

**THE EXPERIENCES OF TEENAGE LEARNERS FROM
SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS**



By

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**THE EXPERIENCES OF TEENAGE LEARNERS FROM SINGLE
PARENT HOUSEHOLDS**



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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my one and only son Thando Maphumulo for his unconditional love. It has not been easy to raise a boy alone, but you made it easier for mommy. Ngiyabonga mfan'wami, ukhule njalo Mashimane. Mom loves you always.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work on “*The experiences of teenage learners from single parent households*” is my own work – both in conception and execution – and, it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been adequately indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference.

N.P Bhengu

21/02/ 2016
Date

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households. Single parent households refers to a home that is headed by a single mother or father. According to various literatures, the number of single parent households is increasing nationally. The main reasons for single parent households are: divorce, death of a partner, children born out of wedlock and sometimes the parent chooses to stay single. The assumption is that children belonging to such a family setup are associated with poor academic performance, are likely to drop out of school, which often results in teenage pregnancy and drug abuse. It is because of these reasons that single parent households are negatively stereotyped. There is a notion that children in intact families (with both parents) fare better academically, socially and emotionally than those in single parent families, because children in intact families typically have access to two parents rather than only one.

This study adopts a qualitative approach. An in-depth investigation of experiences of teenage learners from single parent households is presented. The study adopted an interpretive paradigm since knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process. Data was collected using structured interviews and was administered using open-ended questions. In a structured interview the researcher uses an interview schedule, which is a set of questions in a predetermined order.

The findings in this research study indicate that most children that are raised in single-parent households are usually raised by mothers. Single mothers are likely to experience some economic problems causing them to live below the poverty line; as a result children can have less access to well-resourced schools and tend to live in poor neighbourhoods. It has also been indicated that children from single parent households are likely to have behavioural problems and perform less academically, because there is less supervision from the single parent. However, children growing up in single-parent households, whether the parents were never married, or have separated or divorced, have twice the risk of repeating the grade, having behavioural problems, dropping out of high school and girls have the risk of becoming teenage mothers. This is because parents have to work long hours in order to make ends meet, leaving them with minimum time to spend with their children. However, the findings also reveal there are some positive experiences from single parent households, such as getting more attention from the parent and peaceful home environment. The study also revealed that the impact of single parenthood on learners' well-being and academic performance could either be positive or negative.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single-parent households and how single parent households impact on children's academic performance and general well-being. Currently according to StatsSA (2012) the number of single-parent households is increasing nationally. The main cause of this, according to research studies, is divorce. But in some cases, children are born outside wedlock. The reason behind this study is that, I am a single mother of a sixteen year-old boy. Therefore I am interested in understanding what experiences my son has had as a result of being raised by a single-parent. I was married and got divorced and have raised my son singlehandedly for the past sixteen years. Naturally, I am drawn towards investigating the challenges experienced by teenage learners from single parent households. Single parenthood has become a very common phenomenon, but it seems to be poorly understood. According to Paterson (2001) single parenting is a phenomenon devoid of personality. It is because there is a notion that the healthiest family structure requires two parents (ibid). Although the subject area of divorce and its impact on children has been widely researched, very little research on learners from single-parent households' has been conducted in South Africa.

During personal interaction with most learners in my school, there is large number of learners who were from single-parents households, where parents got divorced, or one parent died or parents did not get married. There is a perception that single-parent households are unstable homes. According to Mennemeyer and Senf (2006) parental divorce and or the absence of fathers from a household are correlated with numerous undesirable outcomes for children,

including lower educational attainment, emotional problems, substance use, participation in undesirable activities, and other problematic outcomes. Other behavioural problems included truancy, smoking, theft, teenage pregnancy and aggression. I will choose pupils from a Secondary School in the Umbilo area.

1.2 Problem statement

There is a shortage of support systems or structures for learners from single- parenthood. However, we need to understand this phenomenon from the perspective of the individual child's experiences. This will assist us to understand the uniqueness of children's experiences of their single-parenting.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study will be guided by the following objectives:

- To explore the education-related experiences of children from single-parent households.
- To investigate the impact of single-parenting on learners' well-being and academic performance.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide and inform me on the aim of this study.

- What are the education-related experiences of teenage learners from single-parent households?
- How does single-parenting impact on learners' well-being and academic performance?

1.5 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Paterson (2001) a family unit is a grouping of a married man and woman raising their children in this traditional unit. Paterson (2001) defines the concept of family in three features; father-mother-children unit and there are delineated gender role division of labour that culminated in traditional family. Downey and Powell (1993) assert that single-parent households are incomplete families where there is one parent absent. Schepard (2004) postulates that, parental divorce is the main cause of single parent households. However, women are usually awarded the full custody of children resulting in most single parent households.

The literature review sets out what the key issues are in the field to be explored and why they are key issues and identify gaps that need to be plugged in (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This will encompass a review of literature from international perspective and conclude with national or local perspective. The literature review will focus on the experiences of learners from single-parent households.

1.5.1 Experiences of teenage learners from single parent households

Children from single parent households are exposed to a myriad of experiences which makes them different and unique from their counterparts from both parent households.

1.5.1.1 Economic Experiences

Economic support in single parent household is highlighted in the level of income, housing quality, residential stability, and general standard of living the families are exposed to.

According to Xu, Zhang and Xia (2008) single parent household, compared with intact families, and are generally economically disadvantaged because in intact families they likely rely on the income of two people. However, in single parent household income flows from one person. Xu, Zhang and Xia (2008) talk about the economic disadvantage perspective as women often experience a dramatic loss in financial resources after divorce, and single-mother families tend to suffer financial instability and poverty. As a result, children from single-parent households may have less access to well-resourced schools and adequate services, but more exposure to unsafe neighbourhoods and to the risks for problem behaviours (ibid.). However, Valimohammadi (2007) argues that as much as the single-parent household falls below the poverty line but, the single-parent's household may provide benefits to children that many dual-parent households do not provide. However, they do that perhaps out of guilt or the feeling that they need to compensate for the absence of the other parent. Sometimes the parent may push their child even harder because the child becomes their only hope due to the loss of ex-spouse's income and support (Xu, Zhang & Xia, 2008).

1.5.1.2 Social Experiences

Xu, Zhang and Xia (2008) state that the single-parent household becomes an easy target and single parents are blamed for problem behaviour in children. Stigma associated with divorce is strong, and can sometimes ruin a person's reputation and career. Although Chinese society has become more accepting towards the single-parent's household, the overall negative attitude toward divorce can lead to a high level of stress to divorcees and their children. Therefore the study will explore how undesirable juvenile behaviour is related to the structure of home life. Living with both own-parents in a very or moderately happy relationship is associated with reduced likelihood of most undesirable behaviours. According to Mennemeyer and Senf (2006) most of the time juvenile undesirable behaviour is the same

across. Parental absence resulting in single parenting has a negative effect on the child's social development because of the lack of healthy interactions with both parents, assuming that both parents play an important role in the child's social development.

1.5.1.3 Academic Experiences

Several studies indicate that teenagers from single-parent households experience more behavioural problems and perform less well academically when compared with children raised in two-parent households (Valimohammadi, 2007; Xu, Zhang & Xia, 2008). They concluded that two parents living together have more time to monitor their children's school work. According Valimohammadi (2007) there is a popular assertion that single parents lack the time needed; to try and make ends meet, and to attend to their children's school work. It is because single-parents spend more time at work with the feeling that they need to compensate for the absence of the other parent (ibid). If there is no supervision of school work, this results in poor academic performance. According to Xu, Zhang and Xia (2008) if a child's academic performance at school is poor; the child is often rejected by fellow students. Consequently, he/she may suffer low-self-esteem. In support, Xu et al., (2007) posit that children of divorced parents are especially vulnerable to the rejection because their grades often drop when they have a difficult adjustment. The stigma of divorce can alienate the child and youth of divorced parents from their peers. Poor school performance can further isolate children as they are consequently teased or made fun of by their peers.

1.5.1.4 Teenagers' emotional needs

Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000) define emotions as the state of consciousness, or a feeling felt as an integrated reaction of the total organism accompanied by arousal and resulting in behavioural responses. This emotional adjustment in teenagers, yearning for independence

may lead to change in their relationship with their single- parents. The researcher will be interested as to how the structure of a family impacts on their emotional needs. Taking on the roles of both mother and father requires a degree of effort and responsibility on the part of parents.

1.6 Theoretical framework

The focus of this research is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households and how single parent households impact on children's academic performance and general well-being. Mennemeyer and Senf (2006) persist that even after controlling of factors such as household income, indicating that remedies such as better enforcement of child support or enhancement of the single-parent's income by other methods will not suffice to counter the negative outcomes for children. Therefore, this research will discuss several theories with consideration to their applicability to the South African context and to the topic.

1.6.1 Ecosystemic theory

I draw on ecosystemic theory because it focuses on family structural factors. The ecosystem theory looks at individuals' experiences in the context of their environment (Everett, Lee, & Nichols 2006). They further postulate that ecosystem theory appreciate that family systems are environments embedded within increasingly larger environment, namely community, school environment, (ibid). Ecosystem theory examines the interactive relationships of different socialisation systems (home, school and wider social sphere) in which learners function, the way in which these affect their learning (Radebe, 2010). For the purpose of this

study, ecosystem theory will clarify that learners' performance and well-being are mostly influenced by a number of social factors.

1.6.2 The family systems theory

The family is viewed from an interactive and systemic perspective. A change in one part of the system will result in a change in other parts (Corey, 2006). Corey (2006) further stipulates that family systems theory provides a primary context for understanding how individuals function in relationship to other and how they behave. "Children always enter the world as part of pre-existing systems, with the family being the most common and central one" (Corey, 2006). According to the family systemic theory perspective, children from single – parent households are associated with worse outcomes than being the child in a two parent family (Sugarman, 2003). The family according to this theory is seen as a whole or unit and if one parent is missing it disturbs its balance. Father involvement is as important as the involvement of mothers and when there is a lack of father involvement, it has significant effects on children. According to Cherlin (1992), fathers demonstrate to their children how male adults can take responsibility; they provide a daily example of how to deal with life outside home and demonstrate the importance of achievement and productivity.

Children learn from their fathers a range of choices about everything from clothing to food to devotion to a great cause. This promotes positive moral values and the development of conscience. Father involvement seems to encourage children's exploration of the world around them (Cherlin, 1992). The emotional support a father gives to the child enhances the overall quality of the mother-child relationship, for example, dad eases mom's workload by being involved with the child's homework. Highly involved fathers also contribute to

increased mental health in children such as increased empathy and greater self-control in their behaviour. Children who have experienced high father involvement show an increase in curiosity and in problem-solving capacity, skills that are very important for academic performance (Cherlin, 1992). Recent educational policy and legislation in South Africa specifically encourages the role of parents in their children's education. However, many parents do not realise that their involvement in their children learning experiences not only improves academic achievement but also has a profound effect on the child's general behaviour (Department of Education 2002).

1.6.3 The Turmoil theory

Since the study explores the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households, turmoil theory will be of value. Teenagers are mostly in their adolescent stage. Adolescence by nature is a difficult or challenging developmental stage and it becomes even worse when children are members of a single parent family. In the view of Downing-Matibag (2009) adolescence involves a period of increasing independence, as young people begin to require less immediate supervision, spend more time with peers, develop their own interests, values and beliefs. It is a transition to adult world. Adolescents are dependent on parents while seeking an independent identity, a source of conflict between parents and children. Sdorow (1990) called this a period of "storm and stress". Tatar (2001) asserts that the 'storm and stress' model is inherent in the transition stage from childhood to adulthood.

According to Downing-Matibag (2009) parents and adolescents are vulnerable to conflict in their relationship, especially because adolescence is a period of life when young people desire greater freedom from adult authority in determining their own values, beliefs and life choices.

Conflictual relationships between parents and their adolescent children were characteristic of this model. Allison and Schultz (2004) as cited in Downing-Matibag (2009) showed that early adolescent between the ages 11 and 14 years old is a period of frequent parent-child conflict and that, although the majority of the conflict are over relatively minor issues, such as household chores, taking care of one's room and homework. According to Sigelman and Rider (2006), many adolescents of both sexes get themselves into trouble by overusing alcohol and drugs, engaging in delinquent behaviour, and displaying other so-called adolescent problem behaviours.

1.7 Research design and methodology

This is a qualitative study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) view research design as planning a research as to the kind of questions being asked or investigated, the purpose of the research and the paradigms, principles, philosophies, ontologies and epistemologies which underpin the research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households. It used a qualitative approach. The researcher uses a qualitative approach when an in-depth description is required (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002). An in-depth description of experiences of teenage learners from single parent households was investigated. As a researcher aiming to capture the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households, I used an interview schedule with open-ended questions to collect or gather data.

1.7.1 Research paradigm

The study is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Mertens (1998) the basic assumptions guiding the interpretive paradigm is that knowledge is socially constructed by

people active in the research process, that the researcher should attempt to understand. By adopting an interpretive paradigm this enables the researcher not to predict peoples' experiences but rather to describe how people make sense of their own worlds (ibid). Cohen, *et al* (2011) suggests that the purpose of interpretive paradigm is to develop a greater understanding of how people make sense of contexts they live in. This paradigm will help the researcher to greatly understand the experiences of teenage learners from single-parent households.

1.7.2 Data collection instruments

The choice of a particular method of data collection depends upon the nature of the research (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002). Data will be collected using structured interview and will be administered using open-ended questions. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) elaborate that an interview is an in-depth study of a particular case, which describe what is like to be in a particular situation, which means it is conducted in a real world contexts. Individual interviews will be used to gather data on the experiences teenage learners from single parent households have. Questionnaires are more suitable for much bigger samples. In a semi structured interview, the researcher uses an interview schedule with a set of questions in a predetermined order (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This will allow participants to express their opinions and experiences the way it pleases them, since the study requires the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households. In an interpretive research, the interview method is used when researchers are aiming at exploring and describing people's perceptions and understanding that might be unique to them. The interview also allows the researcher to ask probing and clarifying questions according to the participants' understanding (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002).

1.7.3 Sampling procedures

A purposive sampling was utilised in order to collect reliable and valid data. Purposive sampling is most suitable when the researcher targets a specific group of people who do not represent the wider population (Cohen *et al* 2011). Since this is a small scale study; the sample size will consist of 6 teenage learners, that is, three teenage girls and three teenage boys from a high school in Umlazi.

1.7.4 Research site

My research site Umlazi High school (pseudonym) which is an ex- model C school situated in the Umbilo area, which is a predominantly White neighbourhood. The learner population consists of approximately 900 learners from different race groups. The school has 40 educators from different racial groups representing the South African demographics. The school curriculum includes the three main streams, viz science, commerce and general. According to the school's admission policy; learners are admitted based on their academic performance.

1.7.5 Ethical Considerations

According to Durrheim and Wassenaar (2002) research studies should follow certain ethical principles. These principles are autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence (ibid). This implies that the researcher must respect all participants. Participants were assured that the study has no intention to harm them. They need to voluntarily agree to be part of the study and they can withdraw at any given point. Therefore consent forms were given to relevant stakeholders, explaining what the study is about so that the participants can make informed choices to participate voluntarily in the study. All participants were assured of confidentiality and their identities were carefully protected in the sense that pseudonyms were used. I also

applied for ethical clearance from UKZN so that the feasibility of the study can be ascertained or ensured.

1.7.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the data collected was accurately captured, audiotape will be used to record the interview. Participants will also be asked to read their transcripts in order to verify whether what is written on the transcripts is exactly what they said. Cohen *et al* (2011) maintains that for research to be reliable it must demonstrate that same group of respondents, in a similar context, and then similar results will be found. To enhance that the study will focus on teenage learners who are coming from single parent household.

1.7.7 Trustworthiness

Since this is a qualitative study the issue of credibility is very important, to ensure trustworthiness. Lincoln and Cuba (1985) in Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) proposed that the following criteria are used in the qualitative paradigm to ensure trustworthiness, which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These criteria will be discussed in depth in chapter 3.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a summary of the purpose of the study, the research questions, methodology, theoretical and conceptual frameworks including the ethical considerations followed in carrying out the study. The next chapter focuses on the review of relevant literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has provided an overview on experiences of learners from single parent households, its prevalence and the need for this study. This chapter will present the review of relevant literature. Literature review is about finding, reading, understanding and arriving at a conclusion about what other researchers have to say about a topic and what theories have been developed on the topic (Cohen *et al*, 2011). This chapter thus focuses on the review of available literature on the concept of single parent households and how it affects the children involved. This study acknowledges that living in single parent households may have profound consequences for both parents and children. Most literature sources on the subject compare single parent households to two parent households, thereby ignoring the variations found in this increasingly common family form (Richards & Schmiede, 1993). The increased prevalence of single parent households necessitates the investigation if this family form has potential strengths as well as weaknesses like any other family form and how it impacts on children's well-being. Single parent households may not be as different as they are perceived to be. The following aspects will be discussed:

2.2 Clarification of concepts

In order to ensure a thorough understanding of this study, hence the study wants to investigate the “*experiences of teenage learners from single parent households*” I have endeavoured to clarify the following terms: **single, teenage learner, nuclear family and household**. The word ‘**single**’ refers to a person who is not married or cohabiting. Single parenting is considered as the primary caregiver and where the child has residency majority

of the time. The term **‘nuclear family’** is generally meaning the family that consisting of the father, mother and children. However, because of the high incidence of divorce, it is no longer realistic to consider the nuclear family as the norm. However, Georgas (2009) defines family as *“a social group”* characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. **‘Household’** refers to a group of persons who live together and provide themselves jointly with food and or other essentials for living or single person who lives alone. A **‘teenager’** is defined as the following: a person between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age, (World reference. com, 2005). **Single parent household:** in the context of this study, it refers to a family where one biological parent raises a child and has custody thereof. Sometimes grand-parents and other extended members of the family (uncles and aunts) are involved to provide emotional support and guidance to both the parent and the child. For the purpose of this research study, **‘secondary school learners’** refer to teenagers, between the ages of 12 to 19 years, who are still attending secondary school.

2.3 Prevalence of single parent families

According to StatsSA (2012) the number of single parent households is increasing nationally. This is because of an increasing divorce rate within different racial groups. StatsSA (2012) showed that children were profoundly affected by this disruption as data revealed that only one-third (32, 6 %) of children lived with both parents. A further 24.4 % lived with their parents (maternal and paternal), nor 3, 7 % lived with their fathers where else 39, 3 % lived with only their mothers. Female headed households are 37, 5 % of all households compared to 6% of male-headed households (StatsSA, 2012). Statistical analysis indicates that a significant number of children are no longer being raised in a family with both parents. Single parent households refer to a family system where there is one parent, caring and raising his or her children alone. Single parent households are likely to be formed through divorce or non-

marital childbearing, and or from parental death (Ellwood & Jencks, 2002). I will focus on depictions of single parent household resulting from divorce and non-marital childbearing because these events are more directly subject to individual choice than parental mortality.

2.4 Causes of single parent households

Chuong and Operario (2012) family dissolution has strong implications for a number of children and this is the main cause of single parent households. The following are regarded as the common causes of family dissolution: the death of a parent, divorce, separation of parents and children born out of wedlock. This increases the likelihood of the child residing with one parent. The following is a discussion of each of the causes.

2.4.1 Death of a parent

In a case whereby a parent is dead, the child becomes an orphan and will carry the orphan status. The UNAIDS (2004) defines orphan status as having lost one or both parents before the age of 18. A maternal orphan is a child who has lost a mother; a paternal orphan is child who has lost a father. The rate of orphans is expected to increase, because of the prevalence of dreadful diseases such as cancer, HIV&AIDS and WHO (2008) in South Africa 18%, (which is 1, 4 million) children have been orphaned by this dreadful disease. HIV&AIDS is the main reason for single parent household in South Africa. The numbers are expected to increase to 3 million in 2015 (WHO, 2008). This is an indication that every year a new family structure including single parent family structure is still going to prevail. However, McLanahan (2001) children who grow up with widowed mothers, in contrast, are far better than children in other types of single parent families, especially on measures of educational

achievement. Higher income (due in part to more generous social policies towards widows), lower parental conflict, and other differences might explain this apparent anomaly, (McLanahan, 2001). This means that single parent families may be stable financially.

2.4.2 Divorce

Divorce is perceived as the main cause of single parent households. Mostly, custody of the children is awarded to the mother, because mothers are perceived as the caring nurturers, the most sensitive parents and the parent who is better equipped emotionally to handle and raise children alone (White, 2004) . Divorce has an adverse effect on children. The Law Dictionary (2014) defines divorce as the legal separation of a husband and a wife, effected, for cause, by the judgement of a court and either totally dissolving the marriage relation, or suspending it. The view point of Hilton and Desrochers (2009) children are likely to respond to divorce with disruptive behaviour. This concurs with White (2004) that the effects on children's psychological well-being are enormous when parents are divorced. It also impacts on children's self-esteem, achievement in school and psychological adjustment. According to White (2004) who says these impacts are due to the amount of time children spend with the non-custodial parent and the emotional environment provided by the custodial parent. However, depending on their temperament, some children become very resilient and learn to cope with emotional consequences of the split.

2.4.3 Births out-of-wedlock

This happens when the couple who had a relationship, because of some differences, decide to end the relationship. Sometimes the woman is already pregnant, or has already had the child. Mostly, people find it easy to stop a bad relationship and raise the child alone. Also McLanahan (2001) says that the shift in social norms and values reduced the stigma associated with divorce and nonmarital childbearing. This permitted young men and women to have intimate relationship and also live together outside of bonds of legal marriage, (McLanahan, 2001). This is gradually becoming a norm as more women realise that they can survive without a man.

2.4.4 Choice to stay single

Sometimes other people choose to stay single, because they are financially stable to raise children on their own. According to McLanahan (2001) the growth of single motherhood is as a result of the decline in men's earning power relative to women's. Consequently, more women can afford to live alone. The narrowing of the wage gap, among those with college education, men are doing well, but women are doing even better (McLanahan, 2001). Women are no longer as dependent on men to provide for them financially, unlike in past decades (ibid).

2.5 Experiences of teenage learners from single parent households

Experiences of learners from single parent households vary in terms of factors influencing them as well as the severity thereof as evident from the discussion below.

2.5.1 Economic experiences

Economic issues have a profound impact on the well-being of children and their mothers. Single mothers are at a greater socioeconomic disadvantage than their married counterparts (Whiteheads & Holland, 2003). Amato (1993) children from a divorce are at a risk of economic support as reflected in the level of income, housing quality, residential stability, and general standard of living enjoyed by families. This also concurs with Roman's (2011) assertion that single mothers are more likely to be very insecure economically because of low earning capacity. Money becomes an important and pervasive concern for single parents (Richards & Schmiede, 1993). Comparatively, single parent households are intact families, but are generally economically disadvantaged. Xu, Zhang and Xia (2008) argue that women often experience dramatic loss in financial resources after divorce, and single-mother families tend to suffer financial instability and poverty.

There are arguments that single mothers live below the poverty line. As a result, children from single parent households may have less access to well-resourced schools and adequate services, but more exposure to unsafe neighbourhoods and to the risks of problem behaviours (Xu, Zhang & Xia, 2008). Accommodation or lack of proper housing is another concern for single parents. However, Valimohammadi (2005) argues that as much as the single parent households fall below the poverty line but, they may provide benefits to children that many dual-parent households do not provide. However, they do that perhaps out of guilt or the feeling that they need to compensate for the absence of the other parent. Sometimes the parent may push their child even harder because the child becomes their only hope due to the loss of ex-spouse's income and support (Xu, Zhang & Xia, 2008).

2.5.2 Social experiences

According to Chuong and Operario (2012) family dissolution has had strong implications for the number of children, both orphaned and non-orphaned, who live apart from their parents. Therefore this study will explore how undesirable juvenile behaviour is related to the structure of home life. Living with both parents in a very or moderately happy relationship is associated with reduced likelihood of most undesirable behaviours. Xu, Zhang and Xia (2008) state that the single parent households become an easy target and single parents are blamed for problem behaviours in children. According to Bornstein (1995) single-parent households are often reputed to be responsible for society's declining values and breakdown of social fabric. Single parent households have been associated with causing of many of social problems and contributing to many wrong-doing in our society. Ambert (2006) postulates that social acceptance and stigmatisation of children and their single parents is unfair and would cause enormous problems. To such an extent that these children and their mothers were isolated and, often in order to escape social stigmatisation, had to move to another town and live a lie to be socially accepted.

The stigma associated with divorce is strong, and can sometimes ruin a person's reputation and career. Although society has become more accepting towards the single parent households, overall negative attitude toward divorce can lead to a high level of stress to divorcees and their children. Furthermore, shared parenting rather than single parenting may increase the likelihood of positive developmental outcomes for children (Bauserman, 2002). In most cases, we cannot reject the hypothesis that the probability of juvenile undesirable behaviour is the same across own-parents in an unhappy relationship, a very or moderately happy parent and step-parent, and a single parent (Mennemeyer & Senf, 2006). Parental absence resulting in single parenting has a negative effect on the child's social development

because of the lack of healthy interactions with both parents, assuming that both parents play an important role in the child's social development.

2.5.3 Academic experiences

A wide range of research indicate that teenagers from single parent households experience more behavioural problems and perform less academically when compared with children raised in two-parent households, (Valimohammadi, 2005; Xu, Zhang & Xia, 2008). According to Chia, Woo and Zhuang (2011) children whose parents were divorced, had lower academic performance, were more likely to drop out of school and had lower chances of completing high school. White (2004) postulates that because children from single parent households live below the poverty line, they tend to live in neighbourhoods with poorer schools or schools without resources. Economic factors play a huge role in children's academic achievement. Less family income means less money for other activities that enhance intellectual stimulation in children. For example, single parents are unable to provide their children with technological equipment such as computers, smartphones, etc. for educational use.

According Valimohammadi (2005) there is a popular assertion that single parents lack the time needed to give children mental or emotional stimulation because they try to make ends meet, and to attend to their children's school work. It is because single parents spend more time at work, working long hours to provide for their children, with the feeling that they need to compensate for the absence of the other parent (ibid). Furthermore, White (2004) avers that mothers who had to work longer hours at low-paying jobs have less time to be involved in their children's daily lives, especially related to their schooling. Single parents tend to be overwhelmed with their parenting responsibilities and could offer less academic support to

their children. Kendig and Bianchi (2008) also postulate that the quality of parenting supervision is frequently compromised due to the length of time spent working in order to support children in single mother families. Single mothers may not have the choice of being a stay-at-home parent if they are the sole providers in a family. However, if two parents live together they have more time to monitor their children's school work. If there is less or no parental involvement or supervision of school work, this results in poor academic performance. In single parenting lack of time is a prevalent issue. According to Chia, Woo and Zhuang (2011) parental involvement refers to the partaking of parents in regular activities and two way meaningful communication with the school about their children's academic learning activities. Parental involvement should be started at an early age in a child's education. Early involvement in their education will contribute towards the improvement of the children's educational outcomes. Xu, Zhang and Xia (2008) indicate that if a child's academic performance at school is poor, the child is often rejected by fellow students. However, Bornstein (1995) states that children from single parent households are likely to have difficulties with emotional and psychological adjustment with school performance and educational attainment. It is mainly because these children are more vulnerable to a wide variety of societal problems or risks.

Consequently, he/she may suffer low-self-esteem. Children of divorced parents are especially vulnerable to the rejection because their grades often drop when they have a difficult adjustment. The stigma of divorce can alienate the child and youth of divorced parents from their peers (Xu, Zhang & Xia, 2007). Poor school performance can further isolate children as they are consequently teased or made fun of by their peers. However, Schnayer and Orr (1989) in White (2004) highlights that the number of years a child had lived in a single parent home tends to differ than that of a child with immediate divorced parents. Meintjies and

Grosser (2010) postulate that the culture in which individuals grows up influences their thinking (cognition) and behaviour. They looked at family factors that influence creative thinking in learners. Their findings reveal that the absence of one parent may on the other hand lead to lower creative thinking because of lower socio-economic status of the family (Meintjies & Grosser, 2010). Lack of parental support and limited resources may inhibit creative thinking ability resulting in poor academic performance. Therefore we need to acknowledge the social context from which learners come, because this may impact on their academic development.

2.5.4 Teenagers' emotional and psychological needs and well-being

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households. Single parent households are prevailing. Therefore, the emotional and psychological context of the family is different in single parent families. This is because the majority of single parent families are headed by women (StatsSA, 2012). White (2004) defines psychological well-being as a general sense of emotional health as evidenced by high self-esteem and positive relationship with others and a lack of anxiety, depression and deviant behaviour. Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000) refer to emotions as the state of consciousness, or a feeling felt as an integrated reaction of the total organism accompanied by arousal and resulting in behavioural responses. This emotional adjustment in teenagers, yearning for independence may lead to change in their relationship with their single parents.

According to Nduna and Jewkes (2012) research show that young people experience considerable emotional distress. Among the causes of distress mentioned, parental absence and family structure were the main source of distress. Time spent with the non-custodial

parent is very important to child's well-being. Children love both parents equally and need them both. White (2004) claims that children who have close contact with non-resident parent tend to have better relationships overall with both parents, and this contributes to a strong sense of well-being. White (2004), state that parents should both remain full service parents. This helps to improve children's psychological growth and strength.

Ridner (2004) defines distress as a unique discomfoting, emotional state experienced by an individual in response to a specific stressor or demand that results in harm, either temporary or permanently to the person. Margow (1999) another emotional distress children experience is that of guilt, especially when parents have divorced. They often assume that in some way they are the cause for the breakup of their parents. It is stated by Butler, Scanlan, Robinson, Douglas and Murch (2003) that parental divorce constitutes a moment of emotional shock and causes high anxiety for most children. From the moment that the children become aware of their parental separation, they become involved, at least emotionally, in the process of their parent's divorce. Sometimes children have to bear the pain of the other parent especially in divorce cases, speaking degrading and derogatory remarks about other parent. Therefore, children feared victimisation so they end up wanting to keep the relationship with their mothers' positive, avoiding conflict or being labelled as disrespectful and ungrateful for their mothers support. This can result into anger, rejection and the feeling of vulnerability because every child wants to love both parents regardless of their shortcomings (Margow, 1999). Psychological distress is prevalent among teenagers from single parent households; this is influenced by material resources, vulnerability tension and conflict and when fathers are not present or playing an active role in their children's lives (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012).

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The focus of this research is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households. According to Mennemeyer and Senf (2006) the correlation persists even after controlling for factors such as household income, indicating that remedies such as better enforcement of child support or enhancement of the single parent's income by other methods will not suffice to counter the negative outcomes for children. Therefore, this research will discuss three theories specifically focusing on their applicability to the South African context and to the topic.

2.6.1 The Ecosystemic theory

I draw on the ecosystemic theory because it focuses on family structural factors. The ecosystem theory looks at individuals' experiences in the context of their environment (Everett, Lee, & Nichols 2006). The ecosystem theory perceives different groups of the social contexts as systems where functioning of the whole system depends on each other. Everett *et al.*, (2006) further postulate that ecosystem theory appreciates that family systems are environments embedded within increasingly larger environment, namely community, school environment, (ibid). The ecosystem theory examines the interactive relationships of different socialisation systems (home, school and wider social sphere) in which learners function, the way in which these affect their learning (Radebe, 2010). For the purpose of this study the ecosystemic theory will clarify that learners' performance and well-being are mostly influenced by a number of social factors. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2012) the notion of balance is a central ecological concept. When the relationships within the whole system are in balance, the system can be sustained; but with one parent, the family is unbalanced. It is also highlighted that learning may be influenced at the family level by a

number of factors. These may include the resources of the family, the family structure; the values held by the family, in relation to scholastic achievement; and the degree of both cognitive and emotional support a child receives from the family, (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2012). What is taking place at home can influence how the children respond towards school. The family structure like single parent households can affect the academic performance and the well-being of the child, positively and or negatively.

However, the family, which in most cases includes a mother and a father with their children, is seen as a dynamic social unit. Children tend to thrive in a set up with both parents showering them with love and care. However, through separation and divorce, the family unit is dissolved with serious consequences for the developing adolescent. The family unit becomes isolated parts which often do not co-operate in raising children. In turn, specific system factors affect at any other level system. According to Donald *et al.*, (2012) the ecosystemic theory connects individual psychological development to social context and the systems within it. Donald *et al.*, (2012) if there is a disruption in the system, the relationship and interdependence between the individuals in the system and other systems could make recovering difficult. Thus, what happens in one part of the system, it will impact on other parts of the systems.

The view point of Donald *et al.*, (2012) macrosystem basically involve social structures such as beliefs, culture as well as values that influence and maybe influenced by all other levels of the system. The natural environments are the major sources of influence on developing children. This refers to the relationship that exists between different individuals within the entire school system. However, the destructive behaviours demonstrated by the teenagers,

will serve as evidence that there is part of the system that does not function very well. If this part of the system is not attended to, it is likely to affect the rest of the systems the child is connected to, for example, the school and the community.

2.6.2 The Turmoil theory

Since the study explores the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households, turmoil theory will be of value. Teenagers are mostly in their adolescent stage. Adolescence by nature is a difficult or challenging developmental stage and it becomes even worse when children are members of a single parent family. In the view of Downing-Matibag (2009) adolescence involves a period of increasing independence, as young people begin to require less immediate supervision, spend more time with peers, develop their own interests, values and beliefs. It is a transition to adult world. Adolescents are dependent on parents while seeking an independent identity, a source of conflict between parents and children. Sdorow (1990) called this a period of “storm and stress”. Tatar (2001) asserts that the ‘storm and stress’ model is inherent in the transition stage from childhood to adulthood.

According to Downing-Matibag (2009) parents and adolescents are vulnerable to conflict in their relationship, especially because adolescence is a period of life when young people desire greater freedom from adult authority in determining their own values, beliefs and life choices. Conflictual relationships between parents and their adolescent children were characteristic of this model. Allison and Schultz (2004) as cited in Downing-Matibag (2009) showed that early adolescent between the ages 11 and 14 years old is a period of frequent parent-child conflict and that, although the majority of the conflict are over relatively minor issues, such as household chores, taking care of one’s room and homework. According to Sigelman and

Rider (2006), many adolescents of both sexes get themselves into trouble by overusing alcohol and drugs, engaging in delinquent behaviour, and displaying other so-called adolescent problem behaviours.

In addition, rates of depression increase dramatically. Sigelman and Rider (2006) further posited that children become more vulnerable to depression as they enter adolescence which leads to suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for this age group, far behind accidental injuries and just behind homicides (Sigelman & Rider, 2006). Often suicide attempt has been characterised as a ‘cry for help’ – a desperate effort to get others to notice and help resolve problems that have become unbearable. Sigelman and Rider (2006), outline that “the adolescent who attempts suicide often wants a better life rather than death”. Single parenting is regarded as another contributing factor leading to adolescent depression and general misconduct. According to Sigelman and Rider (2006) the turmoil theory, stability in a home has a positive impact on a child’s well-being. However, if there is any discord or disharmony between parents, children being perceptive and impressionable, more so in adolescence, are very likely to experience emotional disturbance.

2.6.3 The Family system theory

According to Morgaine (2001) family systems theory is a theory that suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family, as the family is an emotional unit. Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system. The family is viewed from an interactive and systemic perspective. A change in one part of

the system will result in a change in other parts (Corey, 2006). He further stipulates that family systems theory provides a primary context for understanding how individuals function in relationship to other and how they behave. “Children always enter the world as part of pre-existing system, with the family being the most common and central one” (Corey, 2006). According to the family systemic theory perspective, children from single parent households are associated with worse outcomes than being the child in a two parent family (Sugarman, 2003).

The family, according to this theory, is seen as a whole or unit and if one parent is missing it disturbs its balance. Bowen (1990) a family is a system in which each member has a role to play and rules to respect. Members of the system are expected to respond to each other in a certain way according to their role, which is determined by relationship agreements. Within the boundaries of the system, patterns develop as certain family member’s behaviour is caused by and causes other family member’s behaviour in predictable ways. Father involvement is as important as the involvement of mothers and when there is a lack of father involvement, it has significant effects on children. Cherlin (1992), fathers demonstrate to their children how male adults can take responsibility; they provide a daily example of how to deal with life outside home and demonstrate the importance of achievement and productivity. Children learn from their fathers, and or mothers’ range of choices about everything from clothing to food to devotion to a great cause. This promotes positive moral values and the development of conscience. Father involvement seems to encourage children's exploration of the world around them (Cherlin, 1992).

The emotional support a father gives to the child enhances the overall quality of the father-child relationship, for example, dad eases mom's workload by being involved with the child's homework. Highly involved fathers also contribute to increased mental health in children such as increased empathy and greater self-control in their behaviour. Children who have experienced high father involvement show an increase in curiosity and in problem-solving capacity, skills that are very important for academic performance. Lamb (2004) indicates that children, especially boys; growing up without fathers seemed to have problems in the areas of sex-role and gender identity development, school performance, psychosocial adjustment and control of aggression. Recent educational policy and legislation in South Africa, specifically, encourages the role of parents in their children's education. However, many parents do not realise that their involvement in their child's learning experiences not only improves academic achievement but also has a profound effect on the child's general behaviour (Department of Education, 2002).

3. Conclusion

A review of literature reveals that there is lot of literature on single parenting. However, only few literature sources base their research on children from single parent households. Most sources concentrate on parents' perspective leaving out learner perspective of being raised in single parent households. Therefore, the literature review does not indicate clearly the views of children from single parent households and how its affect them directly. It is because children tend to respond to situations differently; some positively while others respond negatively, it depends on their personality, character, the environment and the situation itself. Again, most literature sources seem to have a pessimistic slant on single parenting, focusing mainly on the negative effects of the phenomenon. The next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households and the impact thereof on children's academic performance and general well-being. This chapter provided an in-depth discussion on the research design and methodology that was used to generate useful data for the study. It also provided a description of the research site within which the study was located and conducted. The sampling method that was used to gather a suitable sample was also discussed. A discussion on individual interviewing techniques is then presented, as this method was used to generate data for the study. The issues of validity, reliability as well as ethical considerations have been discussed in this chapter.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) view research design as planning a research as to the kind of questions being asked or investigated, the purpose of the research and the paradigms, principles, philosophies, ontologies and epistemologies which underpin the research. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households and how single parent households impact on children's academic performance and general well-being. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), the aim of methodology is to describe approaches and paradigms of research, helping the researcher to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the product of inquiry but the process of it. It used a qualitative approach; it was most suitable when an in-depth description is required (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002). In-depth descriptions of experiences of teenage learners from single parent households were investigated. As a researcher aiming to capture the experiences of

teenage learners from single parent households; I used an interview schedules with open-ended questions. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) elaborate that an interview is an in-depth study of a particular case, which describes what is like to be in a particular situation, which means it is conducted in real world contexts.

3.2 A qualitative research approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach because researchers in qualitative research attempt to understand a particular social situation or event through on-going interaction (Maxwell, 2005). According to Patton (2001) qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in the context-specific settings, such as real world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon interest. They seek to explore and understand social reality and cultural meaning and their focus is on interactive processes and events (Maree, 2007). This study was conducted through an intense and prolonged contact with participants sharing their life situations, in other words the approach was used because depth was required in the study. An in-depth description of various experiences which teenage learners from single parent households were gained. The aim of this study was to also gain a holistic overview of the context of this study. Stake (2005) confirms this by stating that contexts are important in this type of research and further states that contexts are situational constrained, which means that each study is a complex entity embedded in these contexts or backgrounds.

Maxwell (2005) argues that qualitative research studies people or systems by interacting with, observing the participants in their natural environment and by focusing on their meanings and interpretations; as opposed to quantitative research where the researcher

separates himself from the world being studied; where he would stick to what he would observe and measure it using questionnaires or survey in order to get to the truth. Choosing a qualitative approach over a quantitative approach was motivated by the fact that I wanted to construct a detailed description of how participants interacted and behave in the social world. This is because qualitative researchers attend to participants' experiences as a whole, not as separate variables (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2002). Data was generated to allow patterns, themes and categories of analysis to emerge and it was well suited to explore social phenomena (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Maree, 2007).

3.3 Paradigm

An interpretive paradigm which is closely linked to qualitative research design was used because it became suitable in conducting this study. It involved interpreting and constructing meaning of the participant's experiences as well as their perceptions and beliefs about being raised in single parent household. Mertens (1998) assumes that guiding the interpretive paradigm is that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, that the researcher should attempt to understand. By adopting an interpretive paradigm this enables the researcher not to predict peoples' experiences but rather to describe how people make sense of their own worlds (ibid). Cohen *et al.*, (2011) suggests that the purpose of interpretive paradigm is to develop a greater understanding of how people make sense of contexts they live in. This paradigm helped to greatly understand the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), there is a need for a researcher to understand and make sense of what has been researched. These scholars view the relationship between the

researcher, what is being studied and situational constraints that shape inquiry as intimate; whereby the researcher seeks answers to questions that emphasize how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue that one undertakes qualitative research in natural settings where the researcher is an instrument for data collection, which gathers words or pictures and analyse them. This study centred on the teenage experiences from single parent households. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), the interpretive paradigms strive to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors. In order to understand experiences of teenage learners from single parent households and how single parent households impact on children's academic performance and general well-being, I had to work with them in their natural environment to acquire a better understanding of how they feel. I used theories and concepts which are in line with the study in order to get a better understanding of the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) the interpretive paradigms strive to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors.

3.4 Methods of data collection

The choice of a particular method of data collection depends upon the nature of the research (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002). Qualitative researchers used variety of methods for collecting first-hand materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). These methods included interviewing, observation, documents, visual materials and the use of personal experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Morse and Richards (2002) argue that data is not collected but made. This means that collecting data implies that data pre-exist, ready to be picked up like apples from a tree. Morse and Richards (2002), view the process of making data as collaborative, on-going in which data is jointly negotiated by the researcher and participants; requiring a tremendous effort on the part of the researcher. The data was collected using semi structured interviews

and administered using open ended questions. Individual interviews were used to gather data on the experiences of the teenage learners from single parent households. In a semi-structured interview the researcher uses an interview schedule, with a set of questions in a predetermined order (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This allowed participants to express their opinions and experiences the way it pleases them, since the study requires them to freely express their experiences of living in single parent households. In an interpretive research, interview method is used when researchers are aiming at exploring and describing people perceptions and understanding that might be unique to them. Interview also allow the researcher to ask probing and clarifying questions according to the participants' understanding (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002).

3.4.1 Semi-structured interview

The view point of Morse and Richards (2002) semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to pre-plan the same questions to ask all the participants. Semi-structured interviews are also appropriate when the researcher knows enough about the study topic to frame the discussion in advance (Morse & Richards, 2002). Merriam (2009) goes on to define probes as questions or comments that follow up something already asked. It is not possible to specify probes ahead because they are dependent on how the participant responds to lead questions. Probes take different forms such as silence, sounds, single words and complete sentences (Merriam, 2009). According to Cohen *et al.*, (2011), an interview is a bendable tool for data compilation enabling sensory channels to be used. Punch (2005) interviews are very good ways of assessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality. Furthermore, he claims that the in-depth interviews are one of the most powerful ways of understanding others (Punch, 2005). Participants who cannot read and write are not discriminated against because the researcher simply throws in the question and

the participants answer it at their level of thinking and not writing anything down (DeVisser & Smith, 2007).

The purpose of the interview is to gather information. However, Miltiades (2008) argues that one must keep in mind the fact that the interview is a social, interpersonal encounter not merely a data collection exercise. According to Mason (2002) individual interviewing is the interactional exchange of dialogue whereby meanings and understandings are created in an interaction that is a co-production involving the researcher and the interviewees. Creswell (2007) individual or in-depth interviews are essential for investigating personal, sensitive or confidential information which is not suitable for a group format. It is also the best method when the researcher seeks individual interpretations and responses. I used individual interview so that my participants would feel free and comfortable to express their views regarding their experiences from being raised by single parent. Six individual interviews were conducted and each interview lasted approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. This took place in a secluded space. All the interviews were conducted in English since my participants are from an ex model C school and have English as their home language. It was an individual interview with semi-structured questions using an interview schedule. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate when the researcher knows enough about the study topic to frame the discussion in advance (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

3.5 Sampling Procedures

As its name suggests, a purposive sampling is chosen for a specific purpose. According to Cohen *et al.*, (2011) purposive sampling is when a researcher makes a specific choice about which people to include in the sample. Purposive sampling is used for those participants who

have an in-depth knowledge about particular issue or issues. Four factors need to be taken into consideration when deciding on a sample for a study: the size of the sample; sampling strategy to be used; representativeness and parameters of the sample; and access to the sample (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). The size of the sample depends on the purpose of the study and the nature of population under scrutiny; the researcher must decide whether to use purposive or random sampling; the sample used must represent the whole population in question; researcher needs to ensure that access to the sample is not only permitted but also practicable (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). The common variable among the learners in this study is that they are raised by single parents; therefore the purposive sampling method is used to select participants who are most appropriate for the research study. Rubin and Babbie (2005) explain that within the use of purposive sampling, the researcher has the advantage to handpick key people who in his/her judgement best represents the range of those persons who would best know the needs of the subject/topic chosen. I purposively selected six teenage learners who are between the ages of 15 and 18, three males and three females in order to collect reliable and valid data.

Purposive sampling is most suitable when the researcher targets a specific group of people who do not represent the wider population (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). However, this is a small scale study; the sample size consisted of 6 teenage learners, that is, three teenage girls and three teenage boys from one of Umlazi high schools. A purposive sampling method was therefore suitable for this study. All my participants came from working class backgrounds. Cohen *et al.*, (2011) indicate that the researcher makes a specific choice about which people to include in the study and it is evident that I did the same. To protect their identity, pseudonyms were used.

3.5 1 Sampling Characteristics

Table 1.1 Participant information according to age, gender and grade

Participant (Pseudonyms)	Age	Gender	Grade	Parent living with	Parents' Age	Parents' profession
Sfiso	17	Male	12	Mother	40	Unemployed
Thomas	17	Male	9	Mother	43	Teacher
Zinhle	17	Female	12	Father	56	Unemployed
Charlotte	18	Female	12	Mother	39	Teacher
Beryl	17	Female	11	Mother	48	Teacher
Joseph	15	Male	9	Mother	60	Nurse

3.5.2 Diaries/Journals

In conjunction with interviews, the participants were required to record in their personal diaries/journals, the experiences they encounter in context of their family situation from birth to present. Diaries/ journals were used to create a timeline. The use of a timeline allowed for a representation of the experiences of the participants. I further provided them with the required stationery in which to complete their diaries/ journals. The data collected was for the most part descriptive in nature, the methods of data collection needed to allow the participants the freedom and comfort to express their views on their experiences as teenage learners from single parent households. Also voice how single parent households impact on

their academic performance and general well-being the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households and how single parent households impact on children's academic performance and general well-being.

3.6 Research Site

The study was conducted at Umlazi High school (pseudonym), which is an ex- model C school situated in Umbilo area, a predominantly a white neighbourhood. The learner population consists of approximately 900 learners from different racial groups. The school has 40 educators from different racial groups representing the South Africa demographics. The school curriculum includes the three main streams, which are science, commerce and general. According to the school's admission policy; learners are admitted based on their academic performance. The quality of teaching and learning is well-organised and structured and up to standard because of the good results produced by the school at the end of the year. I chose to conduct research in this particular school because travelling cost were minimised and other limitations such as clashes with activities were easily identified and rescheduled with no cost and without time delays.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

A research should not expose participants to, physical, psychological, emotional, professional and personal injury (Oliver, 2003). Therefore, the need to avoid any moral harm to participants must be the priority. Durrheim and Wassenaar (2002) research studies should follow certain ethical principles. These principles are autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence (ibid). This implies that the researcher must respect all participants. Participants were assured that the study will not harm them. They had to voluntarily agree to be part of

the study and that they can withdraw at any given point. Therefore, informed consent forms were given to relevant stakeholders, explaining what the study is about so that the participants can make informed choices to participate voluntarily in the study. Cohen *et al.*, (2011) define informed consent forms as the procedure in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions. This entails elements of competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension (Diener & Crandall, 1978).

Letters stating the purpose and benefits of this research were given to all participants before the interview process. I obtained permission from the parents of the participants since they were all under the age of 18 years by handing them consent letters that were then signed by parents. The consent forms contained the details of the study and made it clear that participants were free to withdraw from the study should they feel uncomfortable. I also told them that they had a right to say that the interview should not be recorded. In the consent forms, confidentiality and anonymity was stipulated very clearly. All participants were assured of confidentiality and their identities were carefully protected in the sense that pseudonyms will be used. According to Durkheim and Wassenaar (2002) research design should always pay careful attention to the ethical issues embodied in a research project.

The data that was generated from individual 'interviewing transcribed verbatim'. I did this through listening to the taped recordings of the interviews and then typed them to produce interview transcriptions. Cohen *et al.*, (2011) state that some researchers feel that adding verbatim data keeps the flavour of the original data. Where there was a question of clarity, the tape was replayed. It was a challenging to match the speed of what was said but I had to focus

on the recording to ensure that all data was captured accurately. According to Dawson (2006) everything needs to be recorded and stored systematically, so good organisational skills are important if one wishes to understand participants. Broad themes emerged from the data and because of thematic analysis used. Dawson (2006) states that data analysed by themes are called thematic analysis and the analysis is highly inductive and themes emerged from the data are not imposed upon by the researcher.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research data is subjective to respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute to a degree of bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Validity should then be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state, (ibid). Joppe (2000) defines reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. To ensure that the data collected is valid and reliable; during the interview an audiotape was used to record responses from participants. Participants were also asked to read their transcripts in order to verify what on the transcripts is exactly what they said. Cohen *et al.*, (2011) maintains that for research to be reliable it must demonstrate that same group of respondents, in a similar context, and then similar results will be found, learners who are coming from single parent households only. The data that was collected was kept very safe and confidential. All the interview questions that were asked were simplified for the participants so that they can understand and respond appropriately.

Descriptive validity refers to whether the information provided is truthfully correct and comprehensive or whether it has been partly absent or distorted (Struwig & Stead, 2003).

This is where the participants assist the researcher in examining the accuracy of the data and it was clear that my participants assisted me in this process as well.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the criteria used in qualitative research to verify the credibility of the findings of the study as well how transferable and applicable are these findings to the group of people. De Vos (2002), Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson (2002) refer to trustworthiness as establishing the truth value of the study. Morse *et al.*, (2002) proposed that the criteria in the qualitative paradigm to ensure trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability criterions used to judge the trustworthiness of the study on teenage learners from single parent households. The aim of credibility is to demonstrate the inquiry that was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the study was accurately identified and described (De Vos, 2002). The way data gathered has influenced the credibility and trustworthiness on the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households. Transferability is when the researcher demonstrates the applicability of one set of findings to another context. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2002) state that in transferability the researcher can refer to the theoretical framework to show how data collection and analysis had been guided by concepts and models. Dependability is when the researcher tries to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the study, as well as changes the design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting (ibid). Confirmability is the criterion that helps to confirm the general findings and lead to the implications.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter evidently outlined and discussed the research design and methodology that was employed in this study. A qualitative research approach, interpretive paradigm, purposive sampling and two interviewing techniques were used to produce relevant data. This chapter also alluded to the challenges encountered in accessing the research site and also how the participants responded in producing the data. The limitations that were experienced in this chapter were somehow conquered to produce relevant data. The next chapter presents analysis and interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides us with the findings of the data collected on the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households. The objectives of the study are (i) to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single-parent households, (ii) to investigate how single parenting impact on learners' well-being and academic performance and (iii) to understand the uniqueness of children's experiences of their single-parenting. An individual interview and reflective diaries/ journals were the instruments utilised to collect data. Therefore data presentation and discussion include data from individual interview as well as from reflective diaries/journal. The following research questions are aligned to the objectives and serve as a guide and inform readers as to the aim of this study.

- ❖ What are the education-related experiences of teenage learners from single parent households?
- ❖ How does single-parenting impact on learners' well-being and academic performance?

Purposive sampling was utilised and the sample size consists of 6 teenage learners, three teenage girls and three teenage boys. Five of my participants reside with their mothers, and only one resides with her father. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. Thematic analysis assists in organising and analysing textual data. Three themes emerged from data.

4.2 THEME 1: Positive experiences of learners from single parent households

Learners shared their positive sentiments about living with a single parent. My participants are mainly living with their mothers, and only one lives with her father. According to Nijole (2012) children are more likely to show preference for their mothers as they are more involved with them than their fathers. It is within human nature to become attached to a protective caregiver. These are some of the experiences recorded and or captured.

4.2.1 Getting more attention

Living in a single parent household is associated with getting more attention. Single parents are likely to spend lot of their time with their children. This is due to the fact that they do not have the company of the partner or the spouse.

Sfiso: who stays with his mother and his two aunties says:

“I am her only child therefore I get lots of attention, recognition and lots of love since I do not share with anyone”. We have a lot of fun together. She even washes and irons my clothes”. It also appeared in his reflective diary/journal that most of his time he spent them with his mother.

Joseph: also highlighted the same thing and he stays with his mother.

“My mother tries her best to close the gap that my father is not there, so she is give me extra attention and too much love”.

This means that mothers are seen as more capable of nurturing and being emotionally responsive to the needs of their children. However, this can be a challenge when there are

siblings to contend with as the single parent (in this case, the mother) would have to meet all the siblings needs.

4.2.2 Peaceful home environment

Learners associate single parent families with stability and being in a peaceful environment, with no fighting, violence and arguments.

Zinhle: She stays with her father and her son (got pregnant at the age of 16 and now she is 17 years). *“It’s peaceful at home because my father is not arguing with anyone”*. Her father got divorced with her step-mother two years later.

Thomas: He describes his home as a peaceful environment as they now stay with their mother, because their parents got divorced. He continues to say that their father was aggressive, physically and verbally abusive towards his mother.

“There is peace since my parents are not arguing and fighting in the house anymore”. He also said *“... I don’t have the guts to intervene as that would appear as disrespectful”*.

According to Roman (2011) optimal parent-child interaction in single-parent families is predicted by fewer stressful life events, reduced social contact, increased parenting support and the hours of maternal employment. Families with both parents are beset with problems emanating from financial problems, relationship problems, problems with children.

4.3 THEME 2: Negative experiences of learners from single parent household

Participants had to indicate how the absence of another parent impacted on them negatively. This is deemed important in this study so we have an idea as to how it affects learners' wellbeing and school could offer support to ameliorate their problems.

4.3.1 Financial burden

Historically, in single parent household's structure, the mother is usually the primary caregiver. In most cases mothers get the custodial right to stay with children. Sometimes young children who still need some nursing, the mother would be seen to be better suited to take care of the children. Therefore, mothers have the most day to day responsibilities in raising the child or children. In such cases the mother is the sole provider in the family, because the family mainly rely on one income for survival. In this sense finances have profound impact on the economic well-being of the family. However, there are fewer resources especially money. It is revealing that 83% of participants of the study still feel that they need more financial support more than anything.

Sfiso...My mother is unemployed so I don't get everything that I want.

According to Nduna and Jewkes (2012) parental unemployment, absence of father and large families result in financial insecurity. Three of my participants who are currently in matric are worried about what will happen to them next year. They are wondering if their parents will afford their expensive tertiary fees.

Zinhle "Ei mam, I'm worried the fact that my father is not working, sometimes it is hard. We would go to bed without food; even paying for the school fees is difficult. I

sometimes wonder if I will ever go to tertiary institution. Who is going to pay for me...life is really difficult.”

Thomas: *“I’m not sure if my mother will be able to have the financial strengths that will carry us through our schooling career me, my sister and my younger brother.”*

Participants’ responses are evidence of the way finances is an important aspect in single parent household. Children always think because of lack of financial support, life is meaningless. Some learners even have to limit their expectations because with limited funding, it is very likely that their dreams might not materialise.

Charlotte: *“I have pictured how my matric dance will be like, but never did I take into account the issue of money. How I wish I had my money to buy the things for the dance”.*

4.3.2 Adult responsibilities at young age

Sometimes parents find it difficult to coordinate social life and parenting responsibility. Most of single parents are working extra hours because they carry all the financial responsibility for the house or sometimes there are other commitments that they have to attend to. The burdens of being the only parent available may result in some of the household responsibilities delegated to children. Household chores are expected to be carried out by children, including cleaning the house, cooking, ironing and washing. As a result they come from school to do some house chores and by the time they have to do their homework, they are already tired.

Beryl:commented that: “..... because most of the time I would have to do house chores and by the time I finish them I am already tired to do my homework”.

According to Richards and Schmiede (1993) children in single-parent families may benefit from increased levels of responsibility. These adolescents were also more likely to assume household responsibilities than children in two-parent families (Richards & Schmiede, 1993)

4.3.3 Missing mother figure or father figure

It has also been revealed that some of the participants do miss the other parent. However, it is only different in some selected cases especially whereby the separation has been caused by death of the parent. Participants believe that if their parents were still alive, that was going to change their lives for the better.

Zinhle: emotionally highlighted that she feels the absence of a mother figure in her life. “*On the 24 of June 2011 when I discovered that I was pregnant. It was very difficult. I would wish my mother was here. I had many thoughts to abort or to commit suicide.*”

“.....I’m missing a mother figure in my life. Someone to talk to, about my daily life experiences as a woman”.

She continues to say” “*I also think that if my mother was still alive maybe I wouldn’t have got pregnant at the age of 15.*”

The absence of the other parent can negatively impact on learners’ well-being. It is because they strongly believe that if the other parent was still alive maybe the situation they are facing was going to change for better.

Joseph:..... also commented that:“.....*My mother would tell me that my father was a very loving and supportive husband and father, so I always wondered how life would be if he was still alive.* In his dairy/journal he put the picture of his parents’ wedding picture on their anniversary.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder. This means that for most young people there is a feeling that things would improve. The situation would have been very different if the family was complete.

4.4 THEME 3: Impact of single parenthood on learners ‘well-being’ and academic performance

This study also aims to investigate how single-parenting impact on learners’ well- being and their academic performance. The impact could either be positive or negative.

4.4.1 Impact on learners’ well-being

According to Merriam-Websters dictionary (2014) well-being means a state of being happy, healthy and successful. Participants’ experiences of living with single parents varied, so was the impact thereof on their well-being, or state of contentment. As **Zinhle** indicated that she is more concerned about her father’s financial status as he is unemployed. Her desperation is apparent in this aspect “*We would go to bed without food; even paying for the school fees is difficult. I sometimes wonder if I will ever go to tertiary institution. Who is going to pay for*

me...life is really difficult.” It is apparent from the above that a parent’s financial circumstances have an impact on children’s well-being and peace of mind.

There is link between children’s emotional stability and their wellbeing. This is evidently shown by the hardship following the absence of one parent was conveyed in other participants’ response, **Sfiso:***“I don’t have a relationship with my father and it hurts if other boys are talking about what their fathers are doing, or they share sentimental stories about their fathers.”* Some participants were born out of wedlock; however, they seemed to carry an internalised pain and the desire at the same time to have a relationship with their absent parent. In the interviews conducted it was also revealed that father absence concerns most of the participants. Some participants’ perception is that if both parents were fully responsible for their upbringing, their lives would have been better.

Emotional support is highly needed among children and has serious implications on their well-being. **Thomas:** when asked which support he needs since he is living in a single parent household, he said *“.....Emotional support the separation of my parents affected us all. Sometimes I would miss my father”.*

Zinhle: also revealed that amongst all the support she needs, emotional support is the first support she needs in her life right now ...*“need some emotional support. My boyfriend dumped me after I told him I was pregnant. So I am now left with the full responsibility of a child. He doesn’t even contribute a cent. I am adding the burden to my father”.* Participant 1 also feels that if her mother was there, her situation would have been better. Fathers’ lack of support made participants feel deprived of some opportunities, and alleviate some distress.

This is expressed by **Thomas** again when he said... *“I am not happy at all, in fact I’m devastated. I have been repeating grades since their divorce. I’m supposed to be in grade 12 this year. All my peers I started schooling with, all are in grade 12”*.

Well-being is defined as the state of being happy, healthy and successful, however in this research study it is revealed that most of the participants are unhappy for being in single parent household (Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, 2014). It is also revealed that participants seem to be worried about the lifespan of their parents. They are concerned about what will happen to them if maybe their one and only parent will have to die. **Charlotte** said... *“I am scared if something happens to my mother, what I would do, how would I survive? Especially since my granny has also passed away this year (2013).”* This is creating a state of uncertainty in children, and impact negatively on their well-being. However, this negative impact may lead to depression and risks of suicidal thoughts. **Charlotte** continued to say: *“..... I need some emotional support..... This year alone I have tried to overdose pills more than once. Suicidal thoughts are inflating my head”*.

The aim of the study is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households, and also to investigate how single-parenting impact on learners’ well- being. In the above paragraph it is clearly defined that well-being is the state of being happy, healthy and successful (Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, 2014). It is therefore clear that some of the participants enjoy each and every moment they have with their single parent. Some of the participants they even prefer being with one parent and they feel very happy to be in that set up. This has been stated by **Sfiso**: who said: *“.....he prefers this family structure and he is very much comfortable with it.*

Children are likely to show preference for their mothers because they are more involved with them than the fathers. This is because mothers are perceived as protective, showing affection towards their children and with nurturing characteristics that create a profound and strong mother-child relationship and attachment. According to Roman (2011) mother-child interaction in single parent families is predicted by fewer stressful life events, increased parenting support and the hours of maternal employment. Single parent households provide a warm environment where there is emotional support and unconditional love. I think single parents are trying to close the gap of the absent parent. **Joseph** clearly states that “*My mother tries her best to close the gap that my father is not there, so she gives me extra attention and too much love*”.

According to children raised in single parent households where single parents provide atmosphere are more likely to have an increased psychological well-being, competent and generally well-adjusted (Joussemet, Koestner, Lokes, & Landry, 2005). This results in children having to learn to be more appreciative of their parents. **Beryl:** ... “*My mom is a very strong woman. Sometimes I could see that she is struggling and does her best to hide it*”.

The acknowledgement participants shown about the hard work their single parents do to raise them was amazing, **Sfiso** showed his love for his mother by saying that... “*My mother instils moral and values in me and we have lot of fun together*. This underscores the importance of the role mothers play in ensuring a sound development of a child and Participant 5: “*I also learn to be appreciative of the hard work my mother is doing for us*”.

4.4.2 Impact on learners' academic performance

This study aims to investigate the impact of learners' experiences on their academic performance. It is important in this study that I find out how learners' experiences are affecting their performance in class. Learners' problems have a potential to be a huge distraction, especially to teenagers with fewer coping strategies.

4.4.2.1 Economic deprivation

Single parenting is associated with financial insecurity and often single parents are unable to afford to pay for their children's schooling. According to Roman (2011) single mothers are at a greater socioeconomic disadvantage than their married counterparts. Single parents are more likely to take full responsibilities of the household, such as paying for lights, transport, groceries, and school fees, pay for rent/bond. In single parenting households they are mainly depending on one source of income to survive. In this way, children living in single parent households are likely to suffer some deprivation of resources. Lamb (2004) economic deprivation is associated with a number of factors that can affect children's well-being indirectly. The quality of educational and recreational opportunities provided, social stability, (ibid). This is evident when *Charlotte* said... *My mother struggles financial so I don't get everything I want, such study guides. We have to stick to budget.* *Charlotte* also said that sometimes she has to wait for her mother to have money before she gets whatever she wants.....*"Sometimes I could see that my mother is struggling financially. When you ask her to buy me some study guides she would let me wait till she has money"*. Financial resources play a vital role in the academic performance of learners from single parent households, (McLanahan, 1986; Lamb, 2012 & Roman, 2011). The extra learning material or those extra lessons requires some funding, which seem to be difficult for single parents, who have other

financial responsibilities and commitments. Thus impact on learners because they will not perform to the best of their ability without these learning resources.

There is also an indication that most of the participants are worried whether either parent will afford to pay their school fees, and tertiary education. Almost all the participants indicated that they would need financial support to pursue their studies. **Zinhle** said.....“*next year I have to go tertiary institution, I don't know what will happen, since my father is unemployed*”.

4.4.2.2 Minimal supervision of children

It is also noted that children from single parent households are generally less or sometimes not supervised and their actions are not monitored. It is because single parents have to work longer hours, which leaves them with little or less time for their children. This impact on learners' academic performance since parents is not available to supervise homework and give support where necessary. In such situations children experience helplessness. **Charlotte** clearly voiced out that her mother is hardly there to assist her with homework.....“*my mom is working six days a week, she leaves early in the morning and she would come home late in the afternoon, so no one is giving me support in my schoolwork*”.

The lack of parental guidance and supervision relate to learners' poorer academic performance and academic achievement. **Beryl** also said the same thing as **Charlotte**....*There is no proper study supervision. My mother is working far from home so she comes back home tired and never check my schoolwork*”. Parental involvement with their children's

schoolwork raises high expectations of the child academic performance. However, because of less or minimum supervision of children in single parent households, children will engage in early sexual activities resulting in teenage pregnancy and substance abuse. According to McLanahan (1986); Brown and Iyengar (2008) parental supervision is necessary in adolescents for behavioural control. The significant role of active parental involvement maximise children's academic success, (ibid).

4.4.2.3 Learners performing household chores

Most of children living with single parents have to perform household chores, leaving them with less time to do their schoolwork or homework. This is evidently said by *Charlotte*: who said: *“because most of the time I would have to do house chores and by the time I finish them I am already tired to do my homeworks”*. This has impact as well on their academic performance because they do not get enough time towards their studies. Performing chores tend to interfere with children's studies.

5. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study single-parent households are associated with bad experience for children, though most children prefer to live with single parents. As results indicate, there is not much of a difference between single parent families and two-parent families as long as the care-giver (s) provides children with emotional stability. Single parent family as the same as two parenting family, it only depends what parents are willing to do in order to raise responsible young adults. The type of family structure does not have much

influence on learners' well-being and on their academic performance. Children prefer to be in an atmosphere that is pleasant in order to be at their best ability.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at presenting a summary of findings, recommendations and an outline of the limitations of the study. The aim of the study was to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households and their ability to strive for academic success under their social circumstances. It took into account the unique historical gender-based environment that single parents have been moulded into over a period of time, thus trying to solve this seemingly generalised impasse in order to provide a more resilient foundation and scaffolding for future generations.

5.2 Summary of findings

The findings of this study have the following implications for teenagers' experiences of single-parenthood as well as on their well-being and education.

5.2.1 Teenagers' experiences of single parenthood

The aim of the study is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households, and also to investigate how single parenting impact on learners' well-being. The following are the research questions, (1) what are the education-related experiences of teenage learners from single parent households? (2) How does single parenting impact on learners' well-being and academic performance? Data were collected using open-ended questions, semi structured interviews with six participants from single parent households.

Therefore, this study has revealed that indeed in single parent households there are some challenges that are faced by both parents and children. Although research findings revealed that experiences are mixed on both negative and positive experiences. They have similar experiences like any other child from a two parent household. It is the quality of relationship between the child and residential parent that is important. This has a positive effect on children's well-being, especially where there is adequate supervision and adequate income. Learners were also asked to keep daily journals, where they were required to write their daily experiences with their single parent. Findings also revealed that in single parent households especially in mother-only families, boys tend to be more delinquent, including alcohol and drug addiction. This arises because the absence of a male or a father figure can be difficult and strenuous to boys.

It is clear that some children will always need both parents by their side, whereas other children assume they are better off without the absent parent. Although this can be created by the fact fathers often become disinterested and detached from their children at an early age, consequently making the father's absence not a crucial factor. However, the findings revealed that children, who miss their absent parents mostly, are the children who got separated from their parents due to death or divorce. It is because they assume that if, or maybe if the mother/father was still alive or if the family is intact, situations in their lives were not going to be the same. However, on the other hand, other children whose parents separated due to divorce assume it was the best decision their parents had taken, because of the peaceful home environment that consequently ensued. A warm positive engagement by single parents in their children's lives and education is also associated with greater persistence and effort, better performance and minimum behavioural problems at school regardless of family structure (Lamb & Lewis, 2013; Pleck, 2010 & Amato & Fowler, 2002).

Single parent household is characterised by predictive factors such as financial issues, sense of responsibility at young age, missing a mother or a father figure. However, economic deprivation is the major source of the most problems experienced in single parent households. Economic deprivation contributes to lower socio economic status. Therefore, there are other external factors that contribute towards teenagers' emotional and psychological well-being. However, there are also positive experiences that were revealed by participants.

According to Stats (2012) single parenting is increasing and is expected to increase, therefore most children will find themselves in this family set up. However, the majority of children adjust to single parenting families and do not experience severe problems.

5.2.2 The impact of single parenthood on teenagers' well-being and academic performance

The study is not meant to put single parent households in a bad light but to investigate if and how they affect children's well-being and academic performance. Like all families, they have advantages and disadvantages. Children from single parent households (families) are not necessarily intellectually inferior but do experience a lot of social, emotional and academic challenges. This is more so because the parent would be dealing with a lot of pressure to provide for children and are often emotionally detached or distant. A parent juggling with a lot of responsibilities seldom spends quality time with his/her children. Hence there is a need for psycho-social support for children from single-parent families. According to research study findings (Roman, 2011; Lamb, 2012, Brown & Iyengar, 2008) learners from single parent households experience a lot of socio-economic challenges which have a potential to impact negatively on their emotional wellbeing. This means that the school should have programmes in place to address their needs.

5.3 Recommendations of the study

Single parent households are generally characterised by lower socioeconomic status, and an increased likelihood of being economically disadvantaged. This means that in a family where there are two parents more help with the children and emotional support is available. It makes it easy for the supervision and for discipline purposes. According to Cooksey (1998) fathers invest far more in their children when they are in marriage than when they are either living in cohabitation or living apart from their children.

5.3.1 Inculcation of responsibility at a young age

The culture of responsibility should be inculcated in young men and women. Teenagers should be encouraged to consider the advantages of abstinence from sexual relations, practise safe and responsible sex, and to be channelled towards more responsible parenting and partnering. We can also encourage the delaying of motherhood until greater maturity is reached to meet up with the demands of parenting.

5.3.2 Provision of psychological services in schools

There is a need for psychological services in schools for teenage learners. Such services will cater for and offer important information and exposure to our teenage learners. These services will also equip learners to engage in informed decision making. The following psychological services are highly recommended: life skills, sex education, and life orientation. These services will also contribute towards the abilities to take personal responsibilities that are necessary for children's future well-being.

5.3.3 The need for parents to be emotionally available

Time is among most crucial factors in single parent households. This is due to the fact that most single parents are working long hours leaving less time to spend with their children. The loss of time children spend unsupervised and less parental involvement bring bad consequences, because of the absence of the parent. Single parents should strive to spend quality time with their children, especially on their schoolwork, and special occasions like birthdays. Spending much time with children will let them feel loved, thus instilling the values and discipline that will enable them to face the world challenges with a positive attitude.

5.3.4 The need for support networks

Due to the fact that most single parents live alone with their children, they often have inadequate social networks. This means that they should seek extra assistance and support from other family members or extended families such as aunts, uncles and grandparents. The shared responsibility will lessen the burden to single mothers by certain quantity. This will reduce the amount of time children spent alone, because there will be an adult available to supervise.

5.3.5 Educators' understanding of learners' situation

Educators have to have some understanding of learners' situation and design intervention plans to support them. Due to the growing number of children from single parent households and families are unable to provide for their children economically or psychologically, schools are therefore forced to respond to the unmet material and emotional needs of children whose

families are not able to do so (Zellman & Waterman, 2010). However, Zellman and Waterman (2010) postulate that most schools are not fully equipped to integrate with wide range of services to cater for such children.

5.3.6 The need for family therapy to minimise instability and conflicts

As one of the objectives of this study, it is important to investigate how through therapy children from single parent families achieved to be resilient and cope with whatever challenges they encountered along the way.

5.3.7 The need for role models of different sex

Children from single parent families need role models. According to Cruess, Cruess and Steinert (2008) role modelling is a powerful teaching tool for passing on the knowledge, skills and values. Therefore there is a need to have a person whom you can regard as your role model, especially for children raised in single parent. This arises that learning from role models happen through observation and reflection. Role models are different from mentors. Role models inspire and teach by example, (Cruess, Cruess & Steinert, 2008). The benefits of having a role model for learners from single parent households is that, learners learn to reflect on and understand some of the life lessons. Therefore, it is very crucial for a role model to have personal qualities and attributes that promote or inculcate positive life values to learners from single parent households.

5.4 Theoretical analysis of findings

Both the ecosystemic theory and the family systems theory view the family as an important aspect of a larger and more complex community or society (Everett, et al, 2006; Corey, 2006; Donald et al., 2012) or macrosystem, and the individual behaviour should be understood in the context of the environment in which it occurs. Children, as members of the system should be seen as products and active participants of a particular environment (the ecosystem) which impacts on their well-being. This means that the school as a microcosm of society has to demonstrate an understanding of the social dynamics impacting on the wellbeing of teenagers from single parent families, a concern about the challenges they face and negotiate, and its capacity to provide emotional support if and when such a need arise. Any sign that such learners are being picked upon or being ridiculed will galvanise the school to intervene. Education is a societal issue and different stakeholders participate in creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning. It is not the teenagers' choice that they are being raised by single parents; neither should their status be seen as a societal stigma.

5.5 Recommendations for future study

This study raised a concern for future study because single parenthood is spreading widely. Therefore people from all sphere of life will have to be made aware so that surviving strategies can be created and easily implemented. This future study must also look at single parent households from the child's perspective; because children are also affected by this family structure. Literatures tend to look at the problem only from the parental perspective.

5.6 Limitations of the study

The following are limitations of the study:

Generalisability – Due to the fact that only six participants were used in this study and conclusions drawn from their experiences, such findings cannot be generalised for a larger population. Also only one racial group was used in the sample. This means that the views or opinions of other race groups were not captured. Participants selected were little a bit reluctant to answer some of the questions as they evoked some difficult emotional issues long buried. Some of the participants did not fully complete their journal of daily experiences. Also, the views of parents of the sampled teenage learners were not explored.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study is not to vilify single-parent families and portray them as a societal aberration, but to gain a better understanding the challenges teenage learners from such families experience and how schools can support their academic, social and emotional development. The idea behind this project was not to cast aspersions on single-parent households as detrimental to the development of children but to illuminate how they affect children's wellbeing and academic performance. It is difficult to arrive at a conclusive position as to what the requirements of a good single parent family are, as the study reveals, neither can one describe what a dysfunctional family or a detrimental home for a child is. But, as Amato and Fowler (2002) point out, positive parenting practices such as support, monitoring and avoidance of harsh punishment are important predictors of child outcomes in all types of family structures. However, parental monitoring is even more in single-parent households than in two-parent-households (ibid). Amazingly, I learnt that monitoring of

children is equally important regardless of the type of family structure the child comes from. Like all families, single-parent households have advantages and disadvantages. It is however important to take cognisance of the fact that children are unique and their capacity to deal with emotional issues varies. Hence, the need for the school to create conducive environment for teaching and learning for all children, including those from disadvantaged family backgrounds.

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APPENDIX A



28 November 2013

Ms NP Bhengu (209532008)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol Reference Number: HSS/0461/013M
Project title: "The experiences of teenage learners from single – parent households."

Dear Ms Bhengu,

Full Approval Notification – Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response in connection with the above study has now 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 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.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh

/ms

cc Supervisor: Mr H Murbwathoho
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr MN Davids
cc School Administrator: Ms B Bhengu and Mr T Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4001

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8300/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: amb@ukzn.ac.za / svmb@ukzn.ac.za / mb@ukzn.ac.za

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APPENDIX B



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8

Ms NP Bhengu
299 Lotus Drive
Lotus Park
ISIPINGO
4133

Dear Ms Bhengu

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **THE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS FROM SINGLE- PARENT HOUSEHOLD ON ONE HIGH SCHOOL AT UMLAZI DISTRICT**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 October to 31 March 2014.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (Umlazi district).

Brettonwood High School

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 31 October 2013

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

You are kindly requested to participate in a 45-60 minutes interview which is part of an M.Ed (Educational Psychology) study entitled: *The experiences of teenage learners from single-parent households*. The purpose of this interview is to gain insight into learners' experiences and how they affect their emotional well-being. The assumption is that learners from single-parent families experience unique challenges from their two-parents counterparts.

The information being sought by this interview is for research purposes only. Confidentiality of information will be maintained and participants are not asked to identify themselves by names. Please provide as much accurate information in response to each question, or statement, as possible.

Part One – Biographical Information

1.1	School Name				
1.2	Age	16	17	18	19
1.3	Gender/Sex	Male		Female	
1.4	Grade	Nine	Ten	Eleven	Twelve
1.5	Race	African	Indian	White	Coloured

Part Two – Interview Questions

1. Who do you currently live/stay with?
2. What is your custodial parent's occupation?
3. Where is the other parent?
4. Do you have any contact with the other parent?
5. Do you have a sound relationship with him/her? Give a reason for your answer
6. Is the other parent employed? If so, what does he/she do?
7. Does the other parent support you financially?
8. Do you have any siblings? How many?
9. Were your parents married or was it a causal relationship?

10. Does the fact that you live with one parent make you feel different from other children? How so and how does it affect you?
11. Do you ever wish that your parents could reconcile?
12. What is the likely stumbling block?
13. What are the challenges you experience as a learner from a single-parent family?
14. How do you handle the challenges?
15. Do you think that teachers are more sympathetic to your plight?
16. What do you think schools should do to help learners like you?
17. Do you think that your custodial parent understands what you are going through?
18. Give a reason for your answer.
19. Do you think that learners' wellbeing influence their academic performance?
20. Give a reason for your answer

Thank you for your time. If you need to contact me these are my contact details:

Ms Nombulelo Bhengu

Tel: +27 (0)72 863 7749

Email: Bulebhengu@gmail.com

If you need to check with my supervisor, these are his contact details:

Mr Henry Muribwathoho

Tel: +27 (0)31 260-7011

Fax: +27 (0)31 260-7003

Email: Muribwathohoh@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX D

Consent document for conducting research

Research topic:

“The experiences of teenage learners from single parent- households.”

Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households, being guided by the following research questions.

- What are the education-related experiences of teenage learners from single parent households?
- How does single-parenting impact on learners’ well-being and academic performance?

Researcher information

Name: Nombulelo Precious Bhengu

Contact details: 072 863 7749

Supervisor: Mr H.N. Muribwathoho

His contact details: 031 260 7011/ Muribwathoho@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

My name is Nombulelo P. Bhengu; I am a student at University of Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am conducting research on the experiences of teenage learners from single parent households.

Your voluntary participation in this research will be of value. You are not forced to participate and you are free to withdraw at any stage of the interview. There will be set of questions participants will be required to answer. If you agree to be part of the interview please complete the consent form below (if over 18 years) or by your parent/ guardian if under the age of 18 years.

All information will be treated with confidentiality. No names will be used, however pseudonyms will used instead.

CONSENT FORM

I,..... (Full names) parent/guardian
of.....(name of child) consent to
his/her participation in the research project.

SIGNATURE:

DATE

.....

...../...../.....

APPENDIX F

299 Lotus Drive
Lotus Park
Isipingo
4133
April 2014

The Principal and SGB
Mnqolombeni High School
Umlazi
Durban
4001

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT UMLAZI HIGH SCHOOL

I am doing a Master's degree at University of KwaZulu Natal (Edgewood Campus) in Educational Psychology. I am currently doing a research study titled: "The experiences of teenage learners from single parent households"

I kindly request permission to conduct my research at your school. I understand that it is a crucial time for learners as they will soon have to prepare for their Mid-year examination. I will ensure that my research is conducted after school hours so that I will not disturb teaching-learning hours. I intend to do my best to respect that. The research study will involve only 6 participants, voluntarily. I will also protect their identity by using pseudonyms instead of their real names.

This research also aims at assisting the school in terms of understanding, what are the education-related experiences of teenage learners from single-parent households? How does single parenting impact on learners' well-being and academic performance? Learners will get necessary support from psychological services where possible.

I will highly appreciate it if my request in this regard is granted.

Yours faithfully

Miss N.P. Bhengu

APPENDIX G

LANGAUGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

25 Maple Crescent
Circle Park
KLOOF
3610

Phone 031 – 7075912
0823757722
Fax 031 - 7110458
E-mail:
svetariksec@ Telkomsa.net
sathsgovender@bomef.com

Dr Saths Govender

15 JULY 2015

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to inform that I have read the final version of the dissertation titled:

THE EXPERIENCES OF TEENAGE LEARNERS FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS, by N.P. Bhengu, student no. 209532008.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully



DR S. GOVENDER
B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers
MPA, D Admin.

APPENDIX H

TURNITIN REPORT

The experiences of children form single parent households

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