elders at the initiation schools. Several participants in Madlala's (2016) study were concerned that after being circumcised, they are not being taught about sexual related issues. The initiates are left confused and questions such as to whether sexual intercourse would still be the same as before circumcision arise, hence they indulge in unprotected sexual intercourse leading to teenage pregnancy (Madlala, 2016). Hoque (2011:157) highlighted that about 27.2% of young males had had multiple sexual partners and that those young males never used condoms. For young boys, this risky sexual behaviour is influenced by the need to prove their manliness as having many sexual partners wins young males' status and admiration from their peers.

A cultural practice that is unique to Zimbabwe and some African countries relates to child discipline in suspected cases of a possible engagement in sexual activities. In this case, when a girl child comes back home late at night, she is sent back to wherever she was. This practice is primarily underpinned by the assumption that the girl was having sex with her boyfriend, and this prompted her to come back home late. The research conducted by Zimbabwe Youth Council (2014) revealed that those girls were being chased for coming back late or simply being seen with a boyfriend contributing to the formation of *kuchaya mapoto* unions. Even Jones (2009) in his study conducted in Zimbabwe highlighted that it was quite common for a girl to be chased from her house by male relatives (fathers, brothers, uncles) if she returned home 'late' or is rumoured to be with a man (Jones, 2009).

This same practice was also reported in a study done in the Democratic Republic of Congo by Maroyi Mulumeoderhwa in 2016. Most of the participants, both females, and males in Mulumeoderhwa's (2016) study highlighted that parents force their daughters to marry their boyfriends if they spent a night with them and came back home because, according to, Bashi tradition, they are 'no longer girls. One of the participants in Mulumeoderhwa's (2016) study highlighted that " *It means that if she sleeps outside, she is no longer a girl but she is now considered as a married woman. She has become a nkwale [a quail]. Therefore, she must return to her boyfriend's place because there is no way she could have slept with him without*

having sex, this is impossible". This resonates well with the Zimbabwean culture which also forces girls to go and live with their boyfriend if they come back home late and this has also driven the rate of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe.

According to Mulumeoderhwa (2016), in DRC, the traditional Bashi culture is to force girls into marriage if they spend the night with their boyfriends. In other words, such a girl is no longer considered as a girl but is now a married woman. Therefore, her parents must return her to where she spent her night and force her to live with that boy. All this points to the fact that African traditional culture values the virginity of girls, and therefore in some cultures, there is virginity testing. Girls are supposed to abstain from sex until they get married as virginity brings honour and respect to the family of a girl child. Hence, when a girl sleeps outside or comes back home late at night, she will cause shame to occur on the family, accordingly, she should be sent away. Mulumeoderhwa (2016) found that the community often blame parents for their daughters' misconduct.

3.5.2 Parents and religious influence on cohabitation

When the time comes for children to transition to adolescence, the whole world unfolds itself to these at-risk young people because of rapidly changing social conditions and peer pressure. This phase of a child's life is a cause for concern for many parents. Nevertheless, the essence of adolescent growth is to explore the world without any form of cultural and moral boundaries that prevent them from promiscuity. And they tend to want to explore sex and have fun. Unfortunately, this may ultimately put girls particularly at the risk of unwanted pregnancy and the likelihood of suffering from depression and low self-esteem. Consequently, teenage pregnancy can become a driver of child cohabitation.

Cohabitation is gradually replacing marriage as the first living together experience for young men and women in the world. However, contradicts the deep entrenched traditional African society's values and beliefs that are primarily traditional and patriarchal that sees marriage as the norm. The rapid increase in cohabitation unions continues to occur without adequate knowledge of what influences such growth. Prior research on union formation and transitions often fail to examine the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of both family members of a couple (Manning, Giordano and Longmore, 2009).

Nazio and Saraceno (2012) found no indication that cohabitation negatively affected the quality of intergenerational relations, as measured by the frequency of meetings with parents, in Italy and Great Britain. In Jones's (2009) study, one of his participant's Okocha had good relations

with his partner's relatives, especially the mother who gave him money to start his business, although he was living with her daughter, who was below the age of 18 in a *kuchaya mapoto* union. Nevertheless, at times, the children can be involved in cohabitation without the knowledge of their parents. Although cohabiters try to conceal their cohabitation from their parents, cohabitation is easily leaked, especially to a man's parents (Yoo, 2015). In most instances, parents can initially resist such a union, with time they will ultimately accept it based on it turning into a marriage as time goes by.

Young people are knowledgeable that a choice that goes against the fundamental values of their parents may not only worsen the mutual relations but will ultimately lead to a decrease of emotional and material support received from family (Di Giulio and Rosina, 2007; Schröder, 2008). In such a situation, young people are forced to avoid at all cost the living arrangements that are not wanted by their relatives, and cohabitation thus becomes a very selective process. Cohabitation unions are established mostly by those young people, whose family finds it acceptable that a couple lives together without getting married. These other arguments seem especially relevant for some African countries, where cohabitation is not commonly accepted.

Most parents that are educated are open to the idea of their young children cohabiting as compared to their uneducated counterparts. There are available studies that confirm that cohabitation increases among young people from better-educated families (Di Giulio and Rosina, 2007; Gabrielli and Hoem, 2010; Rosina and Fraboni, 2004). However, the downside of these studies is that they were predominantly done in Europe as such, it is difficult to generalize them to the African context. Cohabitation, in most instances, harms the relationship between parents and the young cohabiting couples. A study that seems to confirm that cohabitation may indeed harm relations between adult children and their parents was conducted by Eggebeen (2005) in the USA, where cohabiting couples were reported to exchange less support with parents than the married couples.

In more traditional societies such as those in Africa, which are characterized by familialistic culture, as well as secure attachment to religion, cohabitation remains a relatively less common type of partnership. One of the possible explanations may be the impact of parental norms and values on the choices of living arrangements of their adult children. It can be argued that as long as most young people are raised in religious and tradition-oriented families, their union formation choices are restricted by parents' norms and attitudes (Huschek, Liefbroer, and De Valk, 2010; Rosina and Fraboni, 2004). However, young people of today feel that their parents'

values and beliefs are old fashioned as such they should be left to make the decisions on their own without influence from their parents. However, this applies to those young children who willingly cohabit without being forced into such a union.

Furthermore, views about cohabitation may be positively related to non-traditional attitudes and values. Young cohabiters typically are less traditional than their non-cohabiting counterparts (Axion and Barber, 1977). Similarly, young cohabiters demonstrate lower levels of religious involvement than other young people (Thornton, 2002). Also, adolescents' strong religious beliefs are positively associated with their cohabitation and marriage expectations (Crissey, 2008). Based on this, it is anticipated that adolescents who are not grounded in both traditional and religious beliefs will have positive cohabitation expectations (Crissey, 2008).

Even though cohabitation is widespread, adolescent behaviour may distinguish expectations to cohabit and marry. More delinquent adolescents will have better prospects for cohabitation. Axinn (2000) posits that adolescent expectations may be based on social learning and intergenerational processes. Parents are expected to influence their children's cohabitation expectations via parental modeling, socialization, and socio-economic circumstances. Social learning approaches stress that societies provide not only warmth or support but shared messages about attitude and norms. Parents who have less traditional attitudes may socialize their children to share in those beliefs. Specifically, parents' attitudes about marriage and cohabitation influence their children's marriage and cohabitation attitudes (Axinn and Thornton, 2000). Parental influence is also affected by socio-economic circumstances. Parents who have greater economic and social resources may be able to support their children's transition to adulthood (Porter, 2005). Thus, teenagers from poorer families and with parents who have lower education levels may possess great expectations to cohabit than to marry.

Parents tend to use religion and tradition as forces to scare children that want to cohabit. They use various verses from the Bible to disregard and discredit cohabitation. Religion has been recognized as a vital source of attitudes and values that might oppose the move away from marriage to cohabitation (Village, Williams and Francis, 2010). Religious proponents believe that being involved in a cohabitation union is to undermine the biblical significance of marriage. Marriage, according to the Bible, is a one-flesh union between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24). The sexual act is the glue that seals this one-flesh bond. Many passages report this subject in clear terms. Hebrews 13:4, for example, says that "marriage should be held honourable among all people and the marriage bed kept undefiled." First Thessalonians

4:3 declares, "This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." "Because of sexual immorality," writes Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:2, "let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband."(Village et al., 2010). The implication is that sexual intercourse is inappropriate and not allowed in any other setting other than marriage. The proponents of marriage tend to paint cohabitation with a black brush, and they use words such as 'living in sin' to refer to cohabitation unions. Although some people will say that a cohabiting couple is "married in the eyes of God," that is not true, they are not married in God's eyes because they are living contrary to biblical statements about marriage (Anderson, 2003). To support this assertion, Popenoe and Whitehead (1999) highlighted that living together outside of marriage not only violates biblical commands, but it puts a couple and their future marriage at risk.

The relationship between religion and cohabitation has been well documented. Religion has continuously disapproved of living together outside marriage and has overtly referred to cohabitation as living in sin. In general, studies have reported that those with religious affiliations will not cohabit as compared to those who do not belong to any religious group (Bayer and McDonald 1981; Katz 2001; Stanley, Whitton, and Markman, 2004). The link between religious practice and cohabitation was reported by Berrington and Diamond (1999) in a study in Britain. According to their research, 42% of men and 36% of women who reported no religious attendance and 32% of men and 29% of women who reported weak religious attendance had cohabited, compared with 17% of men and 18% of women who reported strong religious attendance (Berrington and Diamond, 1999).

Village et al. (2010) study found that there was a much lower occurrence of cohabitation among Christian members who frequently attended church. Although casual attending and non-attending Christian affiliates increased in frequency of cohabitation in line with increases among non-religious branches throughout the survey, this was not so among frequent attendees, who seemed to resist the national trends (Village et al., 2010). In Sherman's (2012) study in the USA, the results showed that the higher the rate of membership in evangelical churches in a county, the smaller the percentage of residents that are living together outside of marriage. On the other hand, Sherman's (2012) study also shows a contradiction as results highlight a significantly high rate of Catholics who are cohabiting.

Most religious groups have clear and implicit views regarding family formation. Norms regarding the family formation behaviour of individuals are commonly shaped and reinforced

by religious institutions. Religion has been found to affect other areas of family life, as well, such as fertility, marriage, division of labour, and attitudes toward same-sex unions (e.g., Hertel 1988; Hout, Andrew, and Melissa, 2001; Whitehead, 2010; Xu, Rayimo, Goyette and Thornton, 2005). Hence, for young people who want to cohabit, they tend to think twice before committing to such a union. Strongly religious parents can affect their child's behaviour through guidance and supervision, and regardless of his values regarding cohabitation, the child may opt not to cohabit to avoid humiliating his parents (Sherman, 2012). Not only do parents influence the decision of young people to cohabit but also the community at large. According to Sherman (2012), moral communities are those in which religion permeates social life. The moral communities' hypothesis suggests that these communities will be the most effective at enforcing certain norms, such as no cohabitation. Individuals are likely to consider the values and beliefs of those around them, and the reaction of those same people, when making family formation decisions that are unavoidably public. Human beings are social, and what the neighbours think can have a powerful influence on our behaviour.

3.6 An Overview of international Legislation within the context of child cohabitation

Harmful practices against children are a global concern. These harmful cultural and social practices affect children in Africa and particularly in Zimbabwe, and they contribute to child marriage and child cohabitation. These harmful practices are often motivated by cultural, social, and religious factors (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014). The negative repercussions emanating from these harmful practices on children include psychological trauma, victimization, and violence. Additionally, the practices violate internationally agreed standards for the welfare of children that many countries in Africa and Zimbabwe is a signatory to. Consequently, in this part of the literature review, this study focused on relevant legislation that focuses on the protection of children from harmful cultural and social practices. Various governments should respect, protect, and fulfill rights not only of citizens but particularly of children who are cohabiting or in *kuchaya mapoto* unions. The overall obligation for governments includes the adoption of international and regional legislative policies and measures to prohibit people from violating the human rights of children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) is one of the international legislative instruments that make specific reference to harmful cultural and social practices affecting children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children provides a universal framework for understanding the rights of children. The UN General Assembly

adopted the Convention on the rights of children in 1989, and then it became international law on September 2, 1990 (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014). The UNCRC defines moral, social, political, and economic guidelines that member states should adhere to regarding the appropriate or acceptable treatment of children. The relevant articles in UNCRC include article 1, which defines a child as anyone who is below the age of 18. Article 3, which states that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. Other relevant articles in the UNCRC include articles 19, which seek to protect children against all forms of violence and article 28, which specifies the right to education for children.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is another relevant legislative framework that makes specific reference to harmful practices impacting on children. The ACRWC was adopted by the African Union in 1990 and was entered into force in 1999. The Charter covers civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights with Article 21 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child making specific references to harmful social and cultural practices (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014). Article 21: Protection against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices:

1. State Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child and in particular;

a) Those customs and practices prejudicial to the health or life of the child and

b) Those customs and practices discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex and other status.

2. Child marriages and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited, and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.

Thus article 21 of the ACRWC was relevant to this study because it focused on the harmful effects of social and cultural practices such as child cohabitation. Therefore, governments as signatories to this legislation are compelled to act against practices that impact negatively on children to protect them.

Other relevant legislative framework includes The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which was adopted in 1979 by the UN Assembly. Article 2 of the Convention condemns all forms of discrimination against women and urges all

State Parties to "Take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women." Additionally, Article 16 (2) states: "The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory." (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014:3). Furthermore, the Maputo Protocol, signed in July 2003 and became active in November 2005, is another relevant framework that seeks to protect children, mostly girls from harmful cultural practices. Article 5 of the Maputo protocol prohibits female genital mutilations and all forms of harmful cultural and social practices against women (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014).

3.6.1 An overview of the Zimbabwean Legislation within the context of child cohabitation

It was crucial first to define who is regarded as a child in the Zimbabwean context before focusing exclusively on the various relevant legislation for children involved in cohabitation. However, there is a lot of ambiguity and inconsistencies on who constitutes a child in Zimbabwe as the various acts have different age categories, and there is no alignment of these acts to the constitution of Zimbabwe. The Constitution of Zimbabwe defines a child as "every boy or girl under the age of 18 years" (Constitution of Zimbabwe s81 (1):38). With the Children's Act [Chapter 5:06] defining a child as a "person under the age of sixteen years, and it includes an infant." While the Criminal Law Code defines 'a young person' as anyone who is below the age of 16 (Hodzi, 2014). Sibanda (2011) also provides another different definition in which she states that a young person is a person who has attained the age of sixteen years but has not attained the age of eighteen years. Accordingly, there exists a gap in the definition of childhood between the Zimbabwean Constitution and the Children's Act and the definition given by society. This makes it difficult to intervene accordingly in cases of child cohabitation as there is no alignment of laws to the constitution of Zimbabwe, and these loopholes make it hard to criminalise and persecute the perpetrators of this practice.

Zimbabwe's relevant legislative framework that protects children includes the Children's Act [Chapter 5:06], the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23], and the Domestic Violence Act [Chapter 5:16] which deals with the rights and welfare of children in Zimbabwe. The Domestic Violence Act 2006 section 3(1l) include as offences abuse derived from the following [sic] cultural or customary rites or practices that discriminate against or degrade women—

i) forced virginity testing; or

(ii) female genital mutilation; or

(iii) pledging of women or girls for purposes of appeasing spirits; or

(iv) forced marriage; or

(v) child marriage; or

(vi) forced wife inheritance…

The constitution of Zimbabwe also provides for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms for all Zimbabweans, children included. Section 19 of the Constitution reads:

(1) The State must adopt policies and measures to ensure that in matters relating to children, the best interests of the children concerned are paramount.

(2) The State must adopt reasonable policies and measures, within the limits of the resources available to it, to ensure that children—

(a) enjoy family or parental care, or appropriate care when removed from the family environment;

(b) have shelter and basic nutrition, health care, and social services;

(c) are protected from maltreatment, neglect or any form of abuse; and

(d) have access to appropriate education and training.

(3) The State must take appropriate legislative and other measures—

(a) to protect children from exploitative labour practices; and

(b) to ensure that children are not required or permitted to perform work or provide services that (i) are inappropriate for the children's age; or

(ii) place at risk the children's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development.

Section 19(1) is very important as it speaks about the best interests of the child in matters concerning the child. The government, parents, and other role-players should ensure that the best interests of the child are taken into consideration in dealing with child protection issues. Parents, by forcing their children in child cohabitation unions, do not consider the best interests

of the children involved. Section 19(2) requires that the state must within its available resources, adopt measures that will protect the child from maltreatment, exploitation, and abuse, which is a consequence of child cohabitation. The wording in this section is problematic because the state will only intervene when the resources are available, and with the current economic instability in Zimbabwe, it means that the government is crippled and in no state to intervene in child cohabitation cases in Zimbabwe.

It is crucial to also focus on the different marriage acts in Zimbabwe and how they are relevant to child cohabitation. There are various marriage acts in Zimbabwe, and the relevant ones for the study are the Marriage Act, Chapter 5:11, Act 22 of 2001, and the Customary Marriage Act of 1951. The Marriage Act Chapter 5: has different ages for marriage for boys and girls, respectively. According to this Act, boys are allowed to marry when they are 18 years old whilst girls can marry aged 16. It also prohibits girls below the age of 16 and boys below the age of 18 from contracting a valid marriage except if written permission is given by the Minister of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs (Nyamadzawo, 2015). By allowing girls to marry at 16, this act exposes girls to the ills of child cohabitation as older men can take advantage of such to marry young girls who are still immature and inexperienced in marriage.

Nevertheless, in 2016, the Zimbabwean Constitutional Court outlawed marriage of 16-year-old girls and ruled that the age for marriage for both boys and girls be increased to 18. This ruling is significant also for children who are cohabiting as they need protection, just like children in child marriages as their rights are violated in every aspect. Even though this ruling was made, there is still more considerable effort needed to align specific sections of these legislations to the Constitution. This has to be done to ensure the protection of children from both child marriage and cohabitation. The discrepancies originate from the definition of a child in Zimbabwe. The Constitution of Zimbabwe defines a child as "every boy or girl under the age of 18 years" (Constitution of Zimbabwe s81 (1):38). While the Children's Act [Chapter 5:06] has a different definition of a child, which is a "person under the age of sixteen years, and it includes an infant". The further contradiction is highlighted in the Criminal Law Code, which defines 'a young person' as anyone who is below the age of 16 (Hodzi, 2014). These discrepancies make it difficult to protect children from the effects of child unions.

On the other hand, the Customary Marriage Act does not have a recognised marriageable age. This means that most child marriages or child cohabitation unions take place in terms of the customary marriage act. The lack of a marriageable age has made this act prone to abuse by

perpetrators of either child marriages or child cohabitation. Religious groups such as the Apostle sect in Zimbabwe takes advantage of this act to start cohabiting with children. Research and Advocacy Unit states that in culture, what defines readiness for marriage is the physical attributes of the child and not their age. Therefore, without any age regulation, the child that develops physically quickly will succumb to early marriage (Nyamadzawo, 2015). This means that to intervene in child cohabitation and child marriage issues in Zimbabwe, the customary marriage act should be aligned to the constitution of Zimbabwe, and the marriageable age should be placed at 18 for both boys and girls.

3.7 Children's Rights Framework in relation to child cohabitation

Different laws are central in upholding children's rights throughout the world, however, the problem arises with the implementation of these laws by government, civil society, and citizens of the various countries. Even though children's rights have been debated and documented in academic literature (Tine and Ennew, 1998), the implementation of human rights has been a cause for concern and inconsistent in many parts of the world. Children are helpless and at-risk group, and they face a vast array of challenges and difficulties growing up. According to Freeman (1992), children are amongst the most vulnerable and powerless members globally. Children are virtually powerless as such most of their rights are violated and infringed upon every day, and some of these rights that are contravened include their right to education, health, child labour, and child cohabitation. Children in Africa are double disadvantaged; firstly, due to their status as children, they are not in a position to defend themselves in cases of violations, and secondly, they are living in a place where children are more likely to be suffering from human rights violations than adults (Assefa, 2013).

Mutepfa, Maree, and Chiganga (2006) highlight that there are multiple causes for this rights' infringement phenomenon, including basic lack of respect for the rule of law, traditional practices, and idiosyncratic beliefs. As long as people in the communities know that there is nothing that will be done to them for infringing on the rights of children, they will continue violating their rights. This ultimately leads to millions of African children being denied the chance to reach their potential at various levels of development because of the infringement of their rights. For children that are forced into child cohabitation, it means that they are denied access to further education, being heard, to equip themselves with the skills needed to find employment, design successful lives, and make social contributions (Maree and Crous, 2012).

The major problem that gives rise to the infringement of children's rights is that children are seen as immature and incapable of making their own informed decision about their lives as such adults see the need to make that decision on their behalf. This is influenced by the debate about the age at which children can be able to make informed decisions about their lives. Hall and Lin (1995) study found that 14-year-old children were as capable as adults in terms of their ability to apply competent reasoning skills about real-life dilemmas. As such, Smith (1997) and Ruck, Peterson-Badali, and Day (2002), also highlighted that there seems to be general agreement about the importance of involving children in decisions about matters that affect them directly or indirectly. However, in most instances, decisions for children are made on their behalf by adults who believe that they will be acting in their children's best interest. For instance, young girls that get pregnant are forced into child cohabitation by their parents, who believe that they are better off living with the owner of the pregnancy without taking the time to ask their children what they want to do with the pregnancy. Decisions about children's welfare are often taken on their behalf across Africa, and they are subjected to the effects of these decisions without having been consulted because they are not regarded as competent or mature enough to make these kinds of decisions (Maree, 2012). This violates UNCRC Article 3 and 12, article 3 states that all actions concerning children should take full account of their best interests. The State is to provide adequate care when parents or other responsible fail to do so. Article 12 states that a child has a right to express an opinion and to have that opinion considered in any matter affecting the child. Parents out of anger and fear of humiliation send their pregnant girls away without realising the negative repercussions of such on the rights of these children. Casas (1997) makes a valid assertion that most times, the focus is on children's ‘‘not being yet competent’’, however, it has become evident that the problem is for many adults not being competent enough to understand children's expressions and children's perspectives'.

As such children need to be allowed to make their own informed decisions and choices on aspects that affect their lives. It is important to highlight as adults are often unaware of their own biases regarding children's competence to make decisions regarding their welfare (Hall and Lin, 1995). According to Mutepfa et al. (2006), many adults do not consider the potential ways in which aspects of their behaviour may negatively impact on children's rights. For instance, in child cohabitation cases, parents feel that they are in a better position to decide on behalf of their children as they are responsible for their well-being and welfare. At the end of the day, parents do not want to take responsibility for someone else baby as such, sending away the child regardless of whether it infringes on the child's right to decide on her own will not

matter. Parents do not want a situation in which the child chooses to keep the baby and continue staying with them, which ultimately means that the responsibility of the unborn child befalls on them. Thus, the rights of children in this instance will be secondary on parents, and in most times, it is not always clear what exactly are children's rights in the process of decision making (Mutepfa et al., 2006).

3.8 Conclusion

Literature that focuses explicitly on child cohabitation is scarce, however, in this chapter, an overview of some of the drivers of child cohabitation were discussed. With teenage pregnancy being the main driver of this practice as parents tend to force their pregnant daughters on the man responsible for the pregnancy. A review of the repercussions of child cohabitation was critical as well in this chapter, and the consequences included the health risks young girls are exposed to, such as dying in childbirth as they will be too young to be giving birth. Additionally, cohabitation unions are viewed as a breeding ground for HIV/AIDS as well as domestic violence as they lack stability, and the partners are not committed to each other as nothing is tying them together. Discourses on teenage motherhood and fatherhood were also discussed in this chapter to highlight how societal norms play a critical role in the roles that teenage fathers and mothers play. Harmful cultural practices that not only harm girls and boys but also cause child cohabitation were discussed. After which relevant international and Zimbabwean legislation on child cohabitation was discussed, highlighting the importance of aligning applicable Child laws to the Constitution of Zimbabwe to protect children that are cohabiting. The children's rights framework discussion focusing on the fundamental rights of children that are cohabitating and how parents make decisions on behalf of their children, believing that they would be acting in their best interests, which is not always the case concluded this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

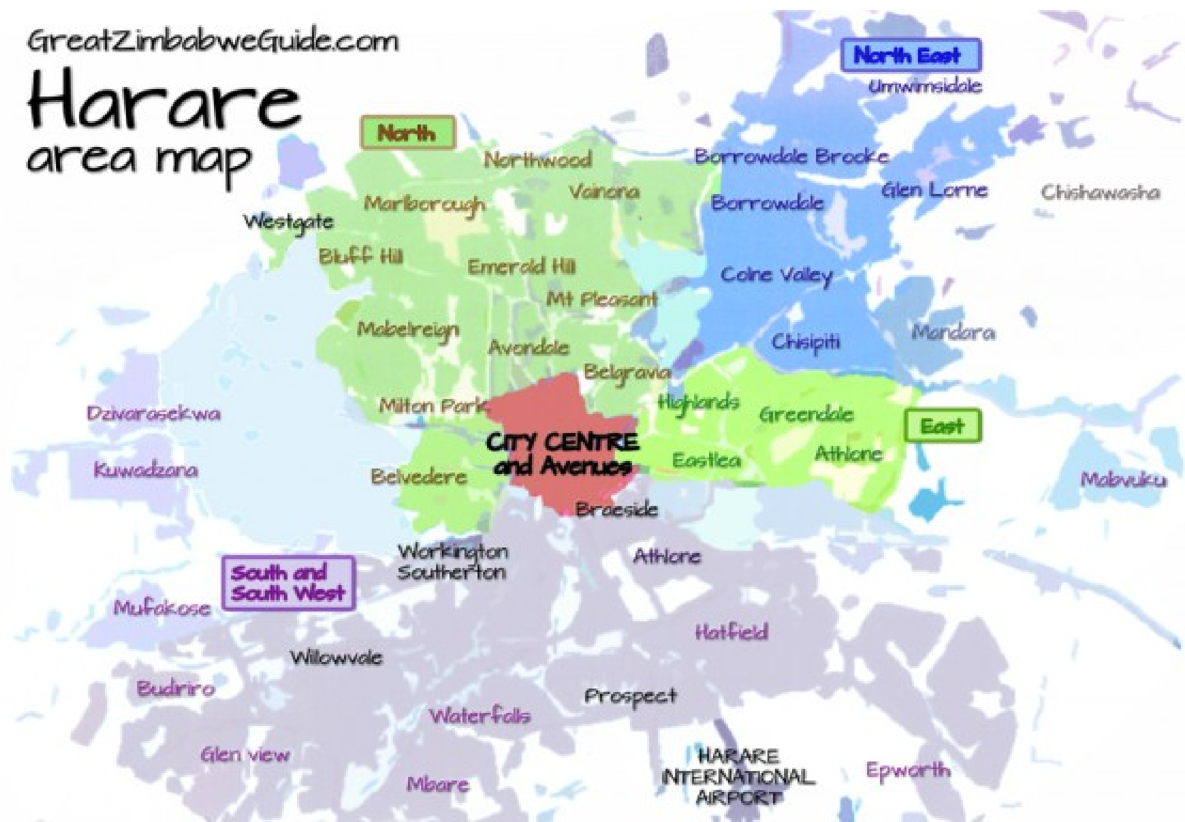
METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes in detail the methodology used to conduct this research, and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006: 6) point out that "methodology specifies how researchers may go about practically studying whatever they believe can be known." The research design, sampling methods specifying the recruitment of participants and data collection methods as well as methods of data analysis are discussed.

4.2. Study context- Zimbabwe (Dzivarasekwa)

Fig 1.1 the map of Harare showing the study context of Dzivarasekwa



Adapted from Great Zimbabwe Guide

Zimbabwe is a landlocked southern African country with a population of approximately 13 million people (Government of Zimbabwe, 2015). With nearly 98% of Zimbabwe's populace being African (Zimbabwean Human Development, 2017). The Shona ethnic group comprises approximately 82% of the population and occupies the eastern two-thirds of Zimbabwe. The Ndebele make up about 13% of the population, and are descended from Zulu migrations in the nineteenth century. Approximately 5% of the population is made up of other ethnic groups, which include Tonga, Kalanga, Nambya, Shangani, and Venda. Zimbabwe has 16 official languages with the prominent dialects being Shona and Sindebele (Zimbabwean Human Development, 2017). English is also an official language, which is used widely in administration, law, broadcasting, and schools. Only 4% of the population lives in urban areas. About 50% of the population has syncretic religious beliefs (part Christian, part indigenous beliefs), while Christians account for 25%, indigenous beliefs for 24%, Muslim and other beliefs 1% (Zimbabwe Human Development, 2017).

This study was conducted in Dzivarasekwa. Dzivarasekwa is a township located in the capital city of Zimbabwe. This township was established in the late 1950s as a residential area for domestic workers, employed in the nearby, and formerly white-only areas of Malborough and Mabelreign during the colonisation era (Bachmayer, 2012). Dzivarasekwa, popularly known as DZ, is a city located to the west of the city centre and is a low-income residential area. Dzivarasekwa was established in 1962 and has the same characteristics of the first black residential areas built during the colonial times 1890-1980 (Zinyama, Tevera, and Cumming, 1993). It is located in Harare Province, and it comprises Glaudina, Dzivarasekwa Extension, and Dzivarasekwa (Zimbabwe Election Support Network, 2015). Dzivarasekwa constituency has a population of about 48 000 people (Zimstats, 2012), which means this number has increased significantly as there is now a cooperative which has built more than 1000 houses in Dzivarasekwa extension.

Just like any other township in Harare, Dzivarasekwa is faced with a plethora of problems such as high unemployment rate and poverty and other challenges that mainly affect the youth such as high school dropout, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse. According to the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (2015), the high-density suburb of Dzivarasekwa has experienced perennial problems of water supply, sewerage reticulation, and an increasing number of road potholes due to reduced road servicing and also the area has registered high unemployment

levels among the youth. The area is also prone to waterborne diseases like cholera and typhoid, as well as tuberculosis mostly due to overcrowding and erratic water supplies. With the increase in youth unemployment and high levels of poverty, an increase in teenage pregnancies has significantly contributed to child cohabitation in this area, which prompted the researcher to conduct the study in this area.

4.3 Research Paradigm

Every research study is unique, and the aims and objectives of each study determine the methodological research approach to be used. For this study, a qualitative research approach informed by an interpretive perspective was used. Qualitative research allows the research to elicit participant's accounts of meaning, experience, and perceptions (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport, 2002). This was important in that this current study wanted to explore, describe and analyse the meaning of individual lived experiences on child cohabitation and importantly "how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it and talk about it with others" (Patton, 2002:104 cited in Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Another reason this study used the qualitative paradigm was that it involves an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern human behaviour (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). It was also crucial for the researcher to be reflexive in the course of this study and qualitative research tends to view social worlds as holistic and complex and enables the engagement of researchers in systematic reflection on the conduct of the study and to remain sensitive to how their own biographies shape their studies (Marshall and Rossman, 2011).

Interpretivism calls for the exploration and understanding of phenomena by interacting with the participants (Snape and Spencer, 2003). Utilising interpretivism gives the researcher the platform to understand the opinions, emotions, responses, and attitudes articulated by participants and then link to people's behaviour and actions and finally contextualise or place into perspective the views and conduct of participants (Carey, 2009). The interpretive paradigm emphasises context and subjective experiences of individuals as the basis for obtaining a rich and detailed description of events (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). That said, an interpretivist position was adopted in this research because multiple realities make measurements difficult, and the only way to understand real-world phenomena is by studying them in detail within the context in which they occur. Interpretivist approaches to research attempt to understand the human world with the researcher being interested in the participants' views of the phenomenon under study taking into consideration both their background and their experiences (Creswell,

2003). This was consistent with the study's theoretical framework of social constructionism, which looked at the participants' understanding of their experiences as influenced by social contexts. In common with constructionists, interpretivists, in general, focus on the process by which meanings are created, negotiated, sustained, and modified (Schwandt, 2003).

Access to the participants' experiences depends on the active role of the researcher as he/she engages in an interpretative process (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). Constructionism is closely related to interpretivism in the sense that interpretivism often addresses essential features of shared meaning and understanding. In contrast, constructionism extends this concern with knowledge as produced and interpreted. Social constructionism assumes individuals have a subjective understanding of the world and to the life they live, shaped by their previous experiences (Creswell, 2009:8). Interpretivism recognizes the need to apply a different logic when studying the social world as compared to the natural order – highlighting the need to consider diverse perspectives (Bryman, 2012:15). In the context of this study, participants constructed their knowledge about child cohabitation within the social-cultural context, which was primarily influenced by their prior knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon. The interpretive approach acknowledges that research is not value-free, and therefore it is vital to explore and address the researchers' biases (Creswell, 1998). Understanding the social context of participants is important in determining the success of the research process. An interpretive approach presented the opportunity to acquire a thick description of the experiences of young people who were cohabiting or in *kuchaya mapoto* unions when they were children.

4.4 Research Design

A research design is essentially a strategic framework for action that importantly serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution of the research (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2006). In other words, a research design can be a plan that you set out to do your research. With that said, the exploratory, descriptive design to gain new insights into the experiences of young people who were in a *kuchaya mapoto* union when they were children in Zimbabwe was used. The exploratory design is supported by Nieswiadomy (2008), as the method to use when there is limited knowledge on the topic. Similarly, Burns and Groove (2001:374) defined exploratory design as research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas, and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon. There was insufficient information and knowledge on the experiences of children in family sanctioned *kuchaya mapoto* unions in Zimbabwe as such explorative descriptive design was the best design to "help

generate new ideas, views, and opinions about the research object" (Sorantakos, 2005:137). Exploratory descriptive research design allowed for an open, flexible, and inductive approach to research into new relatively unknown areas of research (Terre Blanche et al, 2006).

4.5 Sampling

The population for the study was young people between the ages of 18-22 who had cohabited as children, parents with children who had cohabited, social workers who had two or more years of experience working with children, a local teacher and a religious leader from the geographical area of the study. Snowballing and purposive sampling techniques were used to obtain the study sample. The sample size consisted of 9 young people, 10 parents, 2 social workers, a teacher, and a religious leader. The reason for choosing young people was that they were old enough to consent to participate in this study, and they did not warrant ethical concerns compared to children. Additionally, cohabitation is stigmatized, hence it would have been difficult to get consent from the parents with children who are cohabiting, therefore, young people were chosen to participate in the study and were able to reflect on their experiences as children cohabiters.

A Snowball sample is when the researcher requests participants to identify others in a similar situation as themselves (De Vos et al., 2002). In turn, the identified persons will be requested to identify others with similar characteristics who may also potentially make up the sample of the study. The snowballing strategy applied to this study because the researcher targeted participants that were difficult to locate. Snowballing is considered relevant when the population of a study is difficult to identify such as samples of people engaged in illegal and other socially unacceptable activities (Babbie and Mouton, 2006; Rubin and Babbie, 2013).

Recruitment of the sample of young people and parents

The participants were regarded as 'hard-to-reach' or 'a hidden population,' making it difficult for a researcher to locate them (Peek and Fothergill, 2009). Miller (2003:278) observes that "by their very nature members of a hidden population are difficult to locate". Young people who had cohabited or were still cohabiting were hard to locate because cohabitation carries some form of stigma, and some of the participants felt ashamed to come out in the open about this as such a snowballing strategy was useful in finding these elusive participants. Before the commencement of the data collection process, the researcher had identified a key informant who was well known in the whole geographical area of Dzivarasekwa as he is not only a religious leader but also a politician who is involved in many community projects in the area.

As part of initiating the data collection process, a key meeting with the index person was held to introduce the study and to be introduced to community members who fit the sample criteria. The index person then referred the researcher to a community health worker popularly known in the Shona vernacular as ‘mbuya hutano’.

The community health worker was the facilitator for the young mothers’ support group, and she invited the researcher to come and introduce the study and those with interest and meeting the research requirements could approach the researcher anonymously after the meeting. The researcher was contacted after the meeting by three participants who were keen to participate in the study. Since the researcher wanted to interview five female participants, it was vital to speak with the three initial participants to link the researcher with other participants with similar characteristics. Consequently, the researcher was linked to two other female participants in the community known to the initial participants, and after approaching them explained the study in detail, and they agreed to participate.

Conducting interviews with female participants about sensitive issues such as teenage pregnancy and cohabitation as a male researcher would have hindered the interview process. Therefore, an experienced female community health worker with not only the experience of working with young people in the community of Dzivarasekwa but also familiar with research was recruited to conduct interviews with the female participants. She was well known in the community as she frequently went around the community, raising awareness on issues affecting young people. The female interviewer was trained for 4 days (1-hour session daily) to sharpen her interviewing skills. The training included basic interviewing skills, ethical issues, and role-plays were used to prepare the interviewer for the collection of the data. Meyer-Weitz, Reddy, Weijts, Van den Borne, and Kok (1998) state that training of research assistants enhances the collection of rich and thick data.

Before the commencement of the interviews with the five female participants, it was necessary also to capture the experiences of young male participants in cohabitation unions. As such, the researcher spoke with the female participants that had agreed to take part in the study if it was also possible to interview their partners, and 3 of their partners agreed to take part in the interviews whilst the other 2 were not keen to participate. Their partners did fit the required characteristics of being males who started cohabiting when they were children. The researcher had to look for other 2 male participants to take part in the interview. Fortunately, the researcher was referred to one male participant fitting the required characteristics, and he did agree to

participate. Therefore, all in all, 9 young people who had started cohabiting as children agreed to participate in the study, and they consisted of 5 females and 4 males.

With these 9 young participants, the researcher was then referred to their parents by the participants and then asked the parents also to take part in this research. The researcher extensively explained the study to the parents, after which all the parents of the female participants agreed to participate except for the mother of one of the female participants who had gone to the rural areas at the time of the interviews. Whilst only one parent of one male participant agreed to participate in the study. The other parents of the male participants cited the perceived humiliation and the need to keep their issues private and confidential as they did not want the members of the community to know that their sons were cohabiting. As such, in the end, the researcher had 10 parents that agreed to take part in the study.

Recruitment of the social workers and key informants

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006:334), "Purposive or judgemental sampling in qualitative research, the investigator or interviewer selects cases that can shed light on the object of the study". With that said, the researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to locate other stakeholders who met the purpose of this research. Therefore, the religious leader of one of the biggest churches in Dzivarasekwa community was approached and agreed to participate in this study. Also, a local teacher in one of the schools in this community who works hand in hand with the community health workers in addressing issues affecting children agreed to take part in this study. Permission to interview social workers who have extensive experience working with children was obtained from the National Association of Social Workers in Zimbabwe. The researcher approached 5 social workers, and of these 2 were then selected and interviewed as they had more experience working with children than their counterparts.

4.6 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to gain a detailed picture of participants' beliefs about or perceptions or accounts of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe (De Vos et al., 2002). In addition, the semi-structured research technique allowed much more flexibility. As suggested by Silverman (2011), the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews enables an interaction between the research participant and the researcher. All the interviews were tape-recorded with permission and consent from the participants. According to De Vos et al. (2002), if possible, and if permission is obtained from the participants, the researcher should record interviews on

tape or video. Hence, before starting the interviews, informed consent was obtained from the participants, and they were informed that participation was purely voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw anytime from the study with confidentiality and anonymity to be ensured as well. Participants were then issued with informed consent forms (Appendix 2), encouraged to read the information on the form, and to ask the questions that they might have.

Additionally, the researcher explained the benefits of recording, for example, easy capturing of participants' contributions, ensuring the truthfulness of the data (that the data is captured in participant's actual words), and ultimately to enhance easiness of transcribing and data management (Shumba, 2018). The researcher, together with the research assistant to complement the tape-recorded interviews, also wrote field notes which captured mostly the unspoken nonverbal words of the participants. The field notes were mainly in the form of direct observation notes, which were written just after every interview that was conducted. According to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), writing field notes immediately after the interview provides fresher and more detailed recollections. Neuman (2014:456) further emphasised that "pouring fresh memories into the notes with an immediacy often triggers an emotional release and stimulates insightful reflection". And these field notes were incorporated in the presentation and discussion of the results section in the next chapter.

Interviews with young participants

The interviews commenced on the 5th of December 2017 and were completed on the 20th of December 2017. The researcher interviewed male participants, whilst the female research assistant interviewed the female participants concurrently. Before every interview with the female participants, the researcher would ask them if they were comfortable with being interviewed by the researcher, or they preferred the female researcher. All the female participants highlighted that they were comfortable being interviewed by the female research assistant. The interviews were tape-recorded with permission from the participants. After every interview with the female participants, the researcher and the female research assistant met for a thorough and structured debriefing which involved asking the research assistant what participants had said, and also how she interpreted what she had been told. The interviews were between 45 minutes to an hour, and the interviews with the female participants were done in the research assistant office in the community. Most of the young females who were cohabiting when they were children decided that it was better to be interviewed away from their homes as they stayed with their in-laws. Hence, it was difficult for them to freely participate in the

interviews if they were conducted where they stayed. This was important because, according to Elwood and Martin (2000), understanding the ethical implications and analytical significance of interview sites may help researchers to navigate the process of selecting interview sites with a need to balance the needs of the research and the interests of the participants.

On the contrary, the male participants wanted to be interviewed at their homes as they felt safe and comfortable to be interviewed there. As stated by Elwood and Martin (2000), participants who are given a choice about where they want to be interviewed may feel empowered in their interaction with the researcher. Oberhauser (1997) further argue that interviews conducted in participants' homes have significant potential as a strategy for disrupting power hierarchies between researcher and participants. As such conducting the interviews with young male participants at their homes proved beneficial to the study as the participants felt at ease and free to express their feelings and thoughts in an environment they were familiar. And it fostered an atmosphere conducive to sharing personal information and importantly created a more reciprocal relationship with the research participants.

Interviews with parents

After the completion of interviews with young people on the 20th of December 2017, the interviews for parents with children who were cohabiting began. The interviews were between 45 minutes to an hour, and with permission from the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews were done at their respective homes, and the researcher interviewed the parents separately to get diversified views on the study. It was envisioned that interviewing the parents together could potentially create discomfort and certain things would not be said in front of the other partner. This is in line with Zipp and Toth (2002) assertion that social desirability in joint interviews is not a case of presenting answers in line with socially "correct" responses, but answers that are perceived to be acceptable to the partner, or are consistent with the partner's perceived (or known) position. That said, the advantage of separate interviews, therefore, is that participants are more free and able to express their personal views than when interviewed jointly (Taylor and de Vocht, 2016). Interviewing individual parents was vital as it recognizes that people's experiences are not identical to those of their partners, and capturing these unique perspectives might be easier in separate interviews.

Interviews with stakeholders

The interviews with the stakeholders took place after the completion of the interviews with young people and parents. These interviews started on the 10th of January 2018 and completed on the 16th of January 2018. The researcher had made prior appointments with the respective stakeholders' participants. All the stakeholder participants agreed to be tape-recorded. The researcher interviewed the 2 social workers who had experience in working with children, and the interviews took place in their respective offices. While the researcher went to the local school and interviewed one teacher who works with the community health workers on issues affecting children. The interview took place in his office. Lastly, the researcher interviewed a well-known religious leader in the community, and the interview took place in his church office.

4.7. Methods of Data Analysis

The recorded interviews from the participants were translated and transcribed into written form. According to Kvale (1996), verbatim transcripts are considered both loyal and authentic, because they can be true to the intentions of the participant. It was very important for the researcher to make concerted efforts to ensure that the data was free from bias and distortions. To this end, the researcher was helped by two Ph.D. colleagues to verify the authenticity of the translated verbatim transcripts as the interviews were done in Shona and had to be translated into English. The researcher used the qualitative thematic content analysis and the discourse analysis to analyse the data. Discourse analysis was mainly used to focus importantly on the language that was used by the participants. In discourse analysis, language is examined in terms of *construction* and *function;* that is, language is considered a means of constructing rather than mirroring reality (Eugenie and Avdi, 2007). The discourse analysis was relevant to my study as it goes hand in hand with the study's theoretical framework of social constructionism. According to Eugenie and Avdie (2007) discourse analysis is a social constructionism approach and for social constructionism reality and identity are systematically constructed and maintained through systems of meaning and social practices. The view of discourse as the social construction of reality sees texts as communicative units that are embedded in social and cultural practices (Paltridge, 2006). Given its emphasis on construction and function, discourse analysis neither asks questions about nor makes claims about the reality of people's lives or experiences but examines how reality and experience are constructed through social and interpersonal processes (Eugenie and Avdi, 2007). In discourse analysis the language used is

analysed to understand peoples' interpretation of their experiences taking into consideration that cultural and linguistic resources affect their presentation (Fulcher, 2012)

The language that the participants used in constructing and making sense of their child cohabitation experiences was linked with the thematic content analysis to generate codes and finally, research themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:79), thematic data analysis is a method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data". The researcher followed the 5 steps set out by Braun and Clarke in doing the thematic content analysis. Initially, it was important for the researcher to familiarise himself with the data by perusing through the transcripts. According to Riesmann (1994), the process of transcription, while it may be seen as time-consuming, frustrating, and at times tedious, can be an excellent way to start familiarising yourself with the data. Similarly, Wood and Rolf (2000:82) highlighted that "Transcription refers to the transformation of spoken discourse into a written form that is fully amenable to analysis and available for inclusion in the report of the research". Transcription was an essential first step to discourse analysis as it is challenging to keep in mind the emerging discourses. Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) agree that transcription is essential that a record of the data may be made available for checking the analysis by other researchers and also for reanalysing. A thorough reading of the data ensures that the researcher became immersed in the data. Immersion usually involves "repeated reading of the data, and reading the data in an active way-searching for meanings, patterns and so on" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:16). Immersion meant that the researcher became familiar with the data to the depth and breadth of the content.

The second phase of the analysis focused on coding interesting patterns of data emerging. Marshall and Rossman (2011:212) postulated that "coding data is the formal representation of analytical thinking". Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst and refer to "the most basic segment or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998:63). This entailed "working systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item and identifying interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:18). I was coding sentences, lines and phrases as is supported by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:143) who asserted that "you might code a phrase, a line, a sentence, a paragraph, identifying these 'textual bits' by their containing material that pertains to the

themes under consideration". It was then important in this phase to ensure that all my actual data extracts were coded and then collated together within each code.

In the third phase, the researcher sorted the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. The researcher considered how different codes combined to form an overarching theme. This was done with the utilisation of visual representation in the form of mind-maps and tables to sort the codes into themes. After this phase, the researcher moved to the next phase of reviewing themes by verifying if they corresponded with coded extracts, thereby creating a thematic map of the analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) phase, 4 begins when you have devised a set of candidate themes, and it involves the refinement of those themes, and it will become evident that some candidate themes are not themes while others might collapse into each other. This meant that I needed to read all the collated extracts for each theme and considered whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern.

Furthermore, in this phase according to Braun and Clarke (2006) you re-read your entire data set for two purposes, the first was to ascertain whether the themes work with the data set. The second was to code any additional data within themes that have been missed in earlier coding stages. At the end of this phase, the researcher had a pretty good idea of the various themes and the way they fit into each other. And the researcher then defined and further refined the themes, and the researcher made sure that consideration was made to link the themes to the research questions and objectives of the study. In the preceding chapters of the discussion of results, the researcher presents various themes for each of the research questions set out in this study.

4.8 Trustworthiness

Sandelowski (1993) argued that issues of validity in qualitative studies should be linked not to 'truth' or 'value' as they are for the positivists, but rather to 'trustworthiness', which 'becomes a matter of persuasion whereby the scientist is viewed as having made those practices visible and, therefore, auditable. Similarly, Babbie and Mouton (2003) reinforced that in assessing trustworthiness, researchers should strive to convince themselves and others that study findings are meaningful (Babbie and Mouton, 2003). Guba (1981) identifies four essential criteria to enhance trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry. These are; credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity generalisability), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). These four components are interlinked and are dependent on the other, thus ensuring that they are all met to make the study trustworthy.

According to Thomas and Magilvy (2011:152), “a qualitative study is considered credible when it presents an accurate description or interpretation of human experience that people who also share the same experience would immediately recognise”. To ensure the credibility of the study the researcher did member checks that are going back to the participants after data analysis to confirm with them the findings and participants confirmed the findings. Furthermore, the researcher also utilised the tool of *peer checking,* which entailed using experienced colleagues to reanalyse some of the data to ensure that the researcher has analysed the data correctly. Another strategy that the researcher utilised was that of peer debriefing. Shenton (2004) argues that frequent debriefing sessions help widen the researcher’s vision and may expose researcher bias and preferences which can then be mitigated. The researcher further utilised triangulation which essentially means looking at the results from different viewpoints. Triangulation in research is mostly understood as research using the mixed methods of qualitative research and quantitative research. However, by using young people who cohabited as children, parents, and stakeholders in this study, it was one form of triangulation. The Shona recorded interviews and the translated ones that the researcher did were then subjected to scrutiny by a Ph.D. colleague from Psychology and this contributed to the credibility of the research.

Transferability is the ability to transfer research findings or methods from one group to another (Thomas and Malgvy, 2011). Transferability was achieved in my study by the provision of in-depth descriptions of the sample studied and the demographic characteristics of the participants. Although the research was carried out in a single geographical area, the data collected may be transferrable to other areas in Zimbabwe because of the rigour that I pursued to achieve in the course of data collection. Andrews and Halcomb (2009:16) define rigour as “the thoroughness, accuracy, confirmability and ethical soundness of all aspects of a study’s design”. Dependability of the study was achieved by the description of the purpose of the study, how and why the participants were chosen for the study, how the data was collected, and how long the data collection lasted and how the data was analysed. The researcher also provided a detailed description of the research methods in this chapter 4 making this research dependable for any researcher wishing to undertake a similar study, hence the research can be replicated. Lastly, according to Thomas and Malgvy (2011), confirmability occurs when credibility, transferability, and dependability have been established. By making sure that the findings from the data were not biased and the necessary steps were taken to ensure such. Accordingly, as implored by Shenton (2003), the researcher kept detailed personal journals, recording of

interviews, and transcripts as a means of confirmability. Qualitative research emphasises the importance of awareness of bias. One's conscious partiality/reflexivity to phenomena being studied rather than the pursuit of the elimination of bias in the positivist sense (Mushunje, 2017). The researcher made use of a reflexive journal in which observations, personal feelings, and biases were written down, which helped in making this research bias-free.

4.9 Reflexivity

In the course of this study, it was important for me to reflect on the journey of this research process and understand how the research shaped me or how I shaped the research. According to Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, and Caricativo (2017), through reflexivity, researchers acknowledge the changes brought about in themselves as a result of the research process and how these changes have affected the research process. Reflexivity involves self-awareness (Lambert, Jomeen, and McSherry, 2010), which means being fully involved in the research process (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, and Caricativo, 2017). In other words, it is the knowledge that as researchers, we are part and parcel of the social world that we study. This means that reflexivity becomes a process of self-examination on the role of subjectivity in the research process. Hence, it is an ongoing process of reflection by researchers on their values (Parahoo, 2006) and of recognizing, examining, and understanding how their "social background, location, and assumptions affect their research practice" (Hesse-Biber, 2007:17). To deal with biases and assumptions that come from their own life experiences or in interactions with research participants, which are often emotion-laden, qualitative researchers attempt to approach their endeavour reflexively (Morrow, 2005). Social constructionism as a theoretical framework was important to the researcher as it made it possible for self-reflection to assess the researcher's own values and biases that could impact negatively on the study's fairness. As a researcher, I had to reflect on three aspects that are being a Zimbabwean Shona man, a researcher who is regarded as an expert by the participants and a social worker.

As a researcher from Zimbabwe, I had my own biases towards child cohabitation and as someone who had witnessed my cousin sister being forced into such a union by her parents. My cousin sister was not part of the study but acted as a motivator for me to do this study. I did not like what her parents did to her by forcing her into such a union when she was still a child because she got pregnant. Therefore, it was crucial for me to continuously engage in reflection to avoid my beliefs filtering through and possibly influencing the participants' responses. The reason for that was because I had to interview parents who also forced their

daughters into child cohabitation just like her parents. The non-judgemental attitude was important, and it was a key component to make the objective of the interviews. As such, it was vital for me to acknowledge this aspect and be able to reflect on it beforehand so that the interviews will not be biased in any way. I also used what Morrow (2005) termed a 'naïve inquirer' concept that is of someone who does not know anything about the subject being studied. According to Morrow (2005), this is particularly important when the interviewer is an "insider" concerning the culture being investigated or when she or he is very familiar with the phenomenon of inquiry. In addition, I used a self-reflective journal to keep in check my own assumptions, biases, and attitudes. One of the most valuable aspects is for the researcher to keep a self-reflective journal from the inception to the completion of the investigation (Morrow, 2005). In this reflective journal, I had to keep an ongoing record of my personal experiences, reactions, and emerging awareness of any of my assumptions or biases that came to the fore.

I also had to reflect on being an expert and more knowledgeable than the participants. This was important to self-reflect on and to be able to give the participants the freedom to express their thoughts and feelings freely by being on the same level as the participants. I had to view the participants as experts in their own experiences importantly. I used some of the tenets of social constructionism theory, which acknowledge the equal engagement of research participants and researchers as co-creators of shared reality collaboratively and respectfully.

My social work profession, which is guided by principles of social justice, promotion of human rights, children's rights and my passion for child protection made me reflect on my professional position and conviction which strongly opposes any injustice against children. It was, therefore, quite useful to continuously engage in self-reflection about my social work value of a non-judgemental attitude during the interview process. Teater (2010) implored that social constructionism theory requires that social workers remove stereotypes and assumptions about clients and treat each client as a unique individual with a uniquely shaped reality.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

In research, the objective of ethics is to certify that the participants in the research are not harmed or suffer adverse effects. The researcher was obliged to be ethical when dealing with a sensitive topic such as mine. This study consisted of participants that would have gone through traumatic cohabitation experience when they were children and relieving such experiences could induce secondary traumatisation. Hence careful consideration was given to ethical

concerns. The ethical principles of research namely, do not harm, be open, honest, and careful (Shank, 2002) were observed. Informed consent is a very important ethical issue that researchers need to adhere to. According to Armiger (1997), informed consent means that a person knowingly, voluntarily and intelligently, and clearly and manifestly, gives his consent. Therefore, it was important that before the commencement of the interviews to obtain informed consent from the participants with permission to audio record the interviews. The participants were informed of the study's objectives and how they were to be selected and also some of the anticipated harm or discomfort which would come out from participating. Informed consent ensured that the participants did not feel obligated to participate, and thus reduced the chances of the research results being negatively influenced. At the time of obtaining the participants' informed consent to participate in the study, the researcher discussed their expectations to clear any misunderstanding they had and once again informed them of their right to withdraw consent at any stage of the study without getting any reprimand for that. This means that the researcher gave the clients the platform to either choose to participate or not and to be able to make an informed autonomous decision to participate in the study. And this is one of the principles of social work practice, which gives credence to participants' self-determination. Participants were again assured that all information would be kept confidential and locked in a safe place.

After the participants had agreed to participate in the study, the ethical issue of doing no harm needed to be respected. The collection of data on sensitive topics such as mine can be excruciating and traumatic to participants (Horowitz, Ladden, and Moriarty, 2002). This study interviewed participants that were children when they cohabited, and some of their experiences were traumatic, and the researcher provided debriefing and referred some participants for further counselling interventions at Msasa. The researcher made a follow up on 2 of the female participants who needed additional counselling, and they confirmed that they were helped at Msasa. The researcher being a young male having to interview young women who would have gone through traumatic experiences with men, might have made the female participants uncomfortable to talk openly about their experiences. Hence this was averted by employing a female research assistant who interviewed young female participants, however, the researcher interviewed the female parents as they were comfortable talking with the researcher.

Confidentiality and anonymity were necessary to maintain participants' rights. To guarantee their anonymity, the participants were asked to choose pseudonyms for the write-up of the research findings. Information disclosed during the interviews was treated confidentially. The

data obtained was not discussed with anyone else except with the researcher's supervisors and was presented in the study under pseudonyms. During the research, any notes on the interviews did not include the names of the participants. These notes are locked in a lockable cabinet in my working space. The informed consent signed letters were locked in a cupboard in my working space. All hard copies of notes will be shredded after the research, and the voice recordings will be deleted. The electronic password-protected transcripts will be deleted after 5 years.

4.11 Limitations of the Study

Participant bias

The young girls who participated in this study were also part of a teenage mother's group, which was sponsored by a local NGO. Initially, their responses during the interview were too appropriate and almost the same. The researcher identified this pattern after two interviews. A discussion with the female assistant indicated that the participants perhaps assumed that this study was related to their sponsored programme and they would get benefits from participating. In consultation with the research assistant, we agreed that she had to go back and interview the 2 participants again and provide clarity to them that this study was for academic purposes, and it was not a sponsored program. After this, the participants understood and provided credible interviews.

In addition, there is a Shona adage which says "haufukuri hapwa" which loosely means one does not talk about their private home situation in public. The researcher was also sensitive to this as this would also have prompted the participants to give biased responses. The participants would be afraid to talk about what is happening in their homestead and instead be secretive to protect their home. To avert this problem, the researcher made sure that for young couples and even some of the parents married, the interviews were done individually so that each of the participants would be free to express themselves.

Fear of stigmatization

Cohabitation in the Shona culture is viewed as shameful, and for those who are cohabiting, they want to remain hidden and secretive. This was initially a challenge for the researcher as it was difficult to locate the participants as most of them fear being stigmatized in the community. However, this challenge was resolved by contacting the informant who assisted by linking the

researcher with the community health worker who identified possible participants who were cohabiting, and after this the method of snowball aided in getting more participants.

Sample size and generalization of findings

Although this study was done in one geographical area and had a small sample size, however as highlighted by Mushunje (2017), the importance of qualitative research is analysis of data in context and transferability of data with similar samples.

Researcher bias

The researcher had some bias and assumptions before the collection of data and for instance, because the researcher's cousin sister was forced into child cohabitation for falling pregnant. The researcher felt that what her parents did to force her in a cohabitation union was wrong and this would have clouded the researcher's judgement when conducting interviews with parents who forced their children into such a union. To avert this limitation the researcher had to self-reflect on this bias by using a reflexive journal to not only document but to recognise and examine the biases, assumptions, and attitudes that could taint the participants' responses.

Translation of interviews

The researcher conducted the interviews in Shona, after which they were translated into English. This means that there was a possibility that some of the essential data will be lost in translation. To ward of this limitation, the researcher engaged 2 Ph.D. colleagues to also listen to the audio and the transcribed English version to authenticate whether what was transcribed was correct.

4.12 Conclusion

The methodology of the study is described in this chapter. It was essential to give a detailed description of the study context describing the geographic features as well as the socio-economic characteristics of Zimbabwe and particularly the study's context of Dzivarasekwa. The research paradigm, research design, data collection techniques, and methods of data analysis were detailed in the current chapter. Reflection on the researcher's biases and assumptions was important to capture in this chapter. The chapter further discussed how trustworthiness was ensured in this research. The last part of this current chapter focused on the study limitations and how these limitations were averted.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five presents the key research findings. The presentation and discussion of the findings are divided into four chapters, with each chapter answering one of the research questions in the study. In line with the objective one of the study, which was to examine the drivers and consequences of child cohabitation, the key findings reflected that child cohabitation is driven mostly by the shame attached to teenage pregnancy. The second objective sought to explore the lived experiences of young people as child cohabiters, and the results reflected that child cohabiters are faced with a burden of managing parental responsibilities, and in line with this objective, chapter six presents the detailed findings. The third objective aimed to explore the perceptions and views of parents with children who are cohabiting, and the results indicated that cohabitation was viewed as a better alternative, and the importance of *lobola* is outlined. The fourth objective aimed to identify strategies to curb child cohabitation, and the results indicated that parental supervision and monitoring were essential in curbing child cohabitation and in chapter eight, these findings, as well as other themes that emerged, are presented.

5.1.2 Demographic characteristics of young people

Pseudonym	**Age**	**Gender**	**Period in cohabitation**	**Number of children**	**Level of education**
Tatenda	19	Female	2 years	1 (girl)	O level
Tawanda	18	Male	9 months	No child	O level
Chipo	22	Female	4 years	1 (girl)	O level
Tonde	19	Male	2 years	1 (girl)	O level
Tinashe	18	Male	1 year	Girlfriend expecting	O level
Tariro	18	Female	1 year	Pregnant	Form 2
Ruvarashe	19	Female	3 years	1 (boy)	Form 3
Kudakwashe	22	Male	4 years	1 (girl)	O level
Kudzai	21	Female	3 years and 4 months	2 both boys	Form 3

The demographic characteristics presented above depict the sample of young people who were cohabiting when they were children. Initially, the researcher had planned to recruit a sample of 10 participants. Comprising 5 females and 5 males, however, the researcher only managed to interview 9 participants as one male participant declined to participate, citing discomfort and time constraints. Despite interviewing 9 participants, the data reached saturation, and there was no need to recruit further. Both female and male participants described above started cohabiting when they were under the age of 18 years, which, according to the Constitution of Zimbabwe s81 (1):38), means legally they were still children and under parental care. Kudakwashe and Chipo have been living in a cohabitation union for 4 years, and they have a daughter.

Additionally, Tatenda and Tonde also lived together in cohabitation during the period of data collection and are both aged 19 and have 1 girl child. Tawanda does not have a child while Tinashe and her partner Tariro are expecting their first child. The average age for the participants is 19, and the oldest is aged 22 whereas the youngest is aged 18. The average age at which participants started cohabiting was 17 years.

5.1.3 Demographic characteristics of parents

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Gender of a child in cohabitation	Employment
Baba Chipo	Male	59	Female	Retired Soldier
Mai Chipo	Female	45	Female	Unemployed
Baba Ruvarashe	Male	44	Female	Vendor
Mai Ruvarashe	Female	40	Female	Vendor
Baba Kudzai	Male	53	Female	Builder
Mai Kudzai	Female	44	Female	Vendor
Baba Tatenda	Male	42	Female	Unemployed
Baba Tinashe	Male	45	Male	Civil servant
Baba Tariro	Male	55	Female	Civil servant
Mai Tariro	Female	50	Female	Unemployed

As depicted from the above demographic profile of the participants, all the parents interviewed, except one, were parents of the females who were cohabiting. Despite being recruited to participate in the study, the parents of male cohabiters were reluctant to be interviewed except

Baba Tinashe. Despite being assured about privacy and anonymity, feelings of shame, humiliation, and fear of being known as a family whose child is cohabiting were cited by fathers as reasons for being uncomfortable to participate in the study. Generally, parents primarily view themselves as good parents, however, the fact that their young boys impregnated young girls threatens their accorded status of being 'good parents' in the community, culminating into feelings of shame and humiliation. Humiliation, which is defined as the experience or even the fear of some form of ridicule, contempt, or other degrading treatment at the hands of others (Klein, 1991) could be applied in this context to understand parents' emotions about child cohabitation.

The researcher interviewed both parents of Chipo, Ruvarashe, Tariro, and Kudzai while only Tatenda's father was interviewed because the mother had traveled to the rural areas, so she was unavailable for recruitment. The average age for the parents was 47, and the oldest parent interviewed was aged 59 while the youngest was 40 years. The parents were interviewed separately to ensure that their individual opinions and narratives about child cohabitation were shared freely in a private space and without fear of the other partner.

5.1.4 Demographic characteristics of other stakeholders

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Job description	Working experience
Mr. Mutape	35	Male	Social worker	5 years
Mrs. Mugadza	41	Female	Social Worker	11 years
Mr. Mathathu	37	Male	Teacher	8 years
Mr. Musona	40	Male	Religious leader	4 years

The researcher also interviewed relevant stakeholders to give this study a comprehensive and holistic view of child cohabitation, as such social workers, a teacher, and pastor were recruited. The 2 social workers interviewed had 5 and 11 years of experience respectively working with children in Zimbabwe and they provided insightful information on the context of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. Teachers in schools spend a considerable amount of time with children, therefore they tend to have a good awareness of prevalent childhood challenges. Consequently, obtaining the teachers' perspective was important. An interview with a teacher from one of the schools in the Dzivarasekwa community was conducted to understand his

perceptions of child cohabitation in Dzivarasekwa. Religious perceptions on child cohabitation are essential to understand in a society such as Zimbabwe considering its dominant role in shaping parental views and perceptions about child-rearing. To this end, a local religious leader of one of the biggest churches in the community was interviewed. The average age for the stakeholders was 38, and the oldest stakeholder interviewed was 40 years old whereas the youngest was 35 years old.

5.2 Drivers of child cohabitation

5.2.1 The shame of teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is socially constructed as shameful not only in Africa but also in Zimbabwe, with most of the participants in this study viewing it as an abomination and embarrassment to the girl child, the whole family, as well as the broader community. In many communities, unmarried teen pregnancy is often unwanted and unplanned, consequently carrying a social stigma. In Africa teenage childbearing, as well as childbearing out of wedlock, is frowned upon on moral and cultural grounds (Makiwane, 2010). Religion is sometimes used as a yardstick to measure the morality of the family and community as a whole. At times, teenagers who fall pregnant out of wedlock are ostracised by the church because it is considered a sin to have sex when you are not married. Thus when a girl child falls pregnant the shame is not only experienced by the girl but also by the whole family. When one person does wrong, others who share a sense of identity with that person might experience that misdeed as a threat to their self-image, leading to shame (Lickel, Schmader, Curtis, Scarnier, and Ames, 2005).

Bunting (2005) brings attention to the perceived shame pregnant teenagers are believed to be bringing to the family and community. He further argues that this shame may pressure the family to take the 'remedial' action of sending the pregnant teenager to live with the owner of the pregnancy (Bunting, 2005). From the constructs of the participants in this study, teenage pregnancy is associated with loose morality and uninhibited sexual exploration of girls who engage in sexual intercourse with boys. Unfortunately, 'plucking' this shame from the family by forcing the pregnant teenager to live with the prospective father often results in cohabitation. Being a teenager and pregnant is informed by the dominant discourse, which perpetuates teen pregnant girls as individuals who have failed to abide by the strict set of conjugal marital heteronormative expectations. Hence, teenage pregnancy is considered a disgrace by parents and the community at large (Saudi, 2009). Aron, Aron, Tudor, and Nelson (1991) further link self-preservation of positive family identity and the decisions families make to manage teenage

pregnancy. Parents' sense of identity is likely to include their child and their role as parents. Therefore the child's wrongdoing is perceived as a threat to the positive and untainted integrity.

Thus pregnancy alone did not just contribute to cohabitation. Most cohabitation decisions were driven by an underlying cultural norm that is dominant in the community, and that is supported by broader debates and discourses about the perception of being unmarried and falling pregnant and the need to remove the shame from the family. **Mai Ruvarashe** highlights some of the common underlying perceptions which are associated with teenage pregnancy and *kuchaya mapoto* in the community of Dzivarasekwa, to this end, she said:

> *People in the community laugh at me and I hear them gossiping about me all the time. They blame me for failing to discipline my child and they think I spoiled her so much. I have even stopped going to church because you can see in their eyes that they judge me. It is embarrassing my child really brought shame to my doorstep.*

Preserving the family identity becomes the primary priority, hence the decision to remove what is considered shameful in this case a teenage girl who is pregnant. This is supported by **Chipo** who stated that:

> *I fell pregnant by mistake, my boyfriend invited me to his house and one thing led to another and we slept together and I didn't think I was going to get pregnant but unfortunately, I did and my father forced me to elope to his family.*

With **Mai Ruvarashe** highlighting that:

> *she got pregnant and when I discovered that she was pregnant I was devastated and I had to tell her father who kicked her out of the house and told her to go and live with the owner of the pregnancy that is when she eloped and started living at the house of that boy.*

While **Baba Chipo** said that "*She was impregnated by her boyfriend and she had to go and live with that boyfriend who impregnated her"*. **Tonde** further highlighted that "*I got my then-girlfriend pregnant and her people came with her to our house and that is how I started living with her"*.

The above findings are in line with Chauke's (2013) conclusion that teenage motherhood is often not accepted by most parents, to the extent that teenage mothers are forced to leave home because they have caused embarrassment to the family. In support, Chigona and Chetty (2008)

further state that sometimes parents detach themselves from teenage mothers because they feel ashamed that the community will look down upon the family. In three of the families who participated in the study, fathers' reactions to pregnancy often included chasing pregnant teenagers from home. This finding corroborates Saudi (2009) and Parekh and De La Rey (1997) finding that fathers" reaction to their daughter's pregnancy in some cases would even lead to the father chasing their daughters out of the house. According to With Kids' Health (2011) parental embarrassment and concerns about friends, family, and neighbours' reactions are some of the factors which contribute to such responses.

In line with the theoretical framework underpinning this study of social constructionism, changes in a society do not occur as a result of natural processes. Instead, change results from the differing ways in which meanings are constructed and reconstructed through people's histories and social interaction as people experience and make sense of the world. Thus the Shona culture views out of wedlock teenage pregnancy as shameful and a girl who falls pregnant has to be integrated with the man who impregnated her and his family. This cultural norm is socially constructed and inculcated in parents through socialisation, failure to heed to this norm often leads to disgrace and humiliation befalling the family.

Social constructionism theory locates meaning in an understanding of how ideas, beliefs, and attitudes evolve within a social and community context (Dickerson and Zimmerman, 1996). Also, the importance of language is central to social constructionism theory, and it is crucial to highlight some of the language used by the participants to refer to falling pregnant. For female participants, the word '*ndakamitiswa*' kept coming out, which means getting pregnant with **Chipo** indicating that "*ndakamitiswa ndisingafungire*" loosely translated to suggest that she got pregnant without planning for it. In the Shona language, this word carries some form of stigma and humiliation because it essentially means getting pregnant out of wedlock. On the other hand, married women who fall pregnant are accorded respect, and they are referred to as "vanepamuviri" meaning that their pregnancy is accepted and celebrated because they are married. The parents of the female participants from this study also used derogatory phrases to denote the extent of perceived humiliation brought by the pregnancy of their daughters for example, **Baba Chipo** said "*mwana wangu akamitiswa*" even **Mai Ruvarashe** said "*mwana wangu musikana akamitiswa*". Besides, the male participants used similar language tones to indicate that they got their girlfriends pregnant for example, **Tonde** indicated that " *ndakamitisa musikana wangu*". In addition, there was the overuse of the word "*kutizira*" which means elopement and this came out repeatedly. **Chipo** and **Mai Ruvarashe,** as discussed

earlier, brought out this aspect of forced elopement. Elopement is not uncommon in Zimbabwe after a girl gets pregnant out of wedlock, and in most cases, it is enforced by the girls' parents. In Jones's (2009) study conducted in one of the townships in Zimbabwe, one of his participants discussed that his girlfriend, who was 17 years old, had eloped to him because she was pregnant. Zimbabwe, a developing country, has not been spared from the problem of teenage pregnancies, which are leading to child unions (Mutanana and Mutara, 2015). In most cases, child pregnancies have resulted in child unions with parents playing a more prominent role in fuelling the development through arranged unions (Chimhau, 2016). From a social constructionist perspective, language is more than just a way of connecting people as people 'exist' in the language (Galbin, 2014). Furthermore, Berger and Luckman (1996) argue that people socially construct reality by their use of approved and common meaning communicated through language. As such the words '*kumitiswa*, *kumitisa* and *kutizira*' carry a negative shared meaning for Shona people of getting pregnant out of wedlock and the shame and stigma this brings when a girl has to elope. This means that language gains its meaning from its use in a context which then creates realities that are endorsed by language (Burr, 2003).

To simply state that teenage pregnancy is a driver of cohabitation is both misleading and a generalisation. Many teenagers who fall pregnant remain in their households, and families support them in parenting the child. However, in this study, a deep sense of shame, embarrassment, and self-preservation of family identity were some of the critical factors that appear to be common in families of pregnant girls who were chased to go and live with the family of the boys who impregnated them. Not much has been said in literature with regards to the link between teenage pregnancy, family shame, and cohabitation involving children. Thus this finding is a significant contribution to the literature on child cohabitation.

The findings further indicated that in the Shona culture, gender differences associated with parenting of young girls were evident in families. Coming home late at night for a girl was considered shameful and an embarrassment. The socially constructed belief which associates staying out late at night with having sex was evident and this assumption applied only to girls. As evidenced in this study, some of the participants were driven into cohabitation because they came home late, and their parents feared that the girls would fall pregnant while living in the family household. Therefore, parents assumed that sending the girl to live with her boyfriend, who is allegedly having sex with would be in the best interest of the family in that it would curtail future shame on the family. Still struggling to understand how his cohabitation started, **Tinashe** said:

the way I started cohabiting is really strange because my girlfriend visited me one day and we spend the day together and she went back home a bit late and the next hour she came back with a bag saying her father chased her away from home and said she should go back to where she was coming from that late that is how we started living together.

The underlying assumption that a girl who is out at night is having sex may seem baseless. However, it is important to understand the cultural context and common traditional beliefs some families in Shona subscribe to. In shedding clarification to this, **Mr. Mutape** (Social worker) also highlight this norm:

as children grow up especially the girl child is informed that they should be home by a certain time, for example, at 18:00. If she comes home after that time at night the parents automatically assume that she was with her boyfriend and they have been indulging in sexual activities. As such the girl will not be allowed to get into the home and she will be chased away to go back to where she was or the person she was with.

Baba Ruvarashe further said that:

Like what happens in our culture of when a girl child comes back home late and parents say to them return to where you came from so you are forcing a child to go and cohabit and start living with their boyfriends thus as parents we need to friendly and sit down with our children and understand why our child came back late so that we can be able to discipline the child".

Mr. Mathathu (Teacher) as well as empasised that:

Zimbabwe culture believes in values and morals and if a child spends much time in the dark and comes back late parents will only think the worst that the child was having sex or all those nasty things they just have to chase that child away and at times it will not be such as case thus they will be unknowingly promoting kuchaya mapoto unions.

This echoes with discourses on Shona culture as girls are expected to behave according to Shona's customs and beliefs. For girls, this includes returning home before dark when they have gone out. In Mulumeoderhwa (2016) study in DRC, similar findings were reported where most of the participants highlighted that parents force their daughters to marry their boyfriends if they spend considerable time with their boyfriends and come back home late. Thus, when a girl sleeps outside or comes back home late at night, this means that the reputation of the family is at stake and possible shame (referring to possible pregnancy) may befall on the family as such she should be sent away to minimise the chances of that happening.

Similar findings were reported by Sekuwinga and Whyte (2009) that parents or guardians sometimes sent away from their daughters when they came home late. In line with the cultural context of the family, some families may not want to be associated with a girl the community perceives to be ‘sleeping around’ as she brings shame to the family. To rectify and remove the possible shame, the family may initiate the ‘formalisation’ of the union by sending the girl child to live with the boy or the man who made her come back home late. The parents may be avoiding possible blame by the community who might view them as irresponsible parents who have failed to train and discipline their child. Zvinavashe (2016) notes that in present-day Zimbabwe, young women now engage in *kutizira* which means that when a girl visits a man’s place and overstays her visit beyond her curfew, she may be ultimately forced to move in with her boyfriend and this is widely known as *kuchaya mapoto* (cohabitation).

According to this study findings, child cohabitation may be sanctioned by parents to minimise possible shame that is associated with teenage pregnancy. They approve such a union mainly because they do not want their family to be associated with the embarrassment and stigma of a pregnant teenager, and by removing this shame they ultimately preserve and sanctify their family. However, the age of the child, level of maturity, parental care, and protection is sidelined, and with that the rights of the child are violated. Though, a decision to initiate a child’s cohabitation union may be perceived by parents as an intervention to ensure that the unborn child is raised by both parents and the paternal family, the social, health, and psychological impact on children could have irreversible consequences.

It is also of paramount importance as part of the conclusion for this section to focus on the salient issue of children’s rights. Upholding children’s rights is important not only in social work but throughout the world. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child provides universal frameworks for understanding the rights of children. This means that various governments must safeguard the rights of children enshrined in the UNCRC and ACRWC respectively. This is important to note because children in Africa are double disadvantaged; first, due to their status as children, they are not in a position to defend themselves in cases of violations, and secondly, they are living in a place where children are more likely to be suffering from human rights violations than adults (Assefa, 2013).

From a children's’ rights framework, child cohabitation infringes on the right to make an informed decision on the part of the child as they are forced into these unions by parents or guardians. As discussed above, most of the children were forced into child cohabitation by their

parents, and they did not have a say on that decision. One of the challenges that contribute to the infringement of children's rights is a child's position in society where they are seen as immature and incapable of making their own informed decision about their lives. As such, adults, therefore, make decisions on their behalf, which is not always in the best interest of the child. Similarly, parents in the study may have felt that whatever decision they make will be in the best interests of the child involved.

Maree (2012) argues that in Africa, decisions about children's welfare are often taken on behalf of children and they are subsequently subjected to the effects of these decisions without any consultation because they are not regarded as competent or mature enough to make informed opinions about the decisions that include them. This can be considered as the violation of UNCRC Article 3 and 12, with article 3 stating that all actions concerning children should take full account of their best interests whilst article 12 state that a child has a right to express an opinion and to have that opinion considered in any matter affecting the child. As such children need to be allowed to make their own informed decision and choice on aspects that affect their lives. It is salient to give that opportunity to children who get pregnant or impregnate a girl to decide what is best for themselves without parents deciding to force them into a child cohabitation union. This is important to highlight as adults are often unaware of their own biases regarding children's competence to make decisions regarding their welfare (Hall and Lin, 1995) and according to Mutepfa, Mpofu, and Chataika (2006), many adults do not consider the potential ways in which aspects of their behaviour may negatively impact on children's rights. This study is built on the premise that children's rights should be respected as children can be active participants in finding solutions to issues affecting them (Collin, 2016). Doek (2009) further outlined that it is important to stop considering children only as 'victims', as they are rights-holding individuals whose dignity and physical and psychological integrity must be respected.

5.2.2 Use of body as a survival strategy (survival sex)

The turn of the millennium in Zimbabwe heralded unparalleled political and economic instability that had negative repercussions for the citizens of Zimbabwe, and this ultimately gave rise to unprecedented economic crises (Gumbo, 2014). Similarly, Mvutungayi (2010) indicated that Zimbabwe experienced the worst socio-economic and political challenges in its post-independence history, with many people, especially the young people facing the overwhelming burden of unemployment and poverty. Notably, surviving in a harsh economic environment is difficult for families and children. This has given rise to the phenomenon of

young girls using their bodies to survive. Kembo and Nhongo (2002) state that there is a strong correlation between poverty and commercial sexual exploitation of children in Zimbabwe. As a result of poverty, there is a desire either by the child prostitute herself or her handlers to get financial returns in exchange for sex hence the overlaying economic gain for child prostitution (Mushohwe, 2018). This was reported by some of the participants in this study:

Baba Tariro said:

> *I think it is because of unemployment which sees young children hopeless and for girls they think of using their body to get money so if they come across men who say come and let's stay together they will not think twice and they will start cohabiting with them. Because of the economic meltdown children are forced to do anything just to survive.*

Adolescent girls in Sekuwinga and Whyte's (2009) study reported that due to the rampant poverty in the country, parents had difficulty providing necessities such as food and clothing. Thus girls found men who provided these items in exchange for sex, sometimes impregnating them in the process thereafter cohabiting with these men. This finding in Sekuwinga and Whyte (2009) study confirms **Tatenda's** assertion that:

> *I did not want to cohabit at all but circumstances at home forced me to cohabit. My family is very poor and my father could not afford to send me to Secondary school because of lack of money I stopped going to school after I finished my primary education. That is when I met my boyfriend and he promised to take care of me and even send me to school so I eventually got pregnant for him so that he cannot leave me and we started staying together.*

On a different note, Mashayamombe (2017) observed an increase in the culture of consumption among young people, which is different from trying to survive and acquire necessities. In Mashayamombe's (2017) study, pressures to buy a mobile phone, tablets, or be associated with a boy or a man who owns one contributed to the vulnerability of young girls, and some sold their bodies to use or own these gadgets.

In this study, poverty in the family appeared to influence parenting of young girls. Sometimes parental approval directly or indirectly influenced daughters to use their bodies to get money and gifts from their boyfriends. **Tatenda,** one of the girl participants, stated that *"My mother was supportive because she knew that my boyfriend would start buying groceries and other staff needed in the house".* For **Tatenda,** her mother knew about her boyfriend and encouraged her to fall pregnant for **Tonde,** however, **Tatenda's** father was not aware of this, but upon

realising that she was pregnant he chased her away from home. In support, **Baba Chipo** pointed out that:

> *I think mothers are mostly involved in the beginning of kuchaya mapoto as mothers can even send their daughters to go and ask for money from their boyfriends which mean they are throwing their daughters in the deep end of kuchaya mapoto unions.*

These findings resonate with other studies that reported the role mothers sometimes play to encourage their daughters to engage in transactional sex as a way out of poverty (See Mulumeoderhwa, 2016; Montgomery, 2011; Chapter 3.2.3). In countries such as India, the cultural importance of family obligations forces the child to sell her body voluntarily to improve the economic status of the family. Mulumeoderhwa (2016) and Montgomery's (2011) argument upheld Abbhi, Jayakumar, Raja, and Padmanabhan (2013), findings that in some communities in India and for many families, a daughter might be the only available commodity or the only remaining commodity to be traded. This means that young girls are used as a currency to add to the family's otherwise empty coffers. Girls are viewed as an important economic resource within which parents will ultimately get wealth.

Equally importantly, **Mr. Musona** (religious leader) confirmed that:

> *In this community (Dzivarasekwa) kuchaya mapoto involving children is happening at a higher rate because of the things that are found in this community as there are illegal beerhalls where prostitutes are seen in broad daylight and some of them are young girls. And these young girls are then impregnated and they start living with these old men.*

These findings are in line with Muzvidziwa's (2002) study in Zimbabwe, which found that *kuchaya mapoto* operated as a survival strategy for all the women in his sample. Women try, often successfully, to improve their social and economic status through establishing various types of relationships with men. He further highlighted that *Mapoto* was both a response to and an outcome of the demands of a changing urbanising society such as was the case in Masvingo (Muzvidziwa, 2002). Since poverty is rife in Zimbabwe and particularly in Dzivarasekwa community where this study was conducted, *kuchaya mapoto (*cohabitation) is thus used by girls as a safety net to shelter them from the effects of poverty. For them, *kuchaya mapoto* is an available strategy to counter poverty in their households. Poverty has always been a major driving factor in the continued practice of early marriages due to the commercialization of young girls caused by economic depressions within families (Mashayamombe, 2017).

Adolescents in Sekuwinga and Whyte's (2009) study reported that in some cases, parents and guardians sent their girls to have an affair with a boy from a family, which they suspected to have money confirming the findings in this part of the study. This is also in line with Sibanda's (2011) findings that some of these practices are carried out for financial gain by the parents of the children. The emotional, social, and health risks for children that are associated with a decision to marry off their daughters are overlooked in exchange for perceived financial gains. According to the Zimbabwe Herald (2015), girls aged between 10 and 15 have been forced into early unions by their parents owing to poverty at Somerby settlement near Snake Park in Harare. Children, especially girls, are married off early sometimes just after puberty, and sometimes even before to bring the family some monetary earning. In many communities in India a young girl brings in a lot of dowry it doesn't matter that these girls may be too young to marry, it doesn't matter that the man she is married off to, is easily double, triple or even four times her age (Abbhi, Jayakumar, Raj and Padmanabhan, 2013). Similarly, in Cameroon and Mali, it is reported that poor parents sometimes specifically seek out well-off men to provide their daughters a way out of poverty (A report on child marriage in Africa, 2018).

There are various debates on the merits and demerits of young girls using their bodies to survive, mostly poverty. Makiwane (2010) revealed that in apartheid South Africa, it was not regarded as a shame when an unmarried teenager becomes pregnant as teenage childbearing was seen as an economic survival strategy in apartheid South Africa. Research has found that often, young people from low-income communities engage in early sexual activity as a way to receive an income (Dlamini, 2016). This often manifests in the "sugar-daddy" phenomenon". In a study undertaken by the Gauteng Department of Social Development (ENCA, 2013) it was evident that poverty, in most instances, leads young girls to seek financial security from older people. This is in line with **Baba Kudzai's** assertion, "*Children of today now love what we call 'sugar daddies' who they think have the money and even these old men bribe young girls who are still immature with money and gifts and young girls are eventually impregnated".*

However, children who tend to use their bodies for survival are sometimes accused by communities as immoral and loose. The underlying structural and economic circumstances behind this practice are sometimes overlooked, and instead of seeing the children as victims of sexual abuse and exploitation mainly as a result of their poverty, in Zimbabwe and many other countries across the globe, these children are generally seen as *"willing participants'* and therefore *'victims by choice'* (Mushohwe, 2018).

5.2.3 Child abuse in blended families

The concept of stepfamilies is an old practice that has become inevitable owing to the uncontrollable nature of life, which includes deaths and divorces (Dodo and Nyoni, 2016). This practice brings multiple changes in the lives of family members, as, in the majority of cases, the new entrant might bring in new and unusual habits and practices. This is confirmed by **Tawanda** who said that:

> *My mother died in 2008 and my father did not waste time to marry again. The woman my father married did not love us at all and she mistreated us at any given opportunity and she made us to all do the house chores even cooking and I was too young to be cooking. My father did not do anything at all as he was always working away from home most of the time.*

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has had a profound negative effect on family structures in Zimbabwe redrawing families as children lose one or both parents. This has given rise to the phenomenon of step-parents as either one of the surviving parents remarries after the death of their partner. Serious hostilities and mistrust characterize some of the blended families and the level of animosity translates into various negative consequences for children such as abuse and as reported by the participants in this study, it may be one of the drivers of child cohabitation. Life experiences have shown that there is usually some hatred, animosity, and mistrust between the stepmother and the step-children (Dodo and Nyoni, 2016). This emerged from the transcripts of some of the participants in this study. **Tawanda** highlighted that:

> *After I finished my O level things started getting out of hand at home as my stepmother was mistreating me as sometimes I would go to bed hungry and was constantly doing house chores and getting beaten most of the time for no apparent reason and my father did nothing about it. The living conditions became so unbearable to the extent that I was forced to run away from home and started living with a single mother who I was in love with and explained my situation to her and she agreed to live with me.*

This is in line with the findings by leading Canadian researchers Martin Daly and Margo Wilson who coined the term “the Cinderella effect”, referring to the phenomenon whereby stepchildren are more likely than biological children to suffer from abuse and violence (Daly and Wilson, 1999). Studies carried out in various Western countries, including the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, and Finland, all showed that children face a higher likelihood of violence at the hands of a stepparent than a biological parent (Legal Assistance Centre,

2011). The decision to leave home is made when the stress of the domestic situation, lack of food and other resources becomes untenable for the child. The street is then seen as an escape and an opportunity for a better life (Pascoe, 1996). For **Tawanda** cohabitation, not the streets became his way out. He chose cohabitation rather than to continue living in a house where he was mistreated continuously, to him, cohabitation was a better evil, a safety net that will ultimately give him some form of freedom and solace. Some children who make streets their homes are mistreated at home by step-parents and they sometimes decide to run away from home and stay on the streets (Lukman, 2009).

Another participant **Baba Tatenda** shared his sentiments***:***

> *I think sometimes the girl will be oppressed and abused at their house in most instances by her stepmother and she might find a guy who is willing to live with her and they then start cohabiting and the guy will not have money to pay the in-laws. The girl will just be happy that she will no longer be living in a house where she was being abused.*

Mr. Musona (Religious leader):

> *I think what causes children to cohabit firstly is the background of the child in terms of how he/she lives like for example some children live with their step-parents and these children are abused and the child will not have a choice and will think that it is better to live with her boyfriend than at an abusive home.*

Baba Chipo "*in other instances parents would have divorced and the stepmother will mistreat the child and this will force the child to go and cohabit, stepmothers force children to cohabit".* This is in line with Sekiwunga and Whyte's (2009) study findings where adolescent girls reported that most stepmothers were too harsh; they overloaded them with domestic chores, which made them run away to better places where they got men and became pregnant. With Dodo and Nyoni (2016) study further confirming that sometimes the step-children eventually loses out and might drop out of school, leave home, and become destitute. Most people perceive stepfamilies as problematic and stepmother as a figure of cruelty and wickedness (Phillips, 1997). However, this is not a universalised absolute truth as some step-parents treat and love their step-children as their own. The findings of this study point to the elevated risk of child abuse in some of the blended families which at times forces children to cohabit after running away from home, thus using cohabitation as a survival strategy.

5.2.4 The influence of Religion in promoting child cohabitation

Religion has a powerful influence on the lives of Southern Africans, affecting all aspects of their daily life and health, particularly for rural women (Agadjanian, 2005; Chitando, 2007). This is true in Zimbabwe, where the majority of the citizens are Christians. However, the same religion that should be protecting mostly children and acting as a haven is being used as a tool that not only undermines women but also acts as a powerful driver of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. One church in Zimbabwe that has been embroiled in women's and girls' human rights violations is the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church. It is public knowledge in Zimbabwe and various literature has highlighted how this particular church continues to infringe on the rights of women. The church was established by Johanne Marange. Chitando, Gunda, and Kugler (2014) highlighted that Johanne Marange (1912-1963) was born Muchabaya Momberume in 1912 in Marange Tribal Trust Lands and his father was Muchabaya Momberume with his mother being the daughter of Chief Marange. Chitando et al. (2014) further argued that on 17 July 1932, on the road from Mutare to his home near Mount Nyengwe, Johanne had a visionary experience that prompted him to start the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church in that same year. Sibanda, Makahamadze, and Maposa (2008) additionally propound that in the years that followed, Johanne Marange proclaimed to the people that he was divinely commissioned by God to pronounce oracles to the people of his community and even beyond. This prompted his church to grow significantly to other areas in Zimbabwe and the surrounding countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

According to Sibanda (2011), the Holy Spirit in the Apostle church is used as a tool to intimidate and instill fear in church members to deter them from doing certain acts. The same Holy Spirit is used to validate child cohabitation as the prophets would have been 'directed' by the Holy Spirit to marry young girls. Thus whatever the Apostolic prophets say is believed as the members are afraid of the repercussions of going against the Holy Spirit as a result of being threatened with curses. This has seen young girls being forced into cohabitation when they are very young. Moreover, since the Apostle church does not value education for girls, this creates a vicious cycle of early marriage and cohabitation for these girls.

In support, one of the participant **Mr. Mathathu** , a teacher in the community of Dzivarasekwa said that:

some religions also encourage cohabitation such as 'Mapositori' (Apostles) of Johanne Marange they really encourage it some of the children that are forced into cohabitation can be even 12 years old and they say the spirit of God told me that you can be my wife, these children are very young for cohabitation thus religion is used as a weapon to force children to cohabit.

In support, Maguranyanga (2011) confirms that the church has a strong belief in Mweya Mutsvene (Holy Spirit) which is seen as sacred and plays a central role in the spiritual life, beliefs, and faith of the apostolic religious community. Thus when a prophecy is given about the marriage of a young child, it will be accepted without question as it will be from the holy spirit (Nyamadzawo, 2015).

In the same vein, **Mr. Musona** (Religious leader) also confirmed that:

Another thing also is the issue of abuse some of the children will be abused and we might not notice especially when it comes to some religion such as 'mapostori' (Apostles) they force children into cohabitation when they are under age thus religion also is used as a weapon to force children to cohabit.

This is in line with Hodzi (2014) findings that young girls are sometimes forced into child unions by the elders of the Apostolic sect under the guise that it is the 'Holy Spirit' will that they should get married. Mashayamombe's (2017) study also confirmed the issue of prophets in the apostolic sect supposedly making up dreams during church services were they identify young girls under the 'ministry of the Holy Spirit' to become their wives. The problem is exacerbated because the Apostolic church is one of the biggest churches in Zimbabwe and it hard to penetrate. Even parents of the children fully participate and conspire with the church elders to force their young children into these unions to please the 'Holy Spirit'. Although none of the participants in this study were forced into child cohabitation by religion, however, the teacher and the religious leader in the Dzivarasekwa community confirmed that young girls who were members of this particular church were being forced into child cohabitation. Parents of these girls are virtually powerless to stop their daughters from being given away to older men. In support of this, Mashayamombe (2017) states that because it is an accepted practice in the sects, girls often have no-one to protect them since their parents support these practices and doctrines. Families who chose to go against such doctrines may be an outcast to the sect thus, they are forced to go along as they are afraid of being against supposed 'God's command'.

Not only in Zimbabwe is religion used as a driver of child unions but also in other countries. A report on child marriage in Africa (2013) reported that many countries with deep-rooted Islamic populations, local traditions interpret Islamic scripture as permitting and encouraging child unions. For example, countries such as Gambia, Mali, and Mauritania with a high percentage of the Islamic population, child unions are not regarded as wrong or against the best interests of the child. Likewise, the practice of marrying off young girls is deeply rooted in some parts of Cameroon, with one local Islamic leader saying that even if it means confronting the law, he will never go against the religious book (A Report on child marriage in Africa, 2018). The same sentiments were shared by Barbara Burke the head of the Spiritual Baptist Church in Trinidad and Tobago who supported the marrying off young girls as young as 12. She indicated that if the law is struck down, it sets a precedent that State Law trumps people's religious beliefs (Joseph, 2017). This precipitated the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO) in Trinidad and Tobago to vote overwhelmingly 17 to 24 in favour of keeping an old colonial law allowing child unions of girls as young as 12 years old (Joseph, 2017). Therefore religion is sometimes used as a tool to perpetuate child unions, whether they are child cohabitations or child marriages, and this leaves young girls vulnerable and at risk of child sexual abuse and its intended consequences.

5.2.5 Lack of parental supervision and care

The continued economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe has contributed to a significant rise of parents who migrate to neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Botswana. Other parents opt for international countries such as the United Kingdom in search of greener pastures. Often, these parents would leave their children behind with little or no parental supervision. According to Zanamwe and Devillard (2010), the resultant Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis has pushed many Zimbabwean parents to migrate, joining the diaspora in many countries while children are left behind in the home country. By not residing with their parents, children become vulnerable and at risk. Elder (2007) of UNICEF, states that when parents leave their children behind, it increases their vulnerability. The children left behind may have to deal with age-inappropriate responsibilities, such as fulfilling roles previously held by the migrant parent, feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and other psychological problems and a spectrum of other behavioural and developmental issues (Filippa, Cronje and Ferns, 2013). The Zimbabwean media has highlighted the plight of children whose parents have outmigrated, leaving behind unsuitable carers, which make children vulnerable to child abuse (Shaw, 2008).

Parental absence may expose children to sexual experimentation, sexual abuse, and harassment when they are still too young with no one to supervise, monitor, and discipline them (Filippa, Cronje and Ferns, 2013). The widespread use of uncensored internet and social media such as Whatsapp platforms without parental guidance exposed the girls prone to ideas and information that is not be-fitting for their age, and without appropriate parental guidance, the negative impact for children may increase (Mashayamombe, 2017). Some of the concerns raised in Mashayamombe's (2017) study were associated with the widespread distribution of pornographic material in their communities, which resulted in experimental practices and in girls getting pregnant and marrying prematurely.

Mr. Mutape a Social worker shared his observations):

> *some parents are migrating into neighbouring countries such as South Africa in search of greener pastures and leaving their children behind without adult supervision and this has resulted in children being taken advantage of by older men and they get in sexual relationships with them and elope to cohabit with them in the absence of their parents*.

Whilst overseas, some of the parents may underestimate the times required to secure employment, therefore they may be unable to remit money back to their children. Without parental supervision and monetary support, children may resort to engaging in relationships with older men to survive in the harsh economic environment of Zimbabwe. This ultimately may expose them to teenage pregnancy and eventually, child cohabitation. Therefore, the dynamics of poverty and lack of parental supervision seem to contribute to child cohabitation.

Mr. Mathathu (Teacher) also presented the same sentiments by stating that:

> *because of the economic hardships in Zimbabwe parents are always away from home busy at work or looking for money and this means there is no time for parents to talk with their children and be involved in their children's lives.*

Accordingly, Mashayamombe's (2017) study found that without monitoring, children are likely to engage in activities that make them prone to early unions. In cases where the children live alone, they might end up involving themselves in relationships that result in child cohabitation for financial assistance. Thus the lack of parental guidance and discipline in the lives of their children exposes children to teenage pregnancy, which eventually leads to child cohabitation. Preston-Whyte and Allen (1992) mirrored the same sentiments by highlighting that themes that tend to recur in teenage pregnancy studies revolve around what is termed in the literature as a

"poor home background", in particular, "a lack of parental interest and control" and poor communication between parents and their children on sexual issues.

5.3 Consequences of child cohabitation

The findings indicated that child cohabitation is associated with negative repercussions on the children. In this study, the participants reported health risks, physical risks, emotional abuse, and poor educational attainment as a result of cohabitation as children. This reflects the immediate and long term negative consequences cohabitation has for children.

5.3.1 Health Risks

Girls in particular because of their immaturity and lack of agency to initiate condom use with their partners are at risk of contracting HIV and other sexual related infections. Children cohabiting are at far greater risk of contracting HIV than their counterparts who marry later with Muzvidziwa (2002), highlighting that kuchaya mapoto exposes partners to HIV/AIDS. In most instances, girls cohabit with older more sexually experienced men with whom it is difficult to negotiate safe sexual behaviors thus making them vulnerable to HIV. Even though this particular group of participants did not report health risks associated with child cohabitation, other participants in the study raised them.

Baba Tinashe echoed these sentiments:

> *some of the challenges not only for my child but for children cohabiting include being exposed to STIs and HIV and they start these unions without even firstly getting tested to know their partner's status before starting to live together.*

The mere fact that they are children and they are not on an equal footing with their partner in terms of age and maturity exposes them to contracting HIV as they are not in a position to negotiate for safe sex. **Baba Tatenda** reiterated that

> *young girls are being abused by the men because these young girls are having sex when they are still immature and when they are not ripe for that. In other words, these girls are being sexually abused and exposed to HIV. Even when these young girls get sick the older men are even afraid to go with them to the hospital or clinic because they are exposed and get arrested for abusing young girls.*

This was confirmed in Mashayamombe's (2017) study that the spread of communicable diseases and infections such as HIV was identified as a battling space for girls in early unions.

Her research further found that the possibilities of getting such infections are high amongst adolescent girls primarily because they do not have full knowledge and understanding of their sexual reproductive health rights (Mashayamombe, 2017). This is also in line with Mawere and Mawere's (2010) study, which contends that these informal unions expose both partners to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. In support, Muzvidziwa (2002) argues that in the light of the AIDS pandemic, the usefulness of *mapoto* or cohabitation relationships needs examination, shouldn't we consider *mapoto* a death trap? In addition, other studies highlight the exposure of children to HIV and STIs in forced unions (See Mawere and Mawere, 2010; Barnet and Whiteside, 2006; Kang'ete and Mafa, 2014; Chapter 3.4).

Another repercussion of child cohabitation for girls is the exposure to birth-related complications, which might result in their death or the death of their babies because they will still be young to give birth. Young girls face tremendous health risks in childbirth, including a serious condition known as obstetric fistula. Obstetric fistula results when a young mother's vagina, bladder and rectum tear during childbirth, and it causes urine and feces to leak from her, and without surgery, the condition lasts the rest of the girl's life (Sodi, 2009).

This point was pointed out by **Baba Chipo** "*I think they can have complications in childbirth because these girls will be young as they will be below 18 years and childbirth will be a problem*".

The mortality statistics in Zimbabwe show that the age categories of 10-15 and 16-20 usually have high rates of mortality due to hemorrhaging at birth and the lack of skilled medical personnel to assist at childbirth (Mlambo, Chinamo and Zingwe, 2013). Being young and pregnant is, therefore, a health risk, and Hodzi (2014) concludes that the young girls who are pregnant and cohabitating are on a journey towards a dangerous and possible life-threatening future as a result of likely reproductive health complications. Being in a union young also means sexual indulgence before one matures. This hinders these young girls from making sound choices about their bodies and what they want. Moreover, they are unable to come out of abusive relationships that are prevalent in such settings (Kenny and McLanahan, 2006). In chapter 3.4, the negative repercussions faced by young girls when they give birth are reported by the World Health Organisation (2012-2015).

5.3.2 Recurrent physical and emotional abuse

Cohabitation exposes children to the ills of physical and emotional abuse. In this study, **Kudzai** highlighted that *"my partner sometimes he beats me and tells me that I am not educated and I*

do not have anywhere to go because my family is poor". Since most of these girls have been chased away from their homes, they have little or no parental support and this further contributes to their vulnerability. Without family support and alternative places to escape to, these girls are at risk of emotional and physical abuse from their partners. One of the participants confessed that he mistreated his partner for her to return to her house, to this end, **Kudakwashe** said that:

> *at first, I was really scared and angry towards myself and herself for getting pregnant and I tried to mistreat her so that she might go back to her house but she stayed put because she had nowhere else to go as she couldn't go back to their house.*

In other instances the young girls are abused and undermined because the bride price was not paid for them as such, their partners use this as an excuse to abuse them. This point was highlighted by **Chipo** who said that "*sometimes my husband comes home drunk and says nasty things such as that I am not his wife as he has not paid lobola so he can leave me anytime and I should go back to my home".* The non-payment of the bride price means that nothing is tying both partners to this union, and this can further increase the risk for women abuse. A cross-country comparison indicated that living in a cohabiting union rather than marriage increased the risk of intimate-partner violence for young women in Kenya, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe (Hindin et al., 2008). Chipo's mother **Mai Chipo** heard of her daughter's mistreatment through the grapevine, and she confirmed this by stating that "*I even heard from her neighbours that they were mistreating my daughter and they say they do not want her there because she is a prostitute who trapped their son with pregnancy".*

This resonates with studies that have been done on cohabitation as they tend to be viewed as a haven of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Cohabitation is associated with domestic violence, as it is believed that cohabitating couples may be more susceptible to violence due to lack of commitment to one another (Kang'ete and Mafa, 2014). Moreover, Mashayamombe's (2017) study found that the perpetuation of domestic and gender-based violence was high for girls who married young and cases of domestic and gender-based violence are on the rise in Zimbabwe especially amongst young women.

5.3.3 School Dropout

The relationship between teenage pregnancy and school drop-out has long been established in previous studies. According to Hodzi (2014), it is always a girl child who drops out of school after getting pregnant, and with it she is exposed to a life of distress. All the male participants

in this study finished O level which is the ordinary level for completion of Secondary school in Zimbabwe while 3 of the female participants, namely **Tariro**, **Ruvarashe** and **Kudzai** were not able to complete their secondary school. **Tariro** dropped out of school when she was in Form 2, with **Ruvarashe** dropping out of school in Form 3, and **Kudzai** also dropped out of school in form 3. This is evidence that girls are negatively impacted when they get pregnant as they drop out of school whereas boys continued with their education. Education is often interrupted to assume parental responsibilities in the case of female than male adolescents. Mandizha (2015) confirms that approximately 3,000 Zimbabwean girls leave school every year due to pregnancy. In the same vein, Moyo (2016) highlights that a total of 1.253 pupils dropped from primary schools in Matabeleland South province in Zimbabwe during the first term of 2016, while 1,572 also dropped out from secondary schools mainly due to pregnancy.

Before the Amendment of the Education Act of 2006 in Zimbabwe, pregnant girls were not allowed to continue with their education in schools as there was an assumption that they will influence other learners also to get pregnant. This was confirmed in the findings of Runhare and Vandeyar's (2011) study that there were claims that pregnant learners socially contaminated the school environment because they were sexually immoral and undisciplined children who therefore lowered the school's reputation and educational standards. In line with the changes in the Education Act of 2006 legislation specifically Clause 68D of the Amendment Bill of the Education Act, schools in Zimbabwe cannot expel a pregnant girl child based on being pregnant. According to Zimfact (2019), Clause 68D of the Amendment Bill for the Education Act of 2006 inserted a provision stating that girls shall not be expelled from school for falling pregnant. It is important to note that this Amendment was made to align the Education Act to the Constitution of Zimbabwe specifically section 27(2) of the Constitution which states that 'the state must ensure that girls are afforded the same opportunities as boys to obtain an education at all levels' (Zimfact, 2019). However, despite these positive changes, girls are still subjected to stigma and ostracism from fellow learners and teachers that prompt them to drop out of school. Runhare and Vandeyar's (2011) findings reported a disturbing observation of hate language which was rampant against pregnant learners despite the existence of policy guidelines on the management of pregnancy in schools in Zimbabwe and they recommended that schools should put in place measures to eliminate any forms of stigmatisation and hate language. **Kudzai**, one of the female participants who did fall pregnant in school, talked about the humiliation she faced when she was pregnant:

I remember when I was pregnant I could not even walk in the community as I was afraid to meet my school mates but sometimes I would meet them and they would laugh behind my back and also when I went to church people would stare at me, it made me stay indoors.

These results indicate that even if **Kudzai** would have wanted to continue with the school during pregnancy, the school and community environment was toxic and not enabling her to stay with schooling. The jeering, laughing, and giggling from fellow learners contribute to the toxicity of the school environment for pregnant girls (Chirimuuta, 2016). As observed by Ncube and Mudau (2017), even though the policy accords the teenagers the right to continue with their education while pregnant, they are ostracized and castigated. It is not surprising to note that the school dropouts among girls who marry young are relatively high after they have become pregnant (Mashayamombe, 2017). The shame and responsibilities thrust upon the girl are too burdensome and depressing to manage.

Additionally, most school stakeholders are ignorant of the policies in Zimbabwe that allow pregnant girls to remain at school, and sometimes these girls are expelled from school due to this ignorance. This was confirmed in Runhare and Vandeyar's study conducted in Zimbabwe (2011) that indicated the lack of knowledge among teachers about the provisions of the Amendment of Education Act of 2006 that allows pregnant girls to remain in school. Similarly, Runhare and Gordon (2004) study found out that most Education Officers (EOs) and school principals lacked adequate knowledge on the policy circular on the admission and management of girls who could fall pregnant while at school. Notwithstanding, Ncube and Mudau (2017) point out that many Zimbabwean policies on pregnant schoolgirls are ambiguous, difficult to understand therefore, implementing them is difficult if not impossible. The challenge emanates from the interpretation of the guidelines, and when pregnant girls should leave school for delivery, how long should pregnant girls be absent from school and re-entry to school after delivery, among others (Ncube and Mudau, 2017). This lack of policy clarity poses a challenge in implementation which could prejudice the intended beneficiaries. In light of this, the rights of girls who are pregnant are undermined. It is not uncommon for girls to be expelled or drop out of school while their partners continue with their education, and this gender inequality negatively impacts a girl child.

Furthermore, the stigma attached to the girl child manifests in the community as she is seen as a loose immoral girl who falls pregnant at a tender age and out of wedlock. The community sees teenage mothers as girls with low morals, who misbehaved and must not go to school

because they will contaminate non-parenting learners (Chigona and Chetty, 2008). Likewise, Shaningwa (2007) highlighted that teenage mothers suffer from social isolation in their communities, and this disrupts their personal life. However, the same stigma is not faced by the same boy who impregnated her.

Moreover, the lack of financial support and a supportive school environment hinders the re-entry of girls who fall pregnant to school. **Tariro,** who fell pregnant and dropped out of school in Form 2 reported that she was keen to go back to school however, she does not have the money to go back to school. **Tariro** said that "*I have tried to talk to my partner about going back to school but he does not support me and he thinks it is a waste of time, I hope I get the money to rewrite the subjects I failed*". **Tariro** was pregnant at the time of the interview and keen to return to school after the birth of her child, but she did not have the money or anyone to support her and this was frustrating. The lack of support for teenage mothers to return to school after giving birth is a challenge in Zimbabwe. Poor access to financial support, the social stigma which is associated with being a teenage mother, parenting responsibilities, and cohabitation complicate the possibilities to return to school.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed themes that addressed the objective of understanding the drivers and consequences of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. A deep sense of shame, embarrassment in line with the prevailing cultural beliefs and practices, and self-preservation of family identity were key contributors to pregnant girls being chased from home to start cohabitation. The findings on the drivers of child cohabitation in this current study are in contrast to the drivers of cohabitation in young people which are driven mainly by individualised choices. Cohabitation theories on the reasons for cohabitation such as the rationale choice theory and the self-determination theory are individualised and advance the notion that the drivers of cohabitation are centred on free will and the ability to choose to be in a cohabitation union (see Hughes, 2015; Smith, 2014; Levin and Milgron, 2004; Lloyd and South, 1996; Chapter 2.4.1). And the breakdown of cultural practices, pooling of resources, and trial for marriage are some of the reasons for choosing to cohabit. This is in contrast with the findings of this current study as the children are instead forced into cohabitation influenced by the socially constructed norms centred around a pregnant girl having to go and live with the owner of the pregnancy. Thus the children do not choose to cohabit, but their parents make that decision on their behalf and force them into cohabitation unions going against the cohabitation theories that advance that individuals have the choice to choose to be in a cohabitation union.

Furthermore, this chapter discussed the health risks for children in cohabitation unions. Possible exposure to HIV and sexually transmitted diseases was a key concern for the stakeholders as these unions are primarily seen as unstable and there is a general lack of commitment to these unions by the male partners. Despite the health-related risks, the girls in these unions are also exposed to physical and emotional abuse, which renders them vulnerable. It becomes a double tragedy for these girls as on the one hand they are being abused by their partners, and on the other hand, they do not have anyone to tell and also nowhere to run to as they would have been chased from home. Thus they suffer in silence. Another consequence faced mostly by girls in this study is dropping out of school when they get pregnant and there is no guarantee that they will go back to school because of a lack of support. Despite most of the participants' willingness to return to school, they seemed to be confined in these cohabitation unions.

Chapter 6

Perceptions And Views Of Parents Concerning Kuchaya Mapoto Unions Involving Children In Zimbabwe

6.1 Introduction

It was essential to capture the perceptions and views of parents concerning *kuchaya mapoto,* and this answered one of the research questions. The themes covered in this chapter include cohabitation as a preferred precursor to marriage, the significance of *lobola* or *roora* as a cultural practice, and parental disappointment.

6.2 Cohabitation as a preferred precursor to marriage

The fathers who participated in the study preferred to use cohabitation to enforce responsibility and accountability to the partner of a pregnant teenager. Fathers perceived cohabitation as a strategy to manage the unwanted teenage pregnancy since it placed the the responsibility of taking care of the unborn child to the owner of the pregnancy and his family.

This study findings appear to suggest that there is a relationship between the socio-economic status of the family and parental willingness and influence on child cohabitation. As stated earlier in the preceding chapter, if teenage pregnancy occurs, fathers would often force the girl child to go and live with the owner of that pregnancy. Fathers opted not to stay with their pregnant daughters, for financial, cultural and social reasons, they preferred that their pregnant daughters to stay with the family and the partner who was considered to be the father of the unborn child. There is an element of force used by fathers to force their pregnant daughters into cohabitation unions, making child cohabitation family sanctioned.

One of the fathers, a participant in this study, reported that he decided to force her pregnant daughter on the family that had impregnated her daughter. This enforces a sense of responsibility on the owner of the pregnancy. **Baba Chipo** to this end said that:

> *In our culture, if a man impregnates a girl he has to take responsibility so I told my child to go to the one who gave her the pregnancy and I called her aunt and a family friend to accompany her to the boyfriend's place. Because I can't take care of someone else child.*

In making this decision, **Baba Chipo's** beliefs about cultural practices about pregnancy out of wedlock were influential in the decision-making process. His understanding that as a man of the household, it was not his responsibility to care and provide for a child of another man.a

clear indication of a common traditional belief that it is a taboo in the Shona custom, for another man to take care of another man's child when the father is alive. Furthermore, there is an inherent socialised fear that if that child dies in the hands of another man who is not the father curse or *ngozi* in the Shona culture will befall his family. This resonates with the theoretical framework underpinning this study of social constructionism. The parents in the current study were born into a society and culture with existing norms and predefined patterns of conduct. The definitions of reality which are socially transmitted from one generation to the next and are further reinforced by social sanctions and these existing group definitions are learned and internalised through the process of socialisation (Sahin, 2006). Consequently, the reality is not independent of history, culture, and context; in contrast, it is socially constructed (Houston, 2001).

To extend this point further **Mai Ruvarashe,** the mother of Ruvarashe reiterated that:

> *Her father kicked her out of the house and told her to go and live with the owner of the pregnancy that is when she went and started living at the house of that boy. I did not want my child to go and was prepared to take care of the baby but his father insisted that she has to go.*

From this excerpt, it is clear that the mother of **Ruvarashe** was against her daughter's cohabitation, but just like her daughter, she was powerless to stop her husband from forcing her daughter onto this boy. The concept of patriarchal male dominance is highlighted in which the father holds power to make decisions on behalf of the whole family, and the rest of the family has minimal power to decide an alternative route. Also, **Mai Chipo** further indicated that she never wanted her daughter to leave their house after she got pregnant. However, the final decision rested with her husband, who decided that her daughter would go and stay with the owner of the pregnancy. She indicated that *"I did not want my child to go and was prepared to take care of the baby but his father insisted that she has to go"*.

The social construction of teenage pregnancy has largely informed how parents deal with their pregnant daughters. The negative constructions of teen pregnancy have resulted in stringent and punishment-oriented decisions to deal with pregnant teenagers. Possible explanations may include the feeling of embarrassment related to society's assumptions of their 'poor' parental skills or perhaps the additional strain that it places on the family's economic resources (Chohan, 2010).

It was interesting to note that not only do fathers force their pregnant daughters to go and live with the boy's family that impregnated her, but they also push their sons to take responsibility for the pregnancy. This was supported by **Baba Tinashe** who said that:

> *When that girl came with her people, my son initially wanted to deny that he knows her and the pregnancy but I made sure that he has to man up and take responsibility for his actions and start living with that pregnant girl.*

Tinashe did not want to live with her girlfriend, however, his father forced him to accept responsibility and live with her. This is important to note as fathers sometimes ensure that their sons do not abandon their children but take full responsibility for their children. Dowshen (2016) agrees with the above finding by highlighting that teenage boys need encouragement from their parents to handle fatherhood.

Despite cohabitation being viewed by parents as a better alternative to deal with teenage pregnancy, it is essential to note that these unions were kept a family secret. This is due to the stigma associated with cohabitation in Zimbabwe. Parents in this study were embarrassed for people in the community to know that their children were cohabiting. **Baba Chipo** indicated that:

> *people in the community do not know as you can't go around telling them that my child is not married (handingafambe ndichifukura hapwa) its an in house issue which ought to stay in the confines of the home.*

Therefore, these cohabitation unions become family guarded secrets, and the community at large should not know about them as they carry shame and stigma. Even **Mai Tariro** agreed with Baba Chipo when she said that "*people in the community condemn such a union and I am even embarrassed for people to know about it".* Similarly, **Mai Chipo** reported that "*you make sure that you hide it from people so that they will not know because it is something that is really embarrassing".*

Zimbabwe is predominantly a Christian country, hence, cohabitation is viewed as living in sin by most people. Consequently, parents with children cohabiting felt embarrassed for people to know about this. Religion has been recognized as an essential source of attitudes and values that oppose cohabitation (Village, Williams, and Francis, 2010). Religious proponents believe that being involved in a cohabitation union is to undermine the biblical significance of marriage. Although some people will say that a cohabiting couple is "married in the eyes of God," that is not true, they are not married in God's eyes because they are living contrary to

biblical statements about marriage (Anderson, 2003). To support this assertion, Popenoe and Whitehead (1999) highlighted that living together outside of marriage violates biblical commands. That is the reason that prompted **Mai Chipo** to stop going to church because she feared being judged for allowing her child to cohabit. She said:

> *I have even stopped going to church because you can see in their eyes that they judge me. It is embarrassing my child brought shame to my doorstep, but she is only a child who made a mistake and I hope she learns from that.*

This is in line with the findings in Chohan (2010) study, which found that mothers with daughters who fall pregnant out of wedlock are ostracised by the church, as it is regarded as a sin to have sex before marriage.

6.2 The significance of roora as a cultural practice.

Interestingly the parents in the current study viewed the cohabitation unions as temporary and a precursor to formal marriages in which lobola is paid. It is also important to highlight that most parents sanction child cohabitation with an underlying assumption and a belief that by forcing their daughter on the man that made her pregnant, the payment of damages will be made and thereafter the bride price. The payment of a bride price is considered an important cultural practice that purifies and washes away the perceived shame from the family that has a daughter who fell pregnant as a teenager. Culturally the payment of bride price not only removes the shame attached to the teenager and her family, the teenager and her family regains the respect from the community at large. **Mai Chipo** indicated that

> *We send our daughter to her boyfriend after we found out that she was pregnant and we thought that the boyfriend's family will pay the bride price soon but up until now we are still waiting maybe its because they do not have the money or they just do not want to pay.*

Similarly, **Baba Kudzai** showed that he was frustrated by the non-payment of roora (bride price) for her daughter. He said that "*It doesn't make me happy at all in our Shona culture in Zimbabwe even if you do not have the money you should pay even a small amount not to live with my child just like that*". Baba Kudzai believes that it is disrespectful for the family of the owner of her daughter's pregnancy to just live with her daughter without paying roora (bride price).

In most African societies, including Shona people in Zimbabwe, marriage institutions and the traditional practice of payment of roora are treasured and respected (Dodo, 2014). In line with this Meekers (1993) further states that in Shona society, the payment of bride price, which is called *roora*, is the basis of marriage and family obligations. Similar to the isiZulu culture, payment of roora or ilobola improves the status of the individual and her family and it cements relationship ties (Posel and Rudwick, 2013; Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013). Therefore, anything else that deviates from the normal marriage union for the Shona people may be considered by many as shameful.

Even **Baba Tariro** echoed the same sentiments when he said that:

> *I think there are so many problems as it can happen that after my child has 3 children the partner will just say he no longer loves my daughter and there is no guarantee or something that is binding him to this union because he has not married, he can leave my daughter anytime he so wishes.*

Hence, the parent of **Tariro** wants this cohabitation union to be formalized by the payment of bride price so that her partner will not eventually leave her daughter. There is a generalised assumption among the Shona people like in any other African society, that formal marriage is something exceedingly sacred and respected (Mawere and Mawere, 2010). Meekers (1994) similarly highlight that payment of bridewealth is the basis of marriage and family obligations for the Shona people.

The payment of bridewealth to the girls' parents is a token of commitment to this union. Accordingly, traditionally in both Ndebele and Shona customs, what the bridegroom pays is supposed to be a token of appreciation and a sign of commitment (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013). The majority of people in Zimbabwe believe that lobola is a valuable part of African culture (Chireshe and Chireshe, 2010). It is seen as sacred and part of a Zimbabwean identity. Lobola is viewed as a gesture of gratitude to the wife's parents, a token of appreciation, a way of thanking in-laws for bearing and rearing a wife for them (Chireshe and Chireshe, 2010). This gives credence to the argument that because there has not been the payment of bride price, there is no guarantee that these cohabitation unions will last. Hence, cohabitation is rather seen as a prelude to marriage and is sanctioned by parents in the hope that the bride price will later be paid. Cohabitation does not always lead up to the formalisation of the union as evidenced in this study were all the young participants were still cohabiting without immediate plans to formalise the union and pay the bride price.

Payment of roora becomes a symbol of the full commitment towards the union of two people and the glue that will keep the different sets of families together. Lobola is an important traditional belief that has existed since time immemorial for the people of Zimbabwe and has been passed from one generation to the next. This is in line with some of the components of social constructionism, the theory guiding this study. To support this, Vilches (2012) highlights that in the process of social interaction, the knowledge of the world is transferred from generation to generation. Barker (2010) further states that social constructionism is a theoretical framework that underlines the cultural and historical dimensions of phenomena that evolve through experience in a social context.

Consequently, there is an inherent belief that the non-payment of lobola results in misfortune befalling the boys' families. The Shona culture believes that living with someone's daughter without paying lobola is an abomination in the eyes of the ancestors. Henceforth, the girls' parents in the study indicated that *ngozi* (curse) would befall the boys' family if they failed to pay lobola on time. **Baba Tatenda** stated that:

> *the main problem that will eventually happen is that between them one may die and if my daughter dies I will not go to the funeral and will not bury my child because they did not pay lobola for her.*

Even **Mai Tariro** agreed with Baba Tatenda when she said that:

> *I think she might eventually die in this union and we will not be able to bury our child as she will be staying at the boyfriend family and we will say we do not know that you were living with our child as you never paid anything to us which means the son-in-law will have to marry the grave (kuroora guva).*

This is in line with a story reported on News24 (2016) that a Zimbabwe family refused to bury their dead daughter, demanding that their son-in-law should pay $5500 for lobola. Culturally, when a girl dies, she is usually buried at her homestead, and when she dies without the payment of lobola, her parents can refuse to bury her until the lobola is settled. The parents will tell their in-laws that they do not recognise them as they had not followed the proper channels of marrying their dead daughter. There is a proliferation of acts in which parents of a woman, whose lobola had not been paid, refuse to take part in the burial of their daughter in Zimbabwe. The father of Tinashe, who was living with a girl in a cohabitation union, feared the same repercussions for his family. **Baba Tinashe** indicated that:

Blood is thicker than water even if my son misbehaved and got a wife before he was mature enough he will always remain my son as such I can't forsake my own blood but I am just hoping that we get the money to pay lobola because to continue living with someone's daughter is a recipe for 'ngozi' if she dies here what are we going to do.

There is fear that the deceased will come to haunt the husband's family if she is not appropriately buried at her paternal homestead. Hence, the payment of lobola enables proper burial arrangements to be performed for the deceased. Sideris (2004:91) indicated that the payment of lobola is an important step in appeasing the wife's ancestors. Lobola is thus connected to the spiritual realm, which makes it a powerful force in the Shona culture.

6.3 Parental disappointment

The parents were very disappointed with their children and felt that they had destroyed their future as they had high expectations for them. To illustrate this **Baba Tinashe** explained that:

I feel so hurt that my son threw away his future and got someone pregnant just because he felt that he is now a man that can go and sire a child he should be man enough to take care of his family.

Similarly, **Mai Ruvarashe** said that:

My son, it hurts me so much that my only daughter is in a kuchaya mapoto union. She was a good child and up to now, I do not know what influenced her to do such a thing. I had high hopes for her but she chose to disappoint me.

Parents would have invested in their children with the hope that they get educated and be able to take care of them in their old age however, for the parents of the young participants, they feel so aggrieved and let down by their children. **Mai Ruvarashe** was emotional when she talked about the disappointment of her daughter and highlighted that she was hurt to the bone. Other parents who expressed disappointment included **Mai Chipo,** who said that *" It is really painful as a parent who would have taken care of her child you would be looking forward to your child taking care of you in future and you would have sent her to school".*

This is in line with Sekiwunga and Whyte's (2009) study in Uganda, which reported that parents who have invested money in a girl's education are disappointed when she gets pregnant. Mollborn and Jacobs's (2011) findings further demonstrated that many of the teenage mothers in their study talked about family members reacting with rage and severe disappointment when they first found out about the pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy comes as a shock and

disappointment to most parents, and some stop supporting their daughters (Nemutanzhela, 2007:15). This disappointment by parents towards their children sometimes escalates to the extent of cutting ties with their children and possible rejection. Angry parents will feel that they have been let down by their children that they would have invested in heavily. Thus, they will not be in a position to forgive their children for the disgrace and shame that they put them through. **Amai Tariro** said that "*the consequences are many my child, children in these unions face rejection from family and relatives. Like now my daughter is not on speaking terms with her father*". This shows the extent of the damage to family relationships caused by unplanned teenage pregnancy and the father in this case feels let down by her daughter to an extent of not even having a relationship with her. This is in line with Chigona and Chetty's (2008) study that reported that at times the parents distance themselves from the girls because they feel ashamed that the community would look down upon the family because of their child's actions.

In addition, the parents blame themselves for failing to supervise and discipline their children. **Mai Ruvarashe** indicated that:

> *I feel that I somehow betrayed my daughter and feel that I should have done more to ensure that she does not fall pregnant whilst in school. I cry myself to sleep most of the time that my child is suffering when she is still very young whilst me her mother is still alive.*

Likewise, **Baba Tinashe** feels that he let down his son and is responsible for his actions on getting a girl pregnant. He reported that:

> *I failed as a father to discipline my son that is why he ended up becoming a father when he was still at school. It hurts me because I tried as a father to raise him in a good way.*

There seems to be a correlation between a lack of parental supervision (not knowing the whereabouts and activities of their teenagers outside home and school) and teenage pregnancy (Miller, Benson & Galbraith, 2001:9). Likewise, other studies reported that young girls and boys who are not monitored or guided by an adult are exposed to sexual vulnerabilities (Makola, 2011:33; Moliko, 2010:24).

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, parental perceptions indicate that their response to teenage pregnancy is influenced primarily by an intersection of socio-economic and cultural factors. Through social interaction, beliefs about how young girls should behave, views about young women who fall pregnant and marriage are shared and sustained in communities and families. The findings

further indicate that family practices are not always accepted without being questioned. However, families, as social institutions, function within a specific hierarchy where males make final decisions. The findings indicate a clear questioning of decisions taken by fathers about their pregnant daughters and a sense of powerlessness to reverse decisions fathers make on behalf of families. The views of mothers indicate remorse, guilty and regrets about the decision of *kuchaya mabota* and its long and short term impact on teenage mothers. The fathers' views also suggest regrets as they can see that their plan does not seem to bring the intended consequence of lobola, and they also feel a sense of powerlessness.

CHAPTER 7

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CHILD COHABITERS

7.1 Introduction

The voices of children and their experiences of cohabitation were critical to understand, especially the meaning they attach to cohabitation and the use of agency to shape the experience. Moreover, children's experiences answer one of the critical questions in this study of understanding the lived experiences of young people as child cohabiters children in Zimbabwe.

There is a dearth of literature that focuses explicitly on the experiences of children who are cohabiting not only in Zimbabwe but globally. Therefore, this chapter seeks to contribute to this gap in the literature. Thus it was vital first to understand how the child cohabiters lived their everyday lives and the different roles they undertook within this kind of union and how they used their agency to negotiate challenges. From these interactions (interviews) with the nine participants who cohabited when they were children, the following themes emerged: Living arrangements in child cohabitation unions, Mistreatment from inlaws, The burden of managing parental responsibilities as a young parent, The instability of child cohabitation unions and Family rejection and Regret.

7.1.2 Living arrangements in Child Cohabitation unions

It was essential to capture the everyday experience of child cohabiters to understand their living arrangements, how they experienced life as child cohabiters, and the meaning they attached to these experiences. As an expectation in Shona culture, all the girl participants lived with the male partners' families. Once in the household, the girl child could live in the main house with the rest of the family members while some were given one room inside the main house whereas others lived in the outside cottage. Being young and financially dependent on the partner and his family, the child cohabiters could not afford to live independently away from the family or rent a room or house. Three of the participants **Tinashe**, **Tawanda,** and **Tonde,** lived with their partners in the main house with **Kudakwashe** residing in a cottage at the back of the main house.

In support, **Tinashe,** a male child cohabitor said that " *my father said that I could live with her in the boys' room and my young brother now sleeps in the kitchen*". For **Kudakwashe**, his living conditions were different since his father built a 2 roomed cottage at the back of the main house so that he can stay with his partner. To this end, **Kudakwashe** said that " *after my*

pregnant girlfriend came to live with us, my father bought building materials and contracted builders to build a 2 roomed house at the back of our main house". This means that **Kudakwashe** and his partner **Chipo** had private physical space, unlike **Tinashe** and her partner, who shared the house with the rest of the family. However, Kudakwashe's partner **Chipo** did not consider this arrangement private:

> *another challenge is that we do not have our privacy at all as our in-laws interfere in everything we do as we are living at their house. My mother-in-law even comes to our bedroom to inspect and tell me to do that and that in our bedroom*.

Lack of privacy was a dominant theme the participants shared, and this was irrespective of the living arrangements the couple had as **Chipo,** who had her own house at the backyard reported. Sharing the same household with the inlaws appeared to compel the participants to follow the instructions from the inlaws.

The roles, responsibilities, and everyday activities of child cohabiters were explored. Although the participants were not legally married, and they were children, their duties and responsibilities were similar to those of lawfully married older women. The female participants were expected to provide sexual pleasures to their partners, even when they were not traditionally married. In the Shona culture, it is a common practice to teach a young woman to please their husbands when they get married sexually. Similar to other African societies, in Shona culture marriage institution is essential and daughters are raised with the view that one day they will go through the process of proper marriage rites. Through this process of marriage teachings on how to keep the marriage and observe marital rituals, including how to please her husband sexually are passed on to the bride by her paternal aunt (Maguraushe and Mukuhlani, 2014). Despite not being formally married and therefore not personally taught about how to treat her man. **Chipo** was aware of her responsibilities about this union as she said: *" I have to keep my partner happy by giving him sex whenever he wants it because if I don't give him sex he will get it from somewhere else".*

The responsibility to keep the union healthy and secure appeared to rest with girls, and they seemed to carry self-blame for a crumbling relationship. **Tatenda,** for example suspected that her partner **Tonde** was cheating on her but blamed herself " *I think my partner is cheating on me and its because maybe I'm not making him happy so I have to make him happy so that he can not look at other girls.* If a woman refuses to have sex, the traditional or cultural teachings warn her that her husband might leave her for another woman (Maguraushe and Mukuhlani,

2014). This might be the reason **Tatenda** is desperate to please her partner so that he cannot leave her for another woman.

In the Shona culture, a married woman must not refuse to be intimate with her husband without reason at any given time. Accordingly, Maguraushe and Mukuhlani (2014) highlight that a woman is treated as a person who has no sexual needs of her own but only caters to her husband to be sexually satisfied at all costs. Likewise, Mugandani and Vermeulen (2016) further highlighted that two of the most critical roles of brides include procreation and to provide all the sexual needs of the husbands. It seems that the value of the woman is dependent on the extent to which she satisfies her husband sexually, and these messages are socially sanctioned and internalised by women. Thus even for these young female participants, the expectation to satisfy their partners sexually in these cohabitation unions was strong. The girl participants positioned themselves and took roles defined by the social norms and discourses about pleasing their partners. There is an element of adopting subject positions, which ultimately created the girls' subjective experiences.

The male partners were expected to provide for their families whereas female participants had to take care of the household in socially constructed gendered roles. According to Butler (1998), gender has been theorised as an identity marker that is based on social constructions of masculinity and femininity that define appropriate gender roles and traits. This means that the duties of the girls and boys were gendered in the context of masculine roles, with the males as breadwinners and the females as the caregivers. All the female participants reported being performing household chores and duties as expected of a woman, such as washing clothes, ironing, cooking, and all other household duties. In support of this, **Tatenda** said that:

> *I only do house chores. I wake up early at 5 am to prepare breakfast and start cleaning the house and preparing for the school children to go to school. After everyone is gone I then start washing clothes and after that, I then iron the clothes and start preparing to cook supper for the whole family.*

This is in line with Njie, Manion, and Badjie's (2015) argument that learning to be a good wife and mother is an important value assigned to the unpaid household labour of daughters. Girls are expected to be knowledgeable about how to effectively perform domestic chores from the preparation of meals to house cleaning, laundry, and the care of young children (Njie et al., 2015). Tatenda's narratives indicate the level of household chores and responsibilities she performs for her partner as well as the entire household. Thus some of the female participants

felt that they were treated as maids that were expected to do everything for everyone in the household. To this end, **Kudzai** said that **"** *I only stay at home and do the cleaning, cooking, and washing, I am just a maid".* Also, **Chipo** echoed the same sentiments "*I do all the house chores in the house and I also clean the main house of my in-laws not only that I cook for my husband and I have also to go and cook at the main house*". **Chipo** lived in the back house with her husband, and she does her household chores in her home, after which she is also expected to go and do the same in the main house of her in-laws.

The narratives from the participants appeared to suggest that they considered the experience of doing household chores overwhelming and full-time responsibility. Consequently, most of them felt that they were mostly unpaid maids who came to these houses to provide cheap labour rather than being respectfully treated as daughters-in-law. There have been debates on the merit of categorising domestic work involving children as child labour. The reason behind its inclusion is that work in a child's home or the home of others has the potential to compromise a child's development and short or long term well-being, even to the point of exploitation (Brown, 2015). This resonates with the shared sentiments of the female participants in this study who felt exploited. However, the Shona culture supports the notion that daughters-in-las are supposed to perform all the household chores. This is confirmed by Agenor, Canuto, and da Silva (2010) that in many countries, cultural norms are that young women are expected to do most of the housework and childrearing. Similarly, Mugandani and Vermeulen (2016) state that the man needs to get married and bring his wife home to help his parents and other family members in doing all domestic chores before she and her husband build their own home.

On the other hand, the male participants were expected to provide for their families and to take care of their partners and their children. With the economic hardships facing most Zimbabweans and the high unemployment rate, to survive in such a harsh economic environment is difficult for young unskilled men. Despite all this, the male participants had no choice but to look for ways to provide for their families. One of the participants **Tonde** reiterated that:

> *My duty is to hustle for money as you know there are no jobs in Zimbabwe. So sometimes I go to Norton to buy fish so that my wife can sell them in the streets. I also went for a month to mine gold as a makorokoza (illegal gold miner) so that I can get money for preparations for the coming child. I didn't get much money but I am trying even right now I am a hwindi (taxi conductor). I am trying to step up and become a father.*

Based on this narrative, **Tonde** is trying very hard to provide for his family, and beyond the household duty of being a provider, it seems like he is committed to the role of being a good father. He even engages in occupations that are life-threatening, such as illegal mining, to earn an income. **Tonde** also partakes in those jobs that are considered humiliating and looked down upon by the community such as a taxi conductor to be the breadwinner for his family. Even **Tinashe** reported to be working extra hard to be able to provide for his family, he said that:

> *I am unemployed but I sell cellphones and laptops in town and sometimes I get the money but sometimes it is hard to get the money. As such sometimes I get help from my mother with groceries but I do not want to burden them too much.*

For these young men, providing for their families without a formal job and consistent income is not easy, and the informal jobs they partake in are seasonal, with little or no guarantee for regular income. Also, with no educational qualification, accessing formal and secured employment which offers, the employment choices are severely limited. This is in line with Smith et al. (2005) study on teenage fatherhood, which found that failure to finish secondary school made it difficult for the participants to get good jobs to provide for their respective families. However, they have to keep working hard as no one will take care of their families for them. Failure to provide for their families will impact negatively on these young fathers. Research reveals that young fathers feel pressured to provide financially and are greatly disheartened when they are unable to do so (Glikman, 2004; Allen and Doherty, 1996).

Another participant **Tawanda** who lived with an older single mother in a cohabitation union, further highlighted the pressure that he gets from his partner to be employed so that he can provide for his family. **Tawanda** said that:

> *I faced a lot of challenges, I was not working and my partner provided me with everything I needed. At first, she did not complain but as time went by she started complaining that I need to man up and find a job and help in the house, I can't just be sitting in the house doing nothing.*

Despite his age and lack of skills, this participant was forced to play the role of the provider. This particularly highlights the internalised socially constructed masculine roles in the play, as a man with a partner, the expectation was for him to contribute financially to the household and support his partner. Gender differences and expectations about how child cohabiters had to contribute were communicated. On the contrary, some female participants also assisted their partners financially by doing odd jobs in the community. To support this **Tariro** said that " *I*

sometimes went around the community looking for jobs to do such as washing clothes and ironing and we use the money to buy food and clothes for the baby". This is important to note as it shows that even the female participants are helping out in the home, thereby supplementing their male partners' meagre finances.

7.1.3 Mistreatment from in-laws

The strained relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law is not new and is a global problem that is not limited to African society. Often, there is animosity between mother-in-law and their daughter-in-law, and it was not surprising that most of the female participants in this study reported similar relationships. Most times, the mothers-in-law have a strong permanent bond with their sons and would want nothing or even their daughter-in-law to come and break that bond, thus, they mistreat them. A study by Sibiya (2011) found that mothers-in-law abusive attitude is propelled by the love of their sons, as they are very attached to their sons in such a way that they do not trust another woman in their son's lives. At times the animosity stems from the choice of daughter-in-law that their son marries, and that choice is not what they wanted for their son, and the mothers-in-law would do anything possible in their powers to mistreat their daughter-in-law so that she can leave their son. For female participants in this study, it is a double-edged sword as on the one hand their bride price was not paid for them, and often, they are perceived as loose girls who trapped their sons with pregnancy.

One of the female participants **Chipo,** said that **"** *My mother-in-law and my sister-in-law do not respect me at all maybe they wanted their son to have someone else, not me and in me, they just see someone they can use and oppress".* **Tatenda** also reflected the same sentiments to that of **Chipo** when she said that "*I stay with his family and his mother does not like me and she mistreats me and makes me do all the house chores whilst her daughters just sit and watch TV, I am just a maid*". This resonates with Thembi a participant in Sibiya's (2011) study in South Africa, who said that she became a servant to the entire family by doing all the household chores for her mother-in-law without any help from her sister-in-law or any other members of the family. In African culture and particularly Shona culture, 'muroora' (daughter-in-law) is not just married to the husband alone but also to the entire household and because of this entrenched cultural practice women such as **Tatenda** and **Chipo** experience exploitation and dehumanisation from their in-laws.

The extend of the mistreatment by mothers-in-law sometimes reaches proportional levels with members of the community becoming aware of such mistreatment. This was said by **Mai Ruvarashe,** a mother to **Ruvarashe**:

> *I even heard from my daughter's in-law neighbours that her mother-in-law mistreat her together with her son and they say that they do not want her there as she is a prostitute who trapped their son with the pregnancy. This makes me cry sometimes knowing that my child is living in hell.*

This brings to the fore the issue of women oppressing and mistreating other women. The intersection of being a child, unmarried, poor, uneducated, pregnant, and living in the partner's household intersects to create the vulnerability of most female participants. Most participants felt helpless and dependent on their partners as well as the rest of the partners' families after being chased away from their own families.

Most literature highlights women as victims of abuse from men but in this case, women sometimes were the perpetrators of abuse and violence against other women (Ortega, 1995). Nganase and Basson (2017) further substantiate that African culture with such oppressive aspects can hinder the relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. In the African culture, daughters-in-law are expected to be submissive to their mothers-in-law, and they are not allowed to question anything, and their concerns remain mostly unheard. This sometimes hinders a good relationship from developing between mother and daughters-in-law. To support this, Allendorf (2017) states that daughters-in-law are generally viewed as powerless who suffer domination, criticism, and abuse at the hands of their mother-in-law in silence.

The mistreatment of female participants by their mothers-in-law is further compounded by the lack of social support. Consequently, they cannot share their painful experiences with their family members as they have been chased from their homes. Therefore, they ultimately suffer in silence. Moreover, the female participants appear to have lost a sense of belonging as a result of being rejected by their families and forced to live with the family of their boyfriends. Moreover, the new family does not appear to embrace and accept them as members of the family. From the excerpts, the participants felt that they were essentially strangers in their mother-in-law household, and they were being mistreated to be forced to leave. With no place to go, they had to remain in a household they were unhappy to live in. Daughters-in-law that are cohabiting in the same home with their partners' parents and siblings are likely to be

mistreated and abused (Olutola, 2012). Deshmukh-Randive (2005) justifies this by categorically stating that daughters-in-law are at the bottom of both the generational and gender hierarchies in the family. Daughters-in-law are generally viewed as inferior, powerless women who suffer domination, criticism, and abuse at the hands of their mothers-in-law (Allendorf, 2006).

In the same vein, the parents of the female participants in this study also dislike their daughters' partners, and they mostly blame them for destroying their daughters' future by impregnating them. One of the male participants is afraid of his in-laws because they have promised to deal with him when they meet him. To this end, **Tonde** said that:

> *Her parents hate me so much even if I see them from a distance I run because they blame me for destroying their daughter's future. I heard her father said that he wants to beat me and I do talk to anyone from their family*

Even one of the female participant's mother confirmed what Tonde said. **Mai Chipo** noted that:

> *I don't talk to her partner I blame him for impregnating my child and his people never bothered to come and even pay damages they are very disrespectful, how can they just take someone's child without paying anything. This boy destroyed my daughter's future and for that, I will never forgive him*".

This is a testament to the fact that there is great animosity between the two sets of families as they blame each other. The family of the girl blames the boy for impregnating their daughter while on the other hand, the family of the boy child blames the girl for trapping their son into falling pregnant for him. In support of this, Jones's (2009) study found that social relations are muddled if there is no payment of the bridewealth. Accusations and counter-accusations are thrown around between these families. Consequently, children suffer the repercussions of child cohabitation with adults failing to solve their differences amicably.

7.1.4 The burden of managing parental responsibilities as a young parent

Most of the participants in this study highlighted that they were largely inexperienced in their roles as parents because they considered themselves too young to assume such responsibilities. These young parents might be developmentally unprepared to adjust socially and psychologically to parenthood, and thus, this developmental dilemma may compromise their own and their children's well-being. Teen parents often face an unexpected pregnancy, the responsibilities, and challenges of parenthood (Florsheim, Burrow-Sanchez, Minami, McArther, and Heavin, 2003).

Fatherhood is a social, human, and cultural role, whose significance changes over time, and the content of the role also shifts (Richter and Morrell, 2006). Since time immemorial, it has always been the duty of the father to not only provide for his family but also to protect his family. There are higher expectations placed on the young shoulders of teenage fathers that providing for their family is the ultimate goal of fatherhood, however, the harsh economic environment in Zimbabwe makes it virtually impossible for them to succeed in this role. Thus most of the male participants bemoaned that they were not ready to be fathers. **Tawanda** said that:

> *I was too young to have a baby I was not ready to be a father, how would I provide for a baby when I was not even working. I told my partner that I was not ready to have a baby and she said she was very disappointed in me and would keep the baby whether I wanted the baby or not*.

This reflects feelings of remorse and regret for getting someone pregnant when financially and emotionally, he was not ready. Moreover, a sense of powerlessness to avoid this pregnancy was evident. This resonates with Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod, and Letsoalo's (2009) study, which found that adolescents often become parents without the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to deal with early parenthood, which adds stress to their already strenuous development level. Similar feelings were shared by one of the teenage participants in Monepya (2017) study who said that "*At the present moment I feel bad; my life has changed I have to act and think like a father. I don't know how fathers feel. I think about it most of the time and this affects me and disturbs my school work*." The same sentiment was shared by **Tonde,** who said that " *At first I was afraid of living with my girlfriend but now I am getting used to the idea but it scares me that I am still young to have a wife and a child*". For these participants, feelings of being unprepared, fear, and possible anxiety were evident. Teenage fathers are less prepared for the birth of their child, and this results in shock, fear, and detachment that may impact the early father-infant relationship (Ngweso, Petersen and Quinlivan, 2017). Similarly, Deave and Johnson (2008) study found that first-time, teenage fathers experienced feelings of unpreparedness, apprehension, fear, anxiety, and the feeling of a helpless bystander.

This in line with the findings in Monepya (2017) study in which one of the participants said:

> *It is very challenging to have a baby at this young age. I must now play the father role, spending time with my friends is no longer an option. Inside me, I still feel like a boy with no strings attached. But, I need to wake up to reality and change.*

Some of the participants, because of fear, may deny ownership of the pregnancy as a means to run away from the responsibility of becoming a father. **Chipo** highlighted that initially, her partner wanted to deny the pregnancy, she said that:

> *My partner was shocked initially and he wanted to deny the pregnancy and his family asked him if he was the owner of the pregnancy and he said yes so they agreed that I move in with him and we started living in the back of the main house.*

This is in line with findings in Monepya (2017) study in which one of the teenage participants confessed the following:

> *Mmmm, when she told me that she was pregnant, I did not believe her, I thought she was playing and lying. I was thinking too much and I thought the child was not mine. I thought she was telling lies, but in the end, I agreed to the pregnancy as I was the only one coming to her home to pick her up.*

Additionally, these fears were exacerbated by their parents, withdrawing their financial support for them and punishing them for being fathers at a young age. The aforementioned is reinforced by **Baba Tinashe,** who said that:

> *I feel so hurt that my son threw away his future and got someone pregnant just because he felt that he is now a man that can go and sire a child he should be man enough to take care of his family*

This is in line with Chideya and Williams's (2013) study, which found that some of the unemployed teenage fathers were ambivalent about being a father. Fear and anxiety of managing parental responsibilities without any source of income contributed to the ambivalence of being a father. The shift from being under parental care to suddenly be responsible for their own family presents a lot of challenges for male child cohabiters. Having lost financial support from their fathers adds to their dilemma.

The male participants in this study appeared to associate themselves with the role of being a provider, moreover, the definition of fatherhood largely entailed the ability to provide for their families. Chideya and Williams (2013) indicated that these adolescent fathers are growing up in a patriarchal society which socialises them on the importance of the provider role of fatherhood. Living up to this expectation becomes a great challenge for these young fathers who have no source of income and are unskilled. This resonates with the theoretical framework underpinning this study of social constructionism, which sees reality and identity being systematically constructed and upheld through social practices. According to Paltridge (2006),

the view of discourse as the social construction of reality sees texts as communicative units that are embedded in social and cultural practices. In the back of their minds, these male participants' definition of a father is derived from the same way their fathers used to play the father's role in their homestead. However, for them it is different because they became fathers without planning for it.

Societal expectations and cultural beliefs about fatherhood roles and responsibilities have implications on the young fathers' identities, relationships, and lived experiences of fatherhood. The failure to adhere to the social expectations of fatherhood for these young fathers contribute to poor mental health. As a result of the early onset of fatherhood, the young male may encounter a variety of stressors, which may, in turn, alter his ability to cope with the social, emotional, cognitive, and practical aspects of his life. These stressors may, in turn, affect the male adolescent's capacity to parent. To support this point, **Tonde** reflected that:

> *I even started getting drunk and taking drugs so that I can forget about this problem I was facing but when I saw that her stomach was growing I knew I had to grow up and be ready to be a proper father.*

The narrative above indicates the difficulties associated with coming to terms with the role of being a father. In this case, **Tonde** initially resorted to substance abuse as a coping mechanism.

In contrast, discourses on motherhood portray teenage mothers negatively and largely view teenage mothers as immature and incompetent to take the responsibilities of being good mothers. It is often argued that they are not yet physically and psychologically equipped to deal with the demands of motherhood (Chohan and Langa, 2011). Similarly, the female participants in this study were also skeptical about their ability to be good mothers when they were still young children themselves. **Chipo** said that "*I was too young to become someone's wife, I wanted to finish school*". She felt that finishing school was a priority rather than becoming a mother at such a tender age. Even some of the female participants' mothers felt that their daughters were still immature and inexperienced to partake in the responsibilities of a mother. This was said by **Mai Tariro,** who said that:

> *I do not think that my daughter is old enough to be a mother and she also is immature to do wife duties and needs guidance and protection. I hope and pray that when she gives birth she will come back home so that I can help her take care of her baby.*

This is important as it highlights the importance of social capital to support young parents in managing parenting responsibilities. **Mai Tariro,** the mother of a pregnant female participant,

appeared to be aware of the responsibilities her child was being expected to carry, and she was willing to lend a hand. Bunting and McAuley (2004) indicated that most adolescent parents did not receive enough support from their families in learning about parenting. Likewise, Daniels and Nel's (2009) study also found that teenage mothers lacked adequate support from their mothers on parenting. The primary reason for the lack of support for both young girls and boys in this study was because of the nature of the cohabitation unions, which contributed to social isolation most participants felt. According to the Human Science Research Council, strong familial support and availability of adult caregiving are required for a teenage girl to take care of her child and be able to return to school (Chohan & Gina, 2009). Social support is essential for the teenage mother in terms of advice, financial aid, child-care, and responsibilities (Sieger, 2007). Research findings in England on teenage mothers' experiences reported that teenage motherhood could be ultimately be experienced positively with sufficient support (Alfe, 2008). Consequently, a robust support system could safeguard and protect young mothers from negative consequences understood to be linked with teenage pregnancy (Sieger, 2007).

7.1.5 The instability of child cohabitation unions

Cohabitation unions, in general, have been viewed as unstable unions, which are largely temporary, and this came up in this study. The participants in this study are virtually young people who were forced into child cohabitation against their will, and this contributes significantly to these unions becoming unstable. There is a generalised belief that cohabitation is comprised of people who are not committed to each other, and they can leave the union anytime as nothing is tying them to this union, as compared to those that are legally married. Accordingly, Cherlin (2004) highlights that cohabitation is often characterised by its shortliveness, which gives rise to its instability. Further studies indicated that most cohabitations are temporary and transitory unions (Bumpass and Lu, 2000; Bumpass and Sweet, 1989).

In this study, a lack of trust was one of the key challenges which affected the nature of the union. **Tonde** brought this point to the fore when he said that " *Another thing is that we are always fighting as my wife thinks that I have other girlfriends and she is always checking my phone"*. Upon further probing **Tonde** agreed that he was cheating on his partner Tatenda and he claimed that:

> *I have only one other girlfriend and I am planning to leave her but she should understand that I am still young I need to enjoy life, when does she want me to enjoy life? All my friends are enjoying their life while I am stuck in this union.*

This shows that some of the young male participants considered themselves young, and they were at a stage where they felt the need to explore, something expected in their developmental stage. There is a need for greater independence and self-discovery for young adolescents at this age, and this affects their union with their partners. According to Leather (2009), the major developmental tasks of adolescence are achieving independence and establishing identity. Consequently, they always want to explore other sexual relationships. This might be the reason why **Tonde** cheats on his partner. In the same vein, **Mr. Musona** (Religious leader) added that:

> *Because this union of kuchaya mapoto occurred because of mistakes there is a possibility that one will leave the other as there was no plan or preparation for this union thus it can be temporary and at the end, these people may end up divorcing and the girl will be left with children and having her future destroyed in the process.*

The union was involuntary, unplanned, and unprepared for. Therefore it was characterised by problems from the onset. In some of these relationships, the initial intention was not to get married, consequently, the union was deeply resented. The young participants in this study were instead forced by their parents to cohabit, meaning that the union was unplanned. This is in line with the findings by Reed (2006) that couples who moved in together because of pregnancy described their relationship as tenuous after the baby was born and cite instances of infidelity, mistrust, and jealousy as some of their biggest problems. **Kudakwashe**, one of the participants, resorted to mistreating his partner as a strategy to make her angry enough to decide to leave him. **Kudakwashe** said that **"** *at first I was really scared and angry towards myself and herself for getting pregnant and I tried to mistreat her so that she might go back to her house".*

Additionally, because lobola (bride price) was not paid, the female participants feel that their partner would leave them anytime, as payment of lobola would somehow bind them together for life. Chipo to support this said that **"** *I fear that my partner is going to leave me anytime as he has not paid lobola so there is no guarantee that he can stay with me".* In **Chipo's** words, lobola guarantees that her partner will stay with her, therefore making their union stable. Even **Baba Tariro** echoed the same sentiments when he said that:

> *I think there are so many problems as it can happen that after my child has 3 children the partner will just say he no longer loves my daughter and there is no guarantee or something that is binding him to this union because he has not married, he can leave my daughter anytime he so wishes.*

Hence, the parent of **Tariro** wants this cohabitation union to be formalised by payment of bride price so that her daughter will not be eventually left by her partner. There is a generalised assumption among the Shona people like in any other African society, that formal marriage is something significantly sacred and respected (Mawere and Mawere, 2010). Meekers (1994) similarly highlight that payment of bridewealth is the basis of marriage and family obligations for the Shona people. This means that parents sanction these cohabitation unions with the aim of them becoming fully-fledged marriages in future where roora is paid, the continued existence of these cohabitation unions makes parents of mostly the girls afraid that their daughters will be left without them enjoying the bridewealth. In their eyes cohabitation, unions are largely fragile.

The payment of bridewealth to the girls' parents is a token of commitment to this union. Accordingly, traditionally in both Ndebele and Shona customs, what the bridegroom pays is supposed to be a token of appreciation and a sign of commitment (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013). This means that *roora*/*lobola* is an outward manifestation of the young man‟s love for his fiancé and is a safeguard against groundless divorce (Andifasi, 1970: 28). Giving credence to **Baba Tariro** and **Chipo's** argument that because there has not been the payment of bride price, there is no guarantee that these cohabitation unions will last. Payment of roora becomes a symbol of the full commitment towards the union of two people and the glue that will keep the different sets of families together.

7.1.6 Regret and disappointment

All the young participants regretted the circumstances that led them into cohabitation, and they realised that they were too young to be living in a cohabitation union. They felt that they had let themselves and their parents down by falling pregnant (female participants) and by impregnating their partners (male participants) and with it destroying their future. Most of the participants are not happy in these unions, but they also feel powerless to do anything to change the situation. **Tinashe** said that:

> *I did not choose cohabitation, but it just happened that she got pregnant, I did not think she was going to get pregnant it was just a mistake that I now regret because we are both too young to be a father and a mother, we are also children*.

Similarly, **Tonde** said that "*I regret impregnating her now I am no longer happy*".

These excerpts demonstrate that the participants were not ready for the responsibilities of becoming fathers when they were still very young, and they made a mistake of impregnating their girlfriends. It could be that they were just experimenting with sex and the girlfriends got pregnant. Young people tend to experiment with sex without being knowledgeable of the repercussions such as pregnancy, which comes to them as a shock in most times. **Tinashe** strongly feels that he is still a child who needs love and protection from his parents and for him to become a father at such an age is rather regrettable. This is in line with Chideya and Williams's (2013) study, which found that several of the participants felt guilty for becoming a father in their adolescence, mainly because of their inability to provide for their children. In the same vein, Glickman (2004) states that adolescent males are in a particularly vulnerable state as young fathers. The latter are working through adolescence and dealing with issues of self and identity.

Even the female participants also regretted falling pregnant at a tender age and being forced into cohabitation. **Chipo** to support this said that:

> *I feel disappointed and ashamed that I am in such a union and I do not want people to know that ndirikuchaya mapoto (cohabiting). I also feel that I have let down my father who loved me and wanted me to have a bright future*.

There is a sense that life will never be the same again for these participants, and they will not be able to realise their dreams as they are expected to raise their children, and to pursue their dreams seems impossible. **Chipo** feels that she did let down her father, who wanted her to become educated and be someone respected in life, however, she feels that she has thrown all that out of the window. **Tatenda** shared the same sentiments when she said that "*I am not happy in this union, I am always crying if only I had continued with school maybe I would have become someone in life not to be used by people like this*". The tone in the participant's voice can be even be interpreted from this excerpt, and one can get a sense of disappointment and self-condemnation coupled with an element of hopelessness. She feels that without getting adequate education, she is doomed, and nothing good will come out of her life.

This is in line with van Zyl, van der Merwe and Chigeza (2015) study which found that during the interviews the adolescent parents recounted how their pregnancies were met with negative reactions and judgments, which frequently led to withdrawal from the outside world and ultimately exacerbated their sense of limited support and isolation. This also goes hand in hand with Fulford and Ford-Giboe's (2004) and Yardley's (2008) studies, which found out that stigma leads teenage mothers to report feeling fear, shame, resentment, anger distress, and lacking in confidence. Whitehead (2001) also argued that the stigma of teenage pregnancy leads to a 'social death' for young mothers resulting in isolation and social exclusion, which harms the mental and physical health of these young mothers. This regret, shame, and guilt may result in negative repercussions befalling on the children, with some of them even taking the drastic decision of also trying to end their lives, as highlighted by **Ruvarashe** below.

Ruvarashe felt the need even to take her life because the situation was rather unbearable for her to handle as she regretted falling pregnant when she did as it affected her life to the most extreme. **Ruvarashe** shared that:

> *I wanted to abort this baby I didn't want the baby at all I was too young to have a baby and sometimes I thought of killing myself and I saw that my life was already destroyed I always spend most of the time alone and in silence and sometimes crying.*

The findings are consistent with the results from a study of 828 pregnant teenagers in Brazil, namely that suicidal behaviour is relatively common among pregnant teenagers (Pinheiro, Coelho, Da Silva, Quevedo, Souza, Castelli, De Matos and Pinheiro, 2012:522). Cherrington and Breheny (2005: 103) further reported on the link between suicide and teenage pregnancy. This brings to the fore the important issue of mental health issues in young children who are cohabiting. Depression is one health problem that has been reported in several studies that investigated teenage pregnancy and parenthood (Saudi, 2009). Similarly, Hodgkinson, Beers, Southmmakosane, and Lewin (2014) highlighted that adolescent parenthood is associated with a plethora of adverse outcomes for young mothers, including mental health problems such as depression. **Ruvarashe** felt overwhelmed and not ready to have a baby at a tender age, as this would destroy her future. Hence she did not want to have this baby, and this made her sometimes harbour feelings of suicide as she had brought shame not only to herself but the entire family by falling pregnant. The findings are in line with Saudi (2009) study, which found that teenage pregnancy is associated with distressing psychological symptoms like loneliness, feeling stressed, and inadequate. They are virtually left alone to deal with their pregnancy and unions without adult support given as they are punished for their naivety. They need to be fully

supported as they are still children and this will help them not to harbour feelings of committing suicide, just like what Ruvarashe shared. Ruvarashe did not want to have the baby, but because it is illegal in Zimbabwe to abort, she was forced to keep a baby, she did not want to have.

Norms do not only serve as a measure of control but also exclude those individuals who do not conform to "normal" (Foucault, 1977). Therefore, the teenage mother is now faced with a choice of either being stigmatized as being deviant for falling pregnant, for murdering an innocent child, or possibly for both (if people found out) (Chohan, 2010). Hence, in conventional Zimbabwe, where termination of pregnancy is illegal and stigmatised, the reality that Ruvarashe considered abortion demonstrates the extent to which teenage pregnancy is stigmatised. The thought of abortion was a result of fear surrounding disclosure. Keeping the baby for the pregnant teenagers becomes the correct socially acceptable decision that supports the religious beliefs and societal norms. This does not mean that society does not judge a pregnant teenager for keeping the baby; she will be judged on having sex before marriage. Hence, notwithstanding the decisions that pregnant teenagers make, the bottom line is that pregnant teenagers will always be blamed, judged, and stereotyped in society.

7.2 Conclusion

Understanding the lived experiences of being a child in a cohabitation union was the focal point of this chapter. This chapter's findings are important in that they add valuable new knowledge to the literature on the experiences of child cohabiters. The findings revealed that the intersection of being a child, pregnant, poor, female, and not living with a biological family created vulnerability and disempowerment for girls. The girls, in particular, were exposed to abuse, increased physical labour within the household with little or no prospect of furthering their education. Their rights to education, support, family, and protection were severely compromised and they were aware of this.

Gendered roles and responsibilities often accorded to adults were now given to the young girls. Girls participants were responsible for completing the household chores for the entire family while their partners made efforts to provide for the family. However, the role of being a financial provider was difficult to fulfill because of the high unemployment rate in Zimbabwe, the prevailing economic instability, and being unskilled as a child. The boys were engaged in life-threatening tasks such as illegal mining to try and make an income. Despite all the challenges the participants faced, they worked hard to provide for their families despite the

lack of formal employment. Risks to abuse and poor mental health were increased, especially for both girls and boys in cohabitation unions.

CHAPTER 8

INTERVENTIONS TO CURB CHILD COHABITATION

8.1 Introduction

Exploring strategies to curb child cohabitation was one of the key objectives of this study. The young participants considered child cohabitation as a serious child's rights violation as it infringes on their right to education, good health as well as the right to parental care. Participants in the study were asked how *kuchaya mapoto* (cohabitation) involving children can be reduced in their community. Based on the micro and macro levels, interventions are presented in this chapter.

8.2.Parental responsibilities

Within the micro-context, parents reported that interventions are needed to prevent and deal with the underlying causes of child cohabitation. The time parents devote to their children is a significant form of investment that is strongly linked to children's well-being and development. Parents are responsible for not only taking care of their children but also providing support, guidance, and discipline to their children. However, due to the harsh economic environment in Zimbabwe, parents are spending most of their time looking for money to feed their families, and this has resulted in parents spending less time with their children. This means that parents are no longer involved in the lives of their children, which has negative repercussions on the children. According to Baurnrind, Larzelere, and Owens (2010), uninvolved parents often fail to monitor or supervise their child's behavior and do not support or encourage their child's self-regulation. Uninvolved parents do not engage in structure or control with their adolescents, and often there is a lack of closeness in the parent-child dyad; therefore, adolescents of uninvolved parents often engage in more externalizing behaviors (Hoeve et al., 2009). Children do not have anyone to supervise them. As such, they are exposed to various problems that they are not sure about how to solve as there is no adult to guide them.

This was highlighted by most of the participants. **Mr. Musona** (Religious leader) said that:

> *parents are no longer sitting down with their children to help them become responsible individuals as they are busy trying to survive thus neglecting their children in the process. There is lack of training and education in the homes as some parents do not monitor their children, these children can become wild and do whatever they want and most of them like girls end up getting pregnant and start cohabiting.*

Chipo also confirms the **Religious leader's** sentiments when she highlighted that " *I think that parents are not doing enough as my parents never sat with me down to talk about issues pertaining to my life and even sexuality*".

This is in line with Sekuwinga and Whyte (2009) findings that both in-school and out-of-school adolescent girls indicated that they lacked enough knowledge about their sexuality and information on the use of family planning and contraceptives. They said that most parents, guardians, and elders could not provide such insight because they were not confident about what to tell the young girls. This lack of adequate information on sexuality for young teenage boys and girls impacts negatively on their lives as they are exposed to unplanned teenage pregnancy.

Parents hold the key to the prevention of teenage pregnancy and, ultimately, the prevention of child cohabitation. While there is no doubt parents play a critical role in such prevention efforts, there is an underlying message that parents indirectly are the cause of many ills facing children today, and as such, they are the ones who can be able to prevent these ills.

Thus participants felt that interventions should start from the family system with particular focus on parents as charity does indeed begin in the home environment. **Mr. Mathathu** (Teacher) said that:

> *Parents need to be good listeners as some children cannot even talk to their parents because they are afraid of them as parents need to sit down with their children at regular intervals to talk about issues affecting their children maybe once a week or twice a month. They have to talk to their children and sometimes counsel them that creates a bond between parents and children.*

Baba Kudzai also shared that " *charity begins at home parents should play an important role in making sure that they teach and train their children about life and be strict".* This brings to the fore the idea that parents are at the forefront in curbing child cohabitation as they are responsible for the general well-being of their children. Being absent in the lives of their children creates problems such as child cohabitation. Hence parents need to spend more time with their children and be actively involved. **Chipo** also brings a salient point forward when she said that "*parents should start speaking to their children about these issues not to wait for the child to get pregnant and then that is when they want to talk to you*". This is important to note as prevention is always better than cure as such parents should intervene and provide their children with vital information on sexuality and other life lessons.

Baba Tatenda, as a parent, also highlights that parents are important in reducing child cohabitation. **He** said that "*parents should play a crucial role in reducing child cohabitation by counselling their children and sitting down with them and talk about life issues*". Parents should be able to inspire and motivate their children to become responsible individuals that make it in life. This can only be achieved if the parents are fully involved in the lives of their children. **Mr. Musona,** to support this, said that:

> *So I believe that parents should make time to sit down and talk with their children about their future and what they aspire to be because their aspirations may guide them not to do things that are out of line. The children will not think of cohabiting because they know that they want to become doctors, nurses, or teachers in the near future.*

This is in line with studies that have found that higher parental monitoring is associated with less initial adolescent involvement with alcohol and other substances, lower rates of misuse over time (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell and Dintcheff, 2006) and an increase in the age of an adolescent's first sexual intercourse, as well as decreased sexual risk behavior (Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling and Cleveland, 2008). This alludes to the importance of parental monitoring and discipline towards children, which reduces the likelihood of teenage pregnancy.

8.3 School and community-based intervention

Children spend most of their time at school. Therefore it is crucial to have school-based intervention strategies to curb child cohabitation. Most of the participants highlighted different strategies that can be adopted in schools to reduce the practice of child cohabitation. There was agreement that programs that educate children about the dangers of cohabitation should be incorporated in schools. Accordingly, **Tonde** said that:

> *I think it is wise to have programs targeting children in High schools as these are vulnerable children who are at risk of getting in kuchaya mapoto unions so they must be taught about the dangers of starting a family too early before they are mature enough.*

This is coming from a young man who started cohabiting when he was still a teenager, and this carries more weight as maybe if these programs did exist in schools, he might not have impregnated a girl and started cohabiting. If parents are not talking to children about the issues of sexuality and also the schools are quiet about these issues, this means that there is no one talking to children about such essential matters. Even **Tawanda** agrees with **Tonde** that "*they should teach children in schools about the dangers of child cohabitation*". The Teacher in the

study also advocated for a school-based intervention to address the issue of child cohabitation. He said:

> *I would think that the school authorities must have regular counseling sessions with the students and they can even hire specialists to sit down with the children and open up to them about such issues. I think also there should be the introduction of certain subjects such as guidance and counseling in the class so that they are done regularly. They should also use posters and flyers at school to educate and make children aware of the dangers of cohabiting or marrying when they are young.*

Most schools are concerned with the academic side of children only, neglecting the psycho-social needs of these children. Therefore, there is a need for a robust, holistic intervention in schools that focuses on the biological, psychological, social, and economic well being of children.

School-based sexual education in schools is also an important initiative that needs to be incorporated in schools. Zimbabwe has one of the most unfriendly and somewhat hostile environment with regards to the availability of contraceptives and condoms to young adolescents. Young adolescents found with condoms at school are punished by being suspended from school for a period highlighting the extent of hostility towards condom use by adolescents. New Zimbabwe(2015) confirmed that harsh retributive measures such as suspension from school for long periods are given to learners caught in possession of condoms. Thereby violating young people’s rights to access protection gear that can enhance their sexual and reproductive health. This takes away the young people’s agency to make informed decisions on their own with the government and parents having an assumption that they know better what the young people want when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. Problems ranging from lack of access to family planning, contraceptives information, and services were found in Mashayamombe's (2017) study as the leading cause of teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe.

The government of Zimbabwe, together with traditional and religious leaders, advocates for abstinence for young people, thereby making it impossible for young people to access condoms. Although the society is against the idea of availing condoms and contraceptives to the young people in schools. There is adequate evidence that young people are having sex and denying this fact will only exacerbate teenage pregnancies and other related sexual infections as highlighted in this study in which most of the participants were still teenagers when they got

pregnant or made their girlfriends pregnant. Hence, an urgent intervention should be to make available contraceptives and condoms in schools to enable teenage adolescents to access them, which will reduce teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe. Condoms in Zimbabwe are mostly located at community clinics and beerhalls, this means that adolescents will not be able to access them as these places are not youth-friendly. Additionally, adults tend to be unfriendly and hostile to young people wanting to access condoms as they believe that youth should not be having sex. This is supported by Muparamoto and Chigwenya (2009), who state that the judgemental attitudes of health professionals at health centres often pose as a deterrent to youth's access to condoms.

Young people in a South Africa study conducted by Campbell (2013) reported that limited access to condoms has often resulted in unsafe sex, with mostly young girls failing to access condoms at local clinics because of hostile reactions from the staff. Adolescents are engaging in sexual experimentation, which results in exposure to STIs, HIV, unplanned teenage pregnancy, and adolescent maternal mortality. The need to ensure that health services are youth-friendly is critical in reducing the effects of unprotected sex by young people. In Zimbabwe, despite that the country has the highest levels of condom use in the world, specific populations such as young people still face challenges in accessing condoms, and other contraceptives (NAC, 2015). Thus condoms should be made available in schools to mitigate the effects of sexual experimentation by young people.

Another important finding from this study was that all the young participants in this study were not allowed to go back to school. Prioritising support for school-drop out is essential. For female participants in this study, they were not able to complete the basic ordinary level of education in Zimbabwe as they dropped out of school when they got pregnant. This is a gap that needs intervention from the government to make sure that children that drop out of school due to pregnancy are allowed to go back and further their education. **Ruvarashe,** one of the female participants who was not able to complete school highlight that:

> *I think poor children should be assisted to go to school so that they can have a bright future and not think about getting married when they are too young so the government should pay fees for these children.*

One of the social workers in the study recommended a targeted intervention program for children who have dropped out of school and children who are unable to pay for their education.

Mrs. Mugadza said that *" the government should introduce a school grant to pay school fees for children who are not able to pay fees in schools*".

Lack of financial support was one of the barriers towards accessing education, and it also prevented the re-entry of children back to school once they have dropped out. The fact that education in Zimbabwe is not free as compared to other countries such as South Africa poses a challenge for re-entry to school for pregnant girls. With the current dire situation affecting the education sector in Zimbabwe, what remains is that many children and adolescents are being deprived of the right to education as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other International Covenants, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory (Human Rights Bulletin, 2006). In South Africa, great advances have been made, including the legislation of fee-free primary schools for the poorest 40% of the population in South Africa. Therefore, school is free, subject to a test of income, for all learners whose parents cannot afford the fees in South Africa (Department of Basic Education, 2010). The same policies should also be incorporated in Zimbabwe to improve access to education, thus providing every child the right to education. It is important to note that after independence in 1980, Zimbabwe introduced free education in Primary school as a fundamental right. However, this only lasted for a decade, and according to the Human Rights Bulletin (2006) since 1990, the education system introduced cost recovery measures whereby parents were expected to pay for the fees of their children in both urban and rural areas. This has resulted in many children not being able to complete school because of a lack of finances, which ultimately violates and infringes on the right to education for most children in Zimbabwe.

Interventions should also be incorporated in the community to make people in the community aware of the effects of child cohabitation. One of the social worker, **Mr. Mutape** said affirms this when he highlighted that:

> *Awareness campaigns in communities should be done to educate them about the dangers of child cohabitation and also encourage communities to report all cases to child rights organisations, government departments, and the police so that pedophiles be prosecuted and act as a deterrent measure to would-be perpetrators.*

This is important as the community as a whole collective plays an essential role in reducing the rate of child cohabitation by reporting such to the police so that young children are not taken advantage of by older people. **Mr. Musona** (Religious leader) also advocated for the implementation of programs in the community. He said that:

> *I just want to say that the government should start programs where they can go around communities teaching young children about the effects of kuchaya mapoto and other social problems facing children.*

The importance of after school programs for children is also highlighted in this study. To support this, **Mr. Mathathu (**Teacher) said that *" I think there must be social clubs that need to be formed by the government to enable to attend to the social side of children so that they can be preoccupied".* These social clubs are important and they enable children to acquire essential life skills. Some examples of social clubs that can be initiated in the communities may include sports clubs, scripture unions, debate clubs, writers clubs, and others that can holistically equip children with the necessary life skills. This means that children will become preoccupied and will not be exposed to harmful social ills such as drug abuse, sexual experimentation, and others. After school programs can boost academic performance, reduce risky behaviors, promote physical health, and provide a safe and structured environment for the children.

8.4 Alignment of child protection laws

As long the laws that focus on children are not aligned to the Constitution of Zimbabwe it will be challenging to address child cohabitation. The Constitution of Zimbabwe is the highest law of the land, and this means it becomes the parent Act of every legislation in Zimbabwe. The Constitution of Zimbabwe defines marriage as a consensual union between a man and a woman, both of whom have reached eighteen years of age. To this end, the Constitutional court of Zimbabwe ruled in 2016 that marriage with a child under the age of 18 is illegal. As activists welcomed the Constitutional ruling, they have expressed the need for the government to quickly put in place applicable Acts that support the verdict to make it useful in a court of law (Mawaya, 2016). In support, Magaisa (2016) and Mavhinga (2016) highlight that the ruling on its own is of little effect as there is a need for supporting laws to reach its full impact. There is still a glaring gap between the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the supporting laws. As such, it is still difficult to end not only child marriages but also child cohabitation. One of the participants in the study **Mr. Mutape** (social worker) highlighted that:

> *Unfortunately, the current Zimbabwean law of sexual consent is still 16 years and not yet aligned to the current 2013 constitution four years after being passed. Therefore it will be difficult for social workers and communities to make a police report to take the pedophiles to prosecution if the child is 16 years and above. As such child cohabitation*

happens in our communities and if the child defends her partner and likes to continue staying with the boyfriend, it is the child's right as per current legislation as it will be difficult to get the perpetrator to be prosecuted.

The inconsistencies emanate from the definition of a child in Zimbabwe. The Constitution of Zimbabwe defines a child as "every boy or girl under the age of 18 years" (Constitution of Zimbabwe s81 (1):38). With the Children's Act [Chapter 5:06] defining a child as a "person under the age of sixteen years, and it includes an infant". While the Criminal Law Code defines 'a young person' as anyone who is below the age of 16 (Hodzi, 2014). Sibanda (2011) also provides another different definition in which she states that a young person is a person who has attained the age of sixteen years but has not attained the age of eighteen years. Accordingly, there exists a gap in the definition of childhood between the Zimbabwean Constitution and the Children's Act and the definition given by society. Over and above, as mentioned by Sarich, Olivier, and Bales (2016: 456) that the gaps that exist in law in societies with plural legal systems compromise the enforcement of law and the judiciary system as a whole. Due to these discrepancies, Mawaya (2016) highlighted how, as a counselor at Musasa, some cases involving child marriage or cases of rape were dismissed on technicalities relating to gaps existing in law.

Not only is the definition of a child in Zimbabwe ambiguous and problematic, but even some of the marriage acts in Zimbabwe are contradictory to the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The marriage acts in Zimbabwe include the Civil Law under the Marriages Act [Chapter 5:11] and the Customary Law under the Customary Marriages Act (Chapter 5:07). The Civil law under the Marriages Act [Chapter 5:11] is contracted in a civil ceremony either in church or at the Magistrates Courts (Makoni 2016). Section 22(1) of the Civil law under the Marriages Act [Chapter 5:11] reiterates that a boy below the age of 18 and a girl under 16 years cannot marry. However, a girl aged 16 can marry and contract a valid marriage with the consent of her parents or legal guardian (Mawaya, 2016). Also, a boy below 18 and a girl under 16 could marry after obtaining written consent from the Minister of Justice Legal and Parliamentary Affairs if she/he considered it desirable for the marriage to be contracted. Nyamadzawo (2015) points out that Section 22 (1) of the Act hence compromises the fundamental rights of the girl child. With Mawaya (2016) viewing section 22 of the Marriages Act as contradicting section 56 of the Zimbabwean Constitution, which promotes equal treatment and non-discrimination of all Zimbabwean citizens.

Additionally, the Customary Law under the Customary Marriages Act (Chapter 5:07) further provides problems to curb child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. Customary law does not specify the marriageable age. This was confirmed by Mawaya (2016) and Otoo-Oyorty and Pobi (2003) that customary law is silent on the minimum age of marriage. This means that boys and girls can marry at any age. Hence this lack of minimum age makes this Act vulnerable to abuse. Nyamadzawo (2015) reiterates that traditional and religious doctrines take advantage of the loopholes in this Act to marry off children. For a girl child, mainly if she develops and grows in physical statue she will be at risk of being given away for marriage. Thus this Act needs to be amended so that it set out the minimum age of marriage for children that goes hand in hand with the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Without providing a clear definition of a child in Zimbabwe by all the relevant acts and setting out the minimum age of marriage for children that is reflected in the Constitution of Zimbabwe, it will be difficult to curb child cohabitation. Over and above marriage Acts in Zimbabwe such as the Civil Law under the Marriages Act [Chapter 5:11] and the Customary Law under the Customary Marriages Act (Chapter 5:07) are not aligned to the provisions in the Constitution of Zimbabwe which gives room for the practice of child cohabitation to happen at an unprecedented rate. Additionally, if the laws are not consistent with the Constitution, it will be difficult even to prosecute those older men who are cohabiting with young children.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter sums up the study by providing interventions the participants recommended to curb the practice of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. And this chapter addressed the study objective of exploring interventions required to reduce child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. Most of the participants agreed that parents are no longer spending quality time with their children as they are mainly concerned with surviving in a harsh economic environment in Zimbabwe. Thus parents are virtually uninvolved in the lives of their children, and this means that they are no longer monitoring what their children are exposed to. Not only that, but parents also are no longer sitting down with their children to talk about important issues of sexuality with their children. Children devote most of their time at school, and as such, the school should play a leading role in reducing the rate of child cohabitation. Condoms in Zimbabwe should be distributed in schools so that young children can protect themselves, which will eventually minimize teenage pregnancy, and the rate of child cohabitation. Additionally, there is a need to align marriage laws to the Constitution of Zimbabwe, particularly the definition of a child in Zimbabwe. The failure to have one exact age of a child in Zimbabwe that cuts across all the

legislations in Zimbabwe creates challenges when prosecuting adult perpetrators of child marriages as well as those adults in child cohabitation.

This being the last chapter of the presentation and discussion of findings, it is important to highlight key findings that have emerged in this study. The key results from the study that increases knowledge on child cohabitation include the shame attached to teenage pregnancy, which ultimately leads to child cohabitation as parents force their pregnant daughters on the owner of the pregnancy. Poverty and the economic turmoil in Zimbabwe, further forcing girls to sell their bodies to survive and, in some instances, being encouraged by their mothers to do so, which ultimately leads to child cohabitation. The consequences of child cohabitation, especially the aspect of girls dropping out of school, was an important key finding from this study. This is further exacerbated by the fact that there is no support available for these girls to go back to school despite being keen to return. Additionally, the experiences of child cohabiters were important in increasing the knowledge of child cohabitation. Child cohabiters are faced with a plethora of challenges beginning with their living arrangements as well as their livelihood. Girls are primarily confined to the household doing all the chores in the homestead, and most of the girls felt that they were unpaid maids who came to work. In contrast, the boys also working extra hard to provide for their families despite being unemployed and lacking the necessary qualifications to get employed. Despite this, the boys did odd and somewhat dangerous informal jobs to be able to cater to their families.

CHAPTER 9
INTEGRATIVE DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an integrative discussion on the key findings in the different discussion chapters that this study has discussed and from that make the necessary conclusions and recommendations. It is also important to retrospect and reflects on the title of the study and what this study set out to study in the first place to give a clear picture of how this study was initiated and proceeded henceforth. A summary of all the various chapters are presented and conclusions based on the research questions. After which the major conclusions of the study and the contribution of the findings to the body of knowledge in the context of issues affecting young children in Zimbabwe will be presented. Recommendations and areas for further research are also highlighted herein.

9.2 Title of thesis

The title of the thesis was: *Family sanctioned child kuchaya mapoto (cohabitation) in Zimbabwe: Lived experiences of young people as child cohabiters.* The title was informed by the need to bring to the fore the issues of children involved in cohabitation in Zimbabwe as children are inherently vulnerable and at-risk groups that social workers work with. Accordingly, the title of the thesis falls under the domain of social work with an emphasis on affirming the rights of children. Before this study, no study was done on children in cohabitation unions, not only in Zimbabwe but also particularly in the field of social work. Hence this study was important in bringing new knowledge in social work and studies of family formation involving children. It was also very important to capture the voices of children involved in cohabitation not only to understand their lived experiences but also to give this marginalized group a platform to be heard.

9.3 Summary of the previous chapters

Chapter 1 introduced the study with the background and problem statement discussed with the aid of relevant literature. The aim, objectives, and research questions of the study are provided. Most importantly, the theoretical framework of social constructionism underpinning this study was also discussed.

Chapter 2 was the first of the dissertation’s two literature review chapters. It began by looking at the definition of cohabitation and the early history of cohabitation. A discussion on the

drivers of cohabitation followed and lastly the consequences of cohabitation summed up this chapter.

Chapter 3 was the second of the two literature review chapters. This chapter focused mainly on child cohabitation with the drivers and consequences of child cohabitation discussed. Cultural practices that are harmful to children and act as drivers of child cohabitation was also part of this section. After that a discussion on parents and religious influence on child cohabitation followed. A look at legislation both internationally and regionally relevant to children concluding this chapter.

Chapter 4 was the methodology chapter that focused on providing a detailed description of the qualitative interpretivism paradigm. A discussion on the use of the research designs, sampling methods, data collection method, data analysis methods, reflexivity, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations is presented.

Chapter 5 was the first of four chapters on the presentation and discussion of the study's findings. This chapter begins with a presentation of the demographic characteristics of the participants which included young people who cohabited when they were children, parents with children who cohabited when they were children. Besides, stakeholders' demographic characteristics are also presented and these comprised two social workers, a religious leader, and a teacher. After which this chapter presented the themes that applied to the first objective of the study which were the drivers and consequences of child cohabitation. The themes were presented as such: Drivers of child cohabitation and the subthemes underneath it are the shame of teenage pregnancy, use of the body as a survival strategy (survival sex), child abuse in blended families, the influence of religion in promoting child cohabitation, and lastly lack of parental care and supervision. The chapter concluded by presenting the main theme on the consequences of child cohabitation with the sub-themes comprising health risks, recurrent physical and emotional abuse, and school dropout presented and discussed.

Chapter 6 was a continuance of the presentation and discussion chapter. This particular chapter presented themes that focused on the research objective of understanding the perceptions and views of parents concerning children in kuchaya mapoto. The themes presented included cohabitation as a preferred precursor to marriage, the significance of of *lobola* as a cultural practice and parental disappointment.

Chapter 7 was an extension of the presentation and discussion chapter. This chapter focused on one of the objectives of understanding the lived experiences of child cohabiters. The themes

that were presented and discussed included living arrangements in child cohabitation unions, mistreatment from in-laws, the burden of managing parental responsibilities as a young parent, the instability of child cohabitation unions, and family rejection and regret.

Chapter 8 was the last chapter of the presentation and discussion of the findings. The themes for this specific chapter were focused on the interventions to curb child cohabitation in Zimbabwe, which was the last objective of this study. The three themes discussed included parental responsibilities, school and community-based interventions, and lastly, the need for the alignment of laws in Zimbabwe.

9.4 THE PRESENTATION OF CONCLUSIONS

The presentation of the key conclusions is drawn from the key themes that emerged from the findings. These themes are linked to the study objectives as presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the findings sections. The recommendations presented were drawn from the research findings as well as through interaction with the participants during data collection.

Theme 1: The Drivers and Consequences of *kuchaya mapoto* union amongst Children in Zimbabwe

Child cohabitation is a reality for children who either get pregnant or impregnate a girl. The findings provide a link to teenage pregnancy, shame, and cohabitation. Teenage pregnancy alone did not contribute to child cohabitation however, the shame that is associated with it resulted in child cohabitation. This emanated from the fact that teenage pregnancy is primarily associated with loose morals, and teenagers who fall pregnant are ostracized by the community at large. As such young girls falling pregnant bring shame not only to themselves but to the entire family as a whole. And this shame and disgrace compel the parents to make a 'remedial action' of sending the pregnant girl to the owner of the pregnancy (Bunting, 2005). Preserving the family identity becomes the primary priority hence the decision to remove what is considered shameful, in this case, a pregnant girl.

Therefore, a deep sense of shame and the need to self-preserve the family identity were some of the contributing factors that contributed to the pregnant girl being chased away from home and thus contributing to child cohabitation as the perpetrators were also children. The parents were influenced by socially constructed social norms of sending a pregnant girl to the owner of the pregnancy. And this decision to initiate child's cohabitation union might have been perceived by parents as a form of ensuring that both parents raise the unborn child and the

paternal family, however, its social, health and psychological impact on children is irreversible as the age of the child and level of maturity is ignored which contributes to the violation of children's rights. The right to education, health, personal development, and best interest of the children involved in cohabitation are important children's rights that are violated by child cohabitation. Additionally, the children's right to make informed decisions on their lives was infringed upon by the young participants' parents who decided on their behalf for them to start cohabiting. The needs of the children are ignored, and there is an underlying belief that the decision to send them into child cohabitation is in the best interest of the children involved.

The economic instability in Zimbabwe has exacerbated poverty in Zimbabwe, with most of the citizens finding it hard to survive in such a harsh environment. This has contributed to the practice of young girls using their bodies to survive with some parents, especially mothers, as highlighted in the study findings also supporting them. One of the participants in the study Tatenda indicated that because of poverty at their homestead she couldn't continue with her studies, therefore, she became pregnant for her boyfriend to trap him. She also further highlighted how her mother supported her because the boyfriend came from a well-off family. According to Mashayamombe (2017), poverty has always been a major driving factor in the continued practice of early unions due to the commercialization of young girls caused by the lack of sustenance within families. Even other participants concurred that mothers are using their daughters as scapegoats to survive the harsh economic environment in Zimbabwe by encouraging their daughters to live with a man who is financially secure to benefit from the union. Sekuwinga and Whyte's (2009) study in Uganda reported that parents send their daughters to have relationships with boys from families that have money. This means that cohabitation is thus used by girls as a safety net to shelter them from the effects of poverty and becomes an available strategy to counter poverty in their households.

The effects of child cohabitation are enormous, and the impact on the children is disastrous, especially on the young girls. Four out of the five female participants in the study were not able to finish school after falling pregnant. In contrast, all the male participants were able to complete the basic requirement of secondary school in Zimbabwe, which is the Ordinary level. This all points to the fact that girls are negatively impacted as their education is interrupted when they fall pregnant whereas the boys continue with school. In Zimbabwe, before the Amendment of the Education Act of 2006, pregnant girls were not allowed in school because there was an assumption that they will influence other girls also to fall pregnant. Despite the existence of this Amendment, girls are still finding it difficult to be in school during and even

after their pregnancy due to the stigma associated with teenage pregnancy. This has resulted in female participants failing to go back to school. Ncube and Mudau (2017) findings indicated that despite the existence of policy, giving a pregnant girl the right to continue with school, the girl continues to be not accepted and reprimanded in the school environment. Chirimuuta (2016) further reported that the pregnant girl child is tormented by the jeering, laughing, and giggling from fellow students. Kudzai, one of the female participants, reported how her school mates laughed at her, and even at church, people would stare at her with disgust for being pregnant, which made her stay indoors. The female participants in this study were very keen to go back to school. However, financial problems, the social stigma which is associated with being a teenage mother, parenting responsibilities, and cohabitation seem to all contribute to the challenge of re-entry into school for teenage mothers.

Theme 2: The perceptions and views of parents with children who are cohabiting

It was important to capture the views of parents with children who are cohabiting in Zimbabwe. The parents felt that cohabitation was a better alternative to deal with teenage pregnancy, hence they sanctioned such a union. The underlying reason for sanctioning such unions was their belief that these cohabitation unions will be turned into proper marriages whereby lobola is paid. However, this has not been the case as their children remain unmarried. For parents of the male participants who are living with the female participants in their homestead, there is an inherent fear fuelled by the Shona cultural beliefs that failure to pay lobola will result in curses for their families. The cultural beliefs are centered on the notion that the female participants, if they would die, their parents will not bury them until the lobola is paid. Burying the female participants without the blessing of their biological parents will cause evil spirits to torment the male participants' families.

Theme 3: The lived experiences of children who have lived in *kuchaya mapoto* unions in Zimbabwe

Understanding the lived experiences of children in a cohabitation union was important. And saliently, there are broader implications for these new and critical findings on the experiences of child cohabiters not only in Zimbabwe but globally. The mere fact that these were children meant that their lived experience was besieged with challenges stemming even from the lived arrangements and the issue of sustenance. As highlighted in the preceding chapter, girls were forced to go and live with the owner of their pregnancies, which resulted in them living with the parents of the young boys that impregnated them. Being children under the care of their

parents meant that they could not find their accommodation. Most of these young couples were given one room in the main house to start their families, and this living arrangement was bedeviled with enormous challenges, which included lack of privacy and interference by the mothers-in-law.

One important finding that came out was that even though the children were not legally married they were expected to live like married older couples in terms of their roles, responsibilities, and everyday activities. This meant that the young girls in the study were expected to fulfill the expected roles of a married woman, something they were taught when they were young on how it was essential to satisfy men sexually. In the Shona culture, once a girl reaches adolescence, all teachings are directed towards pleasing one's future husband as well as being a gentle and obedient wife (Kambarami, 2006). This is the reason that some of the female participants even blamed themselves when their partners cheated on them as they felt that they did not satisfy their partners fully, which prompted them to cheat. This resonates with Kambarami's (2006) assertion that when a man cheats, it is always the wife that is blamed for failing to satisfy her husband or for failing to curb his desire to cheat. Additionally, this is in line with the theoretical framework underpinning this study of social constructionism, which supports the assertion that the environment and cultural norms of individuals have a significant influence on the belief systems of the individuals and hence affect how they view the world (Teater, 2010). Likewise, girls in this study reported how the Shona cultural norm of pleasing men sexually has been inculcated in them at a tender age and is something sacred that they have internalised to be a normal aspect of being a good woman.

All the girls in the study highlighted how they were treated as maids rather than daughters-in-law. They were expected to do all the house chores in the house, which included waking up earlier than everyone in the house to sweep, wash plates and clothes, iron and cook for the whole family. These young girls felt exploited to a large extent and viewed this living arrangement as living in an unpaid housemaid job rather than it being a union with their partners. However, their sentiments are against the African and particularly the Shona culture, which expects girls and daughters-in-law to do all the household chores without complaining (Agenor, Canuto, and da Silva, 2010; Mugandani and Vermeulen, 2016).

The male participants in this study showed excellent resiliency in the face of adversity as they worked very hard to provide for their families by doing odd jobs, of which some of them were even dangerous. This responsibility of being a young father tends to be overwhelming and

frightening for most of the teenage fathers. Despite the intense stress of being young fathers, the male participants in this study stepped up to take responsibility for their families and worked as taxi conductors, sold cellphones, and even did illegal mining intending to be able to provide for their families. This is important to note as there is an assumption that most teenage fathers tend to run away from assuming the responsibility for their children. Most literature on teenage fatherhood negatively describes these young fathers as incompetent parents. Negative stereotypes portray adolescent fathers as delinquent and not willing to participate in the lives of their children (Tuffin, Rouch, and Frewin, 2010). Even Miller's (1997) study also highlighted that young fathers were largely unwilling participants in their children's lives. In addition, Strug and Wilmore-Schaeffer's (2003) study reported that most young fathers are absent, disinterested, and unable to meet their responsibilities, with Arai (2003) further showing how teenage fathers are viewed as uncaring, selfish and callous to the needs of their offspring. Hence, importantly the teenage fathers in this current study showed agency to be able to provide for their families and with that proving the stereotype and negative assumptions associated with teenage fatherhood wrong. And Marsiglio (1993) and Johnson (2001) agree with the findings from this study that teenage fathers are generally accepting of fatherhood. With that said, teenage fatherhood should rather be regarded as an opportunity rather than a catastrophe (Duncan, 2007).

Another important finding from the study was the mistreatment the female participants were subjected to by their mothers-in-law. The bone of contention for the mothers-in-law stemmed from the fact that their sons were forced to take responsibilities for their girlfriends' pregnancy, and they felt that these girls were loose and trapped their sons into falling pregnant for them. As a result they never considered them as their daughters-in-law and mistreated them with the hope that they would return to their homes. For these female participants, this mistreatment from their mothers-in-law is further compounded by the fact that they do not have anyone to talk to about this abuse as they were chased from their respective homes for falling pregnant. As such, they just suffer in silence, which contributes to their experience of mental issues such as depression. Even the parents of the female participants also hated the male participants that impregnated their daughters as they felt that they had destroyed their daughters' lives by impregnating them.

For these teenage fathers and mothers, the burden of managing parental responsibilities was overwhelming for them as they were young and inexperienced in this regard. Most of the participants highlighted that they were very young to become fathers and mothers, respectively.

It might be that the pregnancy was unexpected and unplanned for thus it came as a shock for most of these participants in this study. The situation was further heightened by their parents removing support, which meant that they were expected to take care of their children on their own. Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod, and Letsoalo (2009) reported that teenagers most times become parents devoid of the required understanding, skills, and resources to deal with early parenthood, which adds stress. From the excerpts of the participants, there was an element of fear, hesitation, and anxiety of becoming teenage parents. One of the participants Tonde, even started drinking heavily as a coping mechanism when he found that his partner was pregnant, with Kudakwashe even wanting to deny the pregnancy and Tawanda suggesting to his partner that she should abort the unborn baby. All this points to the initial shock, powerlessness, apprehension, and ill-preparedness by the male participants when they found that their partners were pregnant.

These factors highlighted above and the fact that these cohabitation unions were rather forced on the participants contributed significantly to the instability of these unions. Just like how the pregnancies were unplanned, these unions as well were unplanned and unprepared for by the participants. Most literature highlight the fragility of cohabitation unions driven by the mere fact that nothing is binding or tying the cohabitees together, unlike those who are married. Cherlin (2004), as well as Bumpass and Lee (2000) agree that cohabitation unions are temporary, which makes them unstable. Some of the male participants highlighted how they mistreated their partners to force them to leave while the female participants reported that their partners cheated on them. And the female participants felt that payment of the bride price would somehow bind and make their partners permanently stay with them, which will ultimately lead to stable unions.

Living in cohabitation unions and being young fathers and mothers contributed to the feelings of regret and disappointment by all the male and female participants as they felt trapped and doomed for life. They felt powerless, helpless and guilt, that they had let themselves and their parents down. On the one hand, the male participants regret impregnating their girlfriends while on the same token, the female participants regret falling pregnant young. For these participants assuming the roles of motherhood and fatherhood as children were overly overwhelming for them, and they felt that they were still children needing parental care and protection. Dropping out of school for falling pregnant made most of the female participants feel that they had disappointed not only their parents but also destroyed their bright future. This also contributed to mental health issues as some of the participants became depressed. One participant

Ruvarashe even wanted to commit suicide as she was failing to deal with falling pregnant and disappointing her parents, who wanted the best for her in life. She reported that she did not want to have a baby and even wanted to abort the baby. However, she could not, as abortion is illegal in Zimbabwe.

Apart from the challenges that the participants experienced as child cohabitors, some of the participants demonstrated resilience and a sense of agency not to remain as victims of their circumstances. The findings demonstrated that both female and male children faced difficulties, but they also used their agency to cope and be resilient. Their use of agency was depended on the resources, opportunities and social networks they had. The male participants demonstrated a sense of agency in providing for their families. Their sense of masculinity as men who can provide for their families was their primary responsibility. Since gender roles are socially constructed, the use of agency in the role of being a provider was expected. Moreover, the gendering process of young men can be seen in how a pregnant teenager is sent to the "owner' of the pregnancy to force him to take a responsibility of a provider to the child and the child's mother. Therefore, this forced responsibility increased the urgency for young men, though unprepared, to stand up and provide for their families. This is consistent with the findings in Paschal's (2006) study that despite limited resources, teen fathers desired to fulfill the provider role for their families financially.

For female participants unwanted and unplanned pregnancy threaten their health, education, and socio-economic well-being. The current study reveal that, in contrast to public health perceptions of teenage motherhood and in spite of the challenges they face, adolescent girls are not victims but survivors and also social actors that try to mobilize resources actively to secure their own health and that of their child. Some of the female participants did contribute as well to the finances in the homestead by doing odd jobs in the community such as washing clothes and ironing. Further, highlighting agency and remarkable resilience to counter the effects of lack of finances. This is important to note as it shows that even the female participants are helping out in taking the responsibility of taking care of their children, thereby supplementing their male partners' meagre finances. This is in contrast to the findings by Skobi and Makofane (2017), who found that teenage parents are frequently unable to cope with raising children without support. The findings also counter the conclusions of Chideya and Williams's (2013) study, which reported that the majority of teenage participants in their study highlighted that their parents continued to support them materially and were also helping them take care of their children.

Even without adequate support to take care of their children, the young participants showed great resilience in the face of hardship. Therefore, deconstructing the notion that teenage parents are not capable of stepping up and taking responsibility for their own children. The major dominant discourse of teenage motherhood and fatherhood is the assumption that they are incompetent to be 'good' mothers and fathers respectively (Macleod, 2001). The argument stems from the generalisation that these teenagers are not yet physically and psychologically equipped to deal with parenthood (Cunningham and Boult, 1996) because they are immature and less knowledgeable (Macleod, 2001).

This quality of perseverance is a character strength displayed by the young participants proving that they were capable better individuals than what society negatively portrays them to be. They demonstrated that they were able to rise above dominant discourses that not only marginalize and disempower them but sees them as irresponsible individuals who are not capable of taking care of their children. Therefore, the findings of this study reflect that the young participants resisted this imposed position of being irresponsible teenage mothers and fathers through challenging these discourses that assume irresponsibility and inadequacy and argue that teenage mothers and fathers are in fact, better parents to their children.

Resilience can be an interaction of culture, context and individual strengths. This applies to the young people in the study for whom Ungar and Terem (2000) suggest resilience may come from contradicting social norms and finding ways to define and empower themselves through being very good at things that are not socially accepted. Hence, resistances become framed as resilience (Bottrell, 2007). Therefore, these young people have skills and competencies that support resilience. Addressing challenges to resilience, such as poor mental health, lack of support and financial concerns, is an important component of ensuring that the teenage parents and their children reach their full potential.

Theme 4: Recommendations on Interventions Strategies to curb child cohabitation in Zimbabwe

Most of the recommendations were highlighted by the participants in chapter 8. The recommendations include the need for parents to monitor their children. Parental monitoring can involve, amongst other things, the direct supervision and oversight of the daily activities of children. Most parents are no longer spending quality time with their children, which means that they do not even know what their children spend their time doing, which puts their children at risk. Low levels of parental monitoring have been linked to early sexual initiation by children

(French and Dishion, 2003). Therefore, parents should be keen to know what is happening in the lives of their children, and this will ultimately reduce the risk for teenage pregnancy. Parental monitoring works best when parents have a good, open, and caring relationship with their children. This in turn, will enable children to be more accepting and willing to talk to their parents if they believe that their parents can be trusted, have useful advice to offer, and are not only open but as well available to listen. Hence parents must actively listen, ask questions, offer support, and be actively involved in every aspect of their children's lives.

The school and the community at large play an essential role in the reduction of teenage pregnancy, which ultimately leads to a decrease in child cohabitation. Children function as members of the communities, hence community-based interventions can be effective in reducing child cohabitation. After school hours are relatively dangerous, it is important that interventions targeted at this period be effective. As such, there is a need to create platforms for children to partake in after school programs in the community, and some of the programs may include social clubs. The social clubs can include sports clubs were children take part in different sports such as football, netball, tennis, rugby, and others. Additionally, scripture unions' clubs can also be formed in which children are taught about the Bible and encouraged to go to church. Whilst others can be involved in debate clubs and writers' clubs, which will equip them with excellent writing and public speaking skills. Therefore, children will become engrossed and will not be exposed to harmful social ills such as drug abuse, sexual experimentation. After school programs are important in the lives of children as they can provide a safe environment for children, thereby enhancing their well-being.

On the other hand, schools are an important component in the lives of children as they spend most of their time at school. Hence the school should play a critical role in reducing teenage pregnancy. Many of the schools in Zimbabwe are mostly focused on the academic aspect of children and the need to position their schools as the best in terms of the number of children passing. However, this means that other aspects that make up a child are neglected, such as the psycho-social functioning of a child. Hence there is a need for a robust integrative intervention in schools that looks at the biological, psychological, social, and economic well-being of children. School-based sexual education is critical and should be adopted by every school as there is an assumption that children are still young to have sex as such issues about sex become a taboo to discuss with children. This also cascades to the lack of support for the distribution of contraceptives and condoms in schools. Zimbabwe is one country with an unfriendly environment with regards to the availability of condoms to young adolescents.

School-based sexual education in schools is also an important initiative that needs to be incorporated in schools. Zimbabwe has one of the most unfriendly and rather hostile environments with regards to the availability of contraceptives and condoms to young adolescents. There is an assumption that availing condoms in schools can increase promiscuity amongst learners. This fierce criticism on the distribution of condoms and the withholding, therefore, is partly attributed to the increase in teenage pregnancies among school girls. Teenagers are having sex. Hence the distribution and availability of condoms in schools might reduce the scourge of teenage pregnancy. This encourages teenagers to engage in safe sex, which will decrease teenage pregnancies as well as HIV/AIDS. Schools should be able to teach teenagers about the advantages of condom use and how they can be able to use them safely. High schools are the best place to provide sex education and make condoms available to teenagers as this is the most convenient place for them rather than in a clinic where most of the adult nurses will be judgemental and hostile to teenagers wanting to access condoms.

Another important aspect that came out from this study is the lack of support for pregnant teenagers to stay in school and to also go back to school after the birth of their child. Prioritising support for school-drop out is important. Female participants in this study were not able to complete the basic ordinary level of education in Zimbabwe as they dropped out of school when they got pregnant. This is a gap that needs intervention from the government to make sure that children that drop out of school due to pregnancy are allowed to go back and further their education. In addition, the government of Zimbabwe should make sure that the implementation of the Education Act of 2006 legislation specifically Clause 68D of the Amendment Bill of the Education Act is applied in all schools, which compels schools in Zimbabwe not to expel a pregnant girl child based on being pregnant. This is important as most girls are being expelled from schools for falling pregnant as there is a lot of stigma and discrimination by teachers who feel that these teenagers would encourage other learners to fall pregnant as such expelling them would counter that threat. Therefore, pregnant girls in Zimbabwe have a right to education and that right should be upheld.

The alignment of laws relevant to children with the Constitution of Zimbabwe is critical to protect children from the effects of child unions. There is confusion and ambiguity on who constitutes a child in Zimbabwe as there are discrepancies amongst the laws on the definite age of a child. The constitution of Zimbabwe defines a child as a boy or girl who is below the age of 18, with both the Children's Act and the Criminal Law Code defining a child as someone who is below the age of 16. This creates loopholes and gaps for the overall protection of

children in child unions with older adults, and it would be difficult to prosecute these older adults as cases would be dismissed on technicalities as there is inconsistent age for children. Hence there should be an alignment of laws protecting children with the Constitution of Zimbabwe to curb child cohabitation as well as child marriages.

It is important to provide recommendations for social work. Social workers mostly work with children with parents who are cohabiting; however, this study provides a new perspective for social work intervention. There is a need for social work intervention in child cohabitation, as highlighted in this study, that children who are cohabiting are faced with a plethora of challenges. Social work can intervene at the micro, mezzo, and macro level to help child cohabitees as they are faced with various challenges, which include mental issues, lack of parental skills, lack of support from parents, abuse from in-laws, school drop-out and unemployment. Additionally, in light of the dearth of literature relating to social work and cohabitation and specifically on child cohabitation there is a need for social work academics to conduct extensive research on cohabitation, document the findings, and include it in the course that introduces students to family issues within the African context. There is need for those social workers in practice to be updated of new developments, and social work academics can play an important role in providing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training on child cohabitation and cohabitation in general to these practitioners in the field for them to intervene accordingly in cases of cohabitation.

9.5 The study's contribution to academic knowledge

This study contributes significantly to academic knowledge as it fills the gap that exists in the literature about children who are cohabiting. Before this study, no study had been conducted on the aspect of child cohabitation not only in Zimbabwe but globally. Hence, the findings from this current study are essential in adding to the existing knowledge on family formation, especially involving children. Importantly, social work as a profession mostly deals with at-risk and vulnerable children, and before this study, there was no knowledge in social work about the plight of children in cohabitation unions. Hence, the study advances the role of social work in addressing child cohabitation in Zimbabwe. As demonstrated in the current study, child cohabitation is one of the major social problems in Zimbabwe that violates children's rights, and there is insufficient social work intervention to address this challenge. Therefore, this study contributes significantly to knowledge and understanding about the experiences of

children involved in cohabitation, which will ultimately help social workers to intervene appropriately on issues affecting children who are cohabiting.

9.6 Recommendations for future research

- As this study was conducted in one of the communities in Zimbabwe, there is a need for further research in other provinces in Zimbabwe to ascertain the extent of child cohabitation in the whole of Zimbabwe.
- The current study comprised young people who started cohabiting when they were children, and for further research, there is a need to conduct a study on children who are cohabiting with older men or older women as their experiences and reasons for cohabiting might be different from those found out in this current study.
- There is also a need for a longitudinal study in Africa to understand the drivers, consequences, and experiences of children involved in child cohabitation.
- The dearth of literature on social work and cohabitation makes it important to conduct a study with social workers to explore their perceptions with regards to child cohabitation and how best they can intervene when working with children involved in child cohabitation.

9.7 Concluding remarks

Children in Zimbabwe and the world over need protection from the effects of not only child marriages but as well as child cohabitation. Child cohabitation is a phenomenon that has not been researched before, and this study provided much-needed information on the drivers, consequences, and importantly the experiences of children cohabiting. Forcing children to cohabit infringes on children’s rights to education, health, and life, as these children will not be mentally, psychologically, and physically developed for the responsibilities and consequences of such a union. Children cohabiting will remain in a state of privation due to a lack of personal development and education.

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Appendix A

Copy of Informed Consent form

Name: Thomas Gumbo

Student number: 210549952

Informed Consent Letter (English)

Dear Participant

My name is Thomas Gumbo. I am a Social Work Ph.D. student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus in Durban South Africa. I am interested in understanding the experiences of young people who were cohabiting or in a *kuchaya mapoto* union sanctioned by family when they were children in Zimbabwe. I am conducting the research in Dzivarasekwa Township in Harare. To be able to gather the information required for the study, I would like to ask you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will never be attributed to you in person, but reported anonymously keeping your identity unknown.
- The interview may last for approximately an hour.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate, or stop participating in the research any time you feel like doing so and you will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your participation in this research is purely for academic purposes only and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate by ticking whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded.

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recorded		

I can be contacted at:

Email: gumbothomas@yahoo.com /thomasgumbo88@gmail.com

Cell: +263 775183977 or +27 730452698

My supervisors are Prof. Carmel Matthias who is located in the Discipline of Social Work MTB Building at Howard College campus at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details:

Email address: matthiasc@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 0312607922

Dr. Maud Mthembu who is located in the Discipline of Social Work MTB Building at Howard College campus at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details:

Email:Mthembum4@ukzn.ac.za

Cell: +27828121761

You may also contact the Research Office

Humanities and Social Sciences Res. Ethics (HSSREC)

Mrs Phumelele Ximba

Email: XIMBAP@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 3587

Fax: 031 260 4609

DECLARATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

I………………………………………………………………………… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

…….………………………………….. …………………………….

Informed Consent Letter (Shona)

Gwaro rekubvuma kupinda mutsvagurudzo

Wadiwa mupinduri

Zita rangu ndinonzi Thomas Gumbo. Ndirikudzidza paUniversity of KwaZulu Natal irimuDurban kuSouth Africa ndichiita gwaro rePhD yeSocial Work. Ndinotenda nekubvuma kwenyu kupinda mutsvagurudzo iyi. Tsvagurudzo iyindeye zvidzidzo zvangu zvegwaro repamusoro re PhD zvandiri kuita nebazi re Social Work re Univhesiti yeKwaZulu-Natal, ku South Africa. Musoro wetsvagurudzo unoti: **Family sanctioned child *kuchaya mapoto* (cohabitation): Lived experiences of children in Zimbabwe.** Ndinoda kunzwisisa zvinosanganikwa nazvo nevana vari pasi pemakore 18 varikuchaya mapoto munyika yeZimbabwe.

Ini semutsvagurudzi ndinokuvimbisai nemwoyo wose kuti zvichataurwa zvicharamba zviri pakati pedu chete zvakavanzika uye ifaniro yangu kukuremekedzai kubudikidza nekuchengeta zvatataura pakati pedu. Ikodzero yenyu pane ino nguva kuti muzive kuti kupinda kana kubuda mutsvagurudzo iyi isarudzo yenyu uye hapana chakashata chingakuwirai nekuda kwesarudzo yenyu iyi. Kana mapinda, hamutarisirwi kuti mutsanagure chikonzero chekuti mazofungirei kubuda mutsvagurudzo iyi nokuti ikodzero yenyu kuita zvamada panguva iyoyo pasina kutya kana kuvhunduka.

Nzvimbo nenguva yekuita nhaurirano yenyaya iyi ngaive yamakasunungukira imwi uye nguva inogona kuva maminitsi makumi mana anoraudzira.

Mabvuma kupinda mutsvagurudzo iyi isai runyoro rwenyu apa kuratidza kuti maverenga gwaro rino mukanzwisisa uye mukagutsikana.

Ini……………………………………………………..(zita rizere) musi wa…………………………………… ndinobvuma kuti ndanzwisisa donzvo retsvagurudzo uye ndazvipira kupinda mutsvagurudzo iyi.

Mune mibvunzo ndibatei **THOMAS GUMBO pa E-mail:** gumbothomas@yahoo.com kana nharembozha **+263 775 183 977 kana +27 73 045 2698** .kanakuti vatungamiri wetsvagurudzo yangu kuchikoro kwangu:

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Kana kuti HSSREC Research Office

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Ndatenda nenguva yenyu!

Appendix 2: Copies of Instruments

Interview guides

Name: Thomas Gumbo

Student No.: 210549952

<u>Interview guide for young people</u>

Demographic characteristics

Age:

Makore:

Gender:

Language:

Mutauro:

Level of education:

Makadzidza kusvika papi:

Period in *kuchaya mapoto*:

Nguva yakareba sei muchichaya mapoto:

Number of children if any:

Vana vangani:

Themes to be explored

General perceptions

What is your general perception of *kuchaya mapoto* unions in Zimbabwe?

Ndeapi mafungiro enyu pamusoro pekuchaya mapoto muZimbabwe?

Has your perception of *kuchaya mapoto* unions changed overtime and if so how?

Ndingavhunze kuti mafungiro enyu pamusoro pekuchaya mapoto kwachinja here kana kwachinja kwachinjiwa nei?

Reasons for cohabitation

What was the reason that made you decide to get into a *kuchaya mapoto* union?

Chii chakaita kuti uve unoda kuchaya mapoto?

What made you choose cohabitation rather than just dating?

Chii chakaita kuti usarudze kuchaya mapoto pane kungodanana chete?

Who proposed to cohabit first? If it was you, why did you do it? And how did the other party react?

Ndiani pakati penyu akauya nepfungwa yekuchaya mapoto? Kana uri iwe wakazviitirei? Uye mumwe wako akazvitora sei?

Experiences of cohabitation

What is your experience of cohabitation?

Ndipeiwo tsanangudzo dzekuchaya mapoto dzawasangana nadzo?

How do you organize your daily lives as partners in a *kuchaya mapoto* union in terms of house chores, finances and others?

Munopatsanura sei hupenyu hwenyu hwamazuva ese sevanhu varikuchaya mapoto zvichienderana nekuti ndiani anoita basa remumba, anoita zvemari nezvimwe zvakangodaro?

What are the challenges you face in a *kuchaya mapoto* union?

Ndeapi matambudziko amunosangana nawo mukugara kwenyu?

What are the strategies you use to cope with these challenges?

Pamatambudziko amunosangana nawo munoshandisa nzira dzipi kuzama kupedza matambudziko aya?

Family involvement

How involved were your parents or significant others in the decision for you to be part of *kuchaya mapoto* union?

Ndinoda kuziva kuti vabereki vako kana hama dzako vakakubatsira sei mukuzofunga kuti ugare mukuchaya mapoto?

What is your position in your partner's family and what is the position of your partner in your family?

Ndinoda kuziva kuti unoremekedzwa sei kumhuri yemumwe wako uye mumwe wako anoremekedzwa sei kumhuri yako?

How do you relate with your partner's family?

Munowiriirana zvakaita sei nemhuri yemumwe wako?

Community and cultural perceptions

Do you think people in your community are more accepting of *kuchaya mapoto* unions? Why?

Unofunga kuti vanhu vemunharaunda yenyu vanotambira here kuchaya mapoto uye ungandiudze kuti sei uchidaro?

How many young children around you have *kuchaya mapoto* experience or are currently in a *kuchaya mapoto* union? Do you think there are many children involved in this practice?

Ungazive here kuti vana vangani varikuchaya mapoto uye varikugara sei? Unofunga kuti vana vakawanda varikuchaya mapoto here?

What are the cultural perspectives around kuchaya mapoto in Zimbabwe?

Pachivanhu chedu chechiShona kuchaya mapoto anoonekwa sei nevanhu ?

Interventions

What are the interventions programs required for children in *kuchaya mapoto* unions?

Unofunga kuti vana vadiki varikuchaya mapoto vanga batsirike sei?

Interview guide for parents/guardians

Demographic characteristics

Age:

Makore:

Gender:

Language:

Mutauro:

Themes to be explored

Perceptions

What is your general perception on *kuchaya mapoto* unions in Zimbabwe?

Ndipeiwo mafungiro enyu maererano nekuchaya mapoto muZimbabwe?

What is your view of your child being in a *kuchaya mapoto* union?

Ndipeiwo pfungwa dzenyu maererano nemwana wenyu arikuchaya mapoto?

Do you see *kuchaya mapoto* unions as permanent or temporary? Why?

Munoona here mubatanidzwa wekuchaya mapoto uriwenguva pfupi here kana kuti yakareba uye sei muchidaro?

Drivers and consequences of cohabitation

What are the drivers of *kuchaya mapoto* unions amongst children in your opinion?

Nemaonero enyu munofunga kuti chii chinokonzeresa kuchaya mapoto nemwana mudiki or pakati pevana vadiki?

What are the challenges that your child and partner face in their union?

Ndeapi matambudziko anosangana nemwana wenyu nemumwe wake muhubatanidzwa hwavo hwekuchaya mapoto?

What are the consequences of cohabitation in your opinion?

Zvii zvakaipa zvingawire mwana mudiki arikuchaya mapoto?

Parent involvement

How involved were you in the beginning of *kuchaya mapoto* union of your child?

Nderipi danho ramakatamba kuti mwana wenyu apinde mukuchaya mapoto?

What is your relationship with your child and your child's partner?

Munowirirana zvakaita sei nemwana wenyu uye nemumwe wake waarikugara naye?

Community and cultural perceptions

What was the community's perception when they found out that your child was cohabiting?

Vanhu vemunharaunda menyu vakazvitambira sei pavakaziva kuti mwana wenyu akuchaya mapoto?

How rampant is cohabitation involving children in this community?

Kuchaya mapoto pakati pevana vadiki kurikuitika zvakanyanya sei munharaunda menyu?

What are the cultural perspectives around kuchaya mapoto in Zimbabwe?

Pachivanhu chedu chechiShona kuchaya mapoto anoonekwa sei nevanhu ?

Interventions

What are your suggestions for intervention for children who are cohabiting?

Chii chamunoona chichida kuitwa kuvana varikuchaya mapoto?

Interview guide for Social Workers

Demographic characteristics

Age:

Sex:

Education level:

Working experience:

Themes to be explored

Experiences and perceptions

Tell me about your experience as a social worker working with children?

Tell me about your general understanding of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe?

How rampant is child cohabitation in Zimbabwe?

Causes and effects

What are the drivers of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe?

What are the negative effects of child cohabitation?

Intervention

What role can social workers play in intervening in child cohabitation in Zimbabwe?

What are interventions programs that can be implemented to curb child cohabitation in Zimbabwe?

Interview guide for Teacher and Religious Leader

Demographic characteristics

Age:

Sex:

Education level:

Themes to be explored

Perceptions

What is your perception concerning child cohabitation in Zimbabwe?

How rampant is child cohabitation in your constituency?

What do you think are the causes of child cohabitation in Zimbabwe?

What are the negative effects of child cohabitation?

Interventions

What role can you play in intervening in child cohabitation in Zimbabwe?

How can your community be involved in ending child cohabitation in your community?

As a teacher or religious leader what do you think can be done in terms of policy for child cohabitation?

Gatekeeper letters

DZIVARASEKWA PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY OFFICE
House No. 2222/39 Tsimba Street
Dzivarasekwa 2
Harare. Zimbabwe
Tel: 263-773 053 705
263-772 415 812
Email: omegasipani@gmail.com
All correspondence to be addressed to the office of the Member of Parliament –Mai Omega Sipani-Hungwe.

Att. Professor C. Matthias and Dr. Mthembu
University of KWAZULU-NATAL
Durban
South Africa
REF: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDYU IN DZIVARASEKWA CONSTITUENCY
I write to confirm that we received application for the above said subject for Thomas Gumbo to conduct his research in Dzivarasekwa Constituency in Wards 39 and 40 respectively.
I have no problem in having him come and conduct his research in my Parliamentary Constituency as his study will benefit the constituency and Government immensely with regards to issues of children rights and social injustice. Should there be any challenge against him to come, please you are free to contact me on the above said address and telephone members.
Yours Sincerely,
Hon. Omega-Sipani Hungwe(MP)
Dzivarasekwa Constituency
10th January , 2017

National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe
Makombe Government Complex, Block 3, Office 83 & 99
Email address: naswz.programmes@gmail.com
Tel: +263 4 799001
Cell: +263 774 385 150

09 February 2017

Dear Thomas Gumbo

RE: SUPPORT TO CONDUCT REASEACH ON THE TOPIC: FAMILY SANCTIONED CHILD KUCHAYA MAPOTO (COHABITATION): LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ZIMBABWEAN CHILDREN.

I am familiar with Thomas Gumbo research project entitled: ***Family sanctioned child kuchaya mapoto (cohabitation): lived experiences of Zimbabwean children.*** National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe (NASWZ) is authorising the researcher to engage its members who are Social Workers to participate in his research. The association is committed to assist the researcher with recruiting participants for the study, providing space or a venue to conduct necessary interviews with participants. However, other costs such as transport reimbursement for participants, allowances for research assistants and refreshments will be met by the researcher

I understand that this research will be carried out following sound ethical principles and that participant involvement in this research study is strictly voluntary and provides confidentiality of research data, as described in the protocol. The researcher is expected to share the outcomes of the research with the participants and the association.

Therefore, as a representative of NASWZ, I agree that Thomas Gumbo's research project may be conducted at our Association.

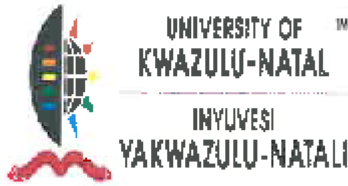
Yours faithfully

Chidyausiku

Weston Chidyausiku
(Programmes officer)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS
ZIMBABWE
Email: nasw.sec@gmail.com
Website: www.naswzim.org
Phone: 04 799000/1

National Executive Committee: Dennis Dzikiti (Acting President), Sifelani Mudimu (Vice President), P.D. Motsi (Treasurer), Dennis Dzikiti (General Secretary), Tinashe Jani (Publicity Secretary), Effie Malianga (Committee Member), Blessing Bhaiseni (Committee Member), Advocate Charles Warara (Legal Advisor), Charles Dziro (Harare Branch Chairperson), Pardon Muyambo (Manicaland Branch Chairperson), Tawanda Masuka (Mash West & Central Branch Chaiperson) and George Madzima (Midlands Branch Chairperson)



30 October 2017

Mr Thomas Gumbo (210549952)
School of Applied Human Sciences – Social Work
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Gumbo,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0570/017D
Project title: Family sanctioned child *kuchaya mapoto* (cohabitation): Lived experiences of Zimbabwean children

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

With regards to your response received on 27 October 2017 to our letter of 05 July 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

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

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Professor C Matthias and Dr M Mthembu
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn
cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Ntuli

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
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Founding Campuses: Edgewood | Howard College | Medical School | Pietermaritzburg | Westville