

**UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF  
SINGLE PARENTS IN KWADAMBUZA**

**BY**

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**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (FAMILY THERAPY) IN THE  
SCHOOL OF APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES**

**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL, DURBAN**

**DECEMBER 2013**

## DECLARATION

I, Cynthia Sanelisiwe Ndlovu, Student Number 204518517 declare that this research title:

**“Understanding the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza”** is the product of my own exploration. I declare that the research reported in this dissertation is my product except where it is indicated the source materials. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or to any other university.

Signed

.....

Cynthia Sanelisiwe Ndlovu

December 2013

## **DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR**

This dissertation, which was under my supervision is being submitted with my approval

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## **ABSTRACT**

When single-parent households are consequences of intentional or unintentional reasons, they are often associated with economic and psychosocial challenges. This study aimed to understand, explore, describe and interpret the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza. This study highlights relevant issues that may provide guidance to different stakeholders in their efforts to deal with challenges of single-parent households. Qualitative research processes were used in this study. The sample consisted of 20 single-parent households (ten male and ten female single-parent households). Data collection took place using in-depth interviews and one focus group. The use of these two techniques served to enhance the reliability of the data.

The ecosystem theory was utilised as a fundamental conceptual theory to understand the economic and psychosocial plight of both male and female single-parent households. The findings show that there were four key themes and six sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis and which are discussed in relation to the microsystem, mezzosystem, exosystem and macrosystems impacting single-parent households. Theme one focuses on the structural impact of poverty, unemployment on both male and female single-parent households and discusses two sub-themes: the impact of social grants on the family household income and family expenditure and implications for education of children. Theme two provides insight into the psychosocial challenges experienced, and discusses two sub-themes: intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges of males and females single-parent households. The third theme focuses on parental responsibilities and child care as a sub-theme. The fourth theme focuses on the blatant lack of support systems that negatively impact both the male and female single-parent households and discusses one sub-theme: access to service provision.

The study revealed that the main challenge is poverty which was closely connected to unavailability and inaccessibility of service providers, and lack of support structures.

This had a negative implication on food security and education of children. Some participants indicated that they and their children are still struggling to cope with the loss of their partners and parents therefore, these single-parent households feel that they also need more therapeutic services to deal with their past. This study further revealed that the social isolation experienced by single-parent households impacts negatively on their social functioning.

Based on the findings, recommendations are made with regards to roles of social services providers in ensuring that the basic needs of both male and female single-parents households are adequately met.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my great gratitude to my Lord Jesus Christ who never forsakes me. He made the impossible to be possible in my life. I am indeed grateful to the Man above.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to my supportive supervisor, Dr Tanusha Raniga for her guidance and endless support throughout the study. Thank you so much for holding my hand at times when I thought I would never finish this study. The writing of this dissertation would not have been made possible without the support of my editor Chuma who spent all her time editing this piece of work.

My big gratitude goes to my parents Mr. Z. Ndlovu and Mrs. M. Ndlovu. I feel truly blessed to have such supportive parents in my life. *Unwele olude kini bazali bami*. I would also like to thank my siblings Fondo, Thakasile and Siyabonga and friends for sharing time and ideas.

A heart filled appreciation to the participants who made the completion of this study successfully.

As for eternity, the unconditional patience and support of my fiancé Mr. Jimmy Buthelezi has been fundamental to the completion of this dissertation. *Ngiyabonga Shenge*

Other special thanks go to the following people who were so supportive during this journey:

- Mrs. Sinikiwe Biyela (LifeLine Director) and the board of management team at LifeLine Pietermaritzburg, for allowing me to conduct this study at their organisation and with their clientele.
- My fellow staff members at LifeLife, Mrs. N. Dyarvane and Ms N. Kheswa, who were so supportive during this journey.

## **DEDICATION**

This special piece of work is dedicated to my nieces Zinathi Sindiswa Choncho and Aphiwe Ndlovu, my nephew Asanda Ndlovu and to my stepson S’phesihle Buthelezi. I love you so much.

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ACRHR</b>	<b>African Charter on Rights on Human and People’s Rights</b>
<b>ACRWC</b>	<b>African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</b>
<b>AIDS</b>	<b>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</b>
<b>BEE</b>	<b>Broad Based Economic Empowerment</b>
<b>CBO</b>	<b>Community Based Organisation</b>
<b>CSG</b>	<b>Child Support Grant</b>
<b>CV</b>	<b>Curriculum Vitae</b>
<b>DOD</b>	<b>Department of Social Development</b>
<b>DOE</b>	<b>Department of Education</b>
<b>DHS</b>	<b>Department of Human Settlement</b>
<b>DOL</b>	<b>Department of Labour Support</b>
<b>GEAR</b>	<b>Growth Employment and Redistribution</b>
<b>HIV</b>	<b>Human Immune Virus</b>
<b>HSRC</b>	<b>Human Sciences Research Council</b>
<b>ICPD</b>	<b>International Conference on Population and Development</b>
<b>LGA</b>	<b>Local Government Area</b>
<b>NGP</b>	<b>New Growth Path</b>



<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>RDP</b>	<b>Reconstruction and Development Programme</b>
<b>SADC</b>	<b>Southern African Development Community</b>
<b>SASSA</b>	<b>South African Social Security Agency</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNCRC</b>	<b>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children</b>
<b>US</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>United States of America</b>
<b>WHO</b>	<b>World Health Organisation</b>
<b>WFS</b>	<b>World Fertility Survey</b>

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## CHAPTER ONE

### CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

#### INTRODUCTION

Single-parent households may be defined as a family comprising of a single mother or father having their own dependent children (Kotwal and Prabhakar, 2009: 197). A single parent household is thus, a nuclear family where one or more children are nurtured by either a father or a mother (Kruger, 2010:51). It involves a sole parent caring for children without the help of the other parent (Kruger, 2010: 51). A single parent is usually considered the primary caregiver, which refers to the parent with whom the children have residency the majority of the time. There are many circumstances that contribute to single-parent households; some of which are intentional choices such as legal separation or divorce where one or both partners make a decision to end their intimate relationship; they then found it impossible to embark on a new intimate relationship, while others are unintentional results of situations such as loss of partner through death. The concern for social workers is that the number of single-parent households is drastically increasing globally. International trends in the United States have revealed that more couples are opting to be single parents as divorce is on the increase (Burke, 2009: 3).

Single-parent households face many unique challenges, regardless of whether the causes are related to divorce, separation, and loss of a spouse, migration, choice, or teenage pregnancy. Williams (2011) affirms this by stating that the parenting role is a hard responsibility and being a single parent is at least twice hard. A qualitative study conducted in Barkin Ladi by Keswet and Dapas (2010) in Nigeria, with forty single-parents on their coping strategies, revealed that some challenges experienced included: childcare and training needs, child support enforcement, loneliness, financial problems and psychological problems.

According to the White Paper on Families (2012) more than 40% of 246 618 households in South Africa in 2007 were single-parent households and this alarming increase of single-parent households in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, is causing tremendous stress for social service providers, as poverty and HIV/AIDS are considered as the additional complex factors that provide impetus for single-parent households (Holborn and Eddy, 2011). The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a major unintentional factor leading to single-

parent households in KwaZulu-Natal (Holborn and Eddy 2011). HIV/AIDS is acknowledged as one of the most common causes of death among people, which has resulted in cutting short lives and leaving countless single-parent households and children who live in fear and pain. Triegaardt (2009) says that the rapidly changing patterns of mortality and morbidity due to AIDS means, many poor households are pushed deeper into poverty which has a detrimental effect on single-parent households.

The current trends indicate that South Africa has made little or no progress in minimising poverty within single-parent households (Sanders, Bradshaw and Ngongo 2009/2010). According to Frye (2007) South Africa has blatant contradictions in society as there is a first world economy where people adore a high standard of living, whereas a second economy mainly focused on informal, marginalised, unskilled and unemployed people who are not capable of accumulating enough resources to break out of the poverty trap.

Many single-parent households in KwaDambuza report psychosocial challenges they face that are caused by the death of their partners through AIDS related illness and they report economic obstacles they confront thereafter. The HIV/AIDS trends in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal provide some evidence that the increase in adult mortality resulting from the HIV/AIDS epidemic is raising greatly the prevalence of single-parent households, Holborn and Eddy (2011). Therefore, in order for the social workers to be in a good position to assist single-parent households to overcome challenges encountered in the parenting process, they need to understand economic structures and psychosocial experiences that have a negative impact on the capacity of single-parent households, to better cope with their situation and to have more support connected to the ecosystem.

This opening chapter provides the introduction of the study and by doing so it outlines the research problem. This is then followed by a discussion of the rationale for the study, the research aim and objectives of the study. The purpose of the study and key questions are also presented. Subsequently, the ecosystems theoretical framework which formed the conceptual foundation for this study is discussed; highlighting the microsystem, mezzosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Finally, the conclusion to this chapter indicates how the remaining chapters are presented.



## **OUTLINE OF RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Single-parent households is a common phenomenon, which has been the subject of research globally with separation and divorce being cited as major life stressors and causes of single parenthood (Burke, 2009: 3). Statistics South Africa (2010) indicates that single-parent households are on the increase and that about 30% of households in South Africa are single-parent households, with that figure being higher in rural areas. More than 20 000 children under the age of 18 years are affected by divorce (Statistics South Africa, 2010) and the concern for social workers is that, children being raised in a two-parent household are becoming a norm of the past. In addition, the South African Institute of Race Relations (2011) revealed that nine million children in South Africa are growing up in households with an absent biological father. Shefer & Clowes (2012:553) provide evidence from their qualitative study conducted at University of Western Cape in South Africa, with a group of 29 men who reported their experiences of growing up without a biological father. This study concluded that fathers are not playing their role and responsibility to their children; such as nurturing and caring for their children.

South Africa had been affected by many issues that lead to one another, for instance, South Africa had been negatively impacted by the apartheid regime and from there it was violent crime followed by a cycle of poverty under the second economy (Holborn and Eddy, 2011). In particular these authors argue that during the apartheid era, single-parent households in KwaZulu-Natal have been attributed to a history of political violence that resulted in many deaths, especially among males.

Another qualitative study conducted by Sewpaul and Pillay (2011) in Chatsworth Durban in KwaZulu-Natal with five women, it revealed that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and divorce had destructed the immediate family structure and that the two parent family structure is being replaced by single-parent households, grandparents-headed or other alternative family structures (Sewpaul & Pillay, 2011: 290). Furthermore, this study concluded that the main causes of single parent households in the Chatsworth area were divorce, death of spouse and teenage pregnancies (Sewpaul & Pillay, 2011: 290). The implications from these studies is that many South African children, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal are growing up in less safe, insecure households and streets more threatening (Juffer, 2006: 173) with the absence of a father figure. The consequences of apartheid especially in terms of mass poverty and HIV/AIDS, add a further crisis on an already divided society. The South African AIDS

epidemic demonstrates no signs of hesitancy. At present South Africa has the greatest percentage of individuals living with the virus in a single country, with an estimated 5.3 million infections (UNAIDS, 2005) and KwaZulu-Natal is ranked fourth. South Africa is facing an extraordinary AIDS crisis. The increasing numbers of HIV infected adults are having a devastating impact on social service providers.

As a social worker employed within a Non-Governmental Organisation for the past six years, my case files provide evidence of the increasing phenomenon of both male and female single-parent households in a low income, predominantly rural community, named KwaDambuza in KwaZulu-Natal. One of the most pressing developmental challenges such as; having to cope with all the care-giving, nurturing, role-modelling, challenges, rewards, obstacles and joys meant for a partnership of two, facing the KwaDambuza low income, predominantly rural area. All these experiences are overwhelming, frightening and extremely tough for single-parent households from KwaDambuza and they subsequently receive the LifeLine and Rape Crisis's counselling services as they find it hard to cope with their roles and responsibilities. Having been working with single-parent households, I have observed that they often experience deep economic and psycho-social challenges and tend to suppress their emotions for fear of being labelled as failures. The purpose for conducting this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza.

## **RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The key motivation for embarking on this study was to gain an understanding of economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza. At my place of employment at an NGO level, one of the main concerns was the increase in the number of single parents in KwaDambuza who were experiencing challenges in coping with financial obstacles and reporting psychosocial ills. In the past two years I have seen the different trends in KwaDambuza, which was an increased number of male single-parent households. It had been a norm that a greater number for single-parent households would be females, but recently there is a noticeable increase number of male single-parent households in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. Hence, I felt the need to make known the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in order for the social workers to be in a good position to render relevant services to the single-parent households. The KwaDambuza

informal settlement was selected for this study as I am a social worker who works in this area. As a social worker employed by Lifeline and Rape Crisis in Pietermaritzburg, I work primarily with KwaDambuza community members, offering supportive services and helping them with challenges they might be experiencing, which hinders the single parents' capacity to reach their full potential.

In recent years, I have had to deal with many single-parent households from KwaDambuza who are struggling economically and psychosocially. In some instances, the single parents would verbalize that they are unable to cope with the roles and responsibilities of being a parent. Some of the concerns raised included poor living conditions, lack of social support and support from relevant service providers, stigma, loss of family connection, anger management and other social relationship issues.

Another single parent that I had to provide with psychosocial support through counselling, presented with many challenges. She had challenges in controlling her anger, she had trust issues, she would sometimes refuse to communicate with me and she often decided not to keep the appointments for the on-going counselling. I found it hard to offer substantial assistance to this client as she could not cooperate. From this example, my concern has been with the blatant lack of clear information and support mechanisms in social work services to deal with single-parent households.

A further concern that motivated my involvement in this study was my experiences with single-parent households, as they have been identified as a challenging role with disadvantages including financial hardship and poor mental health (Cheeseman, 2011). Through understanding the economic and psychosocial experiences of single-parents in KwaDambuza, I hoped to investigate whether this was a unique situation. The augmented number of children cared for in single-parent households and the shrinking of potential biological caregivers, raises a concern to me as a researcher. Furthermore, my six years of work experience as a social worker have revealed that these critical priorities are being addressed on an ad-hoc basis.

This study is therefore intended to provide participants an opportunity to open up and to talk about their own understandings, feelings and challenges. Given this background, I embarked upon this study in order to understand economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza. I hope that the results of this study will be useful in informing

service providers of the challenges experienced by single-parent households, thereby serving as vital input information in planning appropriate intervention strategies to address the needs of single-parent households. In addition, the findings of this study would complement previous studies in highlighting the gaps pertaining to the support structures available for single-parent households in general.

## **RESEARCH AIM**

The main aim of this study was to understand economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza.

## **KEY OBJECTIVES**

- To understand the economic stressors associated with single-parent households in KwaDambuza.
- To understand the psycho-social experiences of single-parent households in KwaDambuza
- To understand the coping strategies of single-parent households in KwaDambuza
- To present recommendations to service providers in respect of gaps in services for single-parent households in KwaDambuza.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The key questions underpinning this study were:

- What are the economic stressors associated with single parenting in KwaDambuza?
- What are the psycho-social experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza?
- What are the coping strategies of single parents in KwaDambuza?

- What recommendations do single parents and service providers make in the provision of economic and psycho-social support services to single parents?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is informed by the ecosystem theory. Fisher *et al.* (2008) cited in Ginsburg, Mitchell, Breen and Crafford, (2012: 6), argues that the ecosystem service is useful as it depicts how people think about their environment, in terms of the benefit they receive and the ways in which they utilize their resources. William and Burch (2010: 86) states that ecosystems do not have absolute or permanent boundaries, though we draw lines around kinds of places for our convenience and ecosystems are always changing, whether people cause the change or not. This study builds on work that emphasizes the importance of viewing single-parent households as an ever changing process, interconnected systems that impact the health and well-being of single-parent households.

Ecosystems theory views human behaviour from a holistic perspective, developing from the interplay of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, spiritual and cultural systems. According to Berk (2000) the ecosystems theory views the person as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. Human beings advance and familiarize through transactions with all components in their environment. Berger, Mcbreen & Rifkin, (1996) argue that these transactions are not always mutually beneficial, or entered into with equal power and status. “The ecosystem theory is thus composed of different subsystems that help support and guide human growth which include the microsystem, mezzosystem, exosystem and macrosystem” (Berk 2000: 27).

### **The microsystem**

“The microsystem refers to the relationship and interaction a human being has with his/her immediate surroundings” (Berk, 2000: 27). In this study, the microsystem is the single parent households and the children that are cared for. It will also include other members of the extended family residing within the household such as nieces, nephews and cousins. The family is central to single parent headed households as it provides support, nurturing

environment, security, and love. Thus a single parent's ability to function well depends on his or her holistic well-being (physical, social, spiritual and mental).

### **The mezzosystem**

Stepney & Ford (2000), state that the interaction between the micro-systems makes up the mezzosystem. The mezzosystem is the second level in the ecosystem model and in this study, it will encompass the connections among mezzo systems such as schools and neighborhoods (Berk 2000: 28). It is characterized by interactions between different systems, for example, it will include the interaction shared by the single parents with their neighborhoods and surrounding schools.

### **The exosystem**

The exosystem refers to social settings that do not contain the developing person but affect experiences in the immediate settings. In the context of this study, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) or churches will be conceptualized as the exosystem. It could also be the organizations in the communities that provide medical care, meals, day care and other services to the single-parent households, as coping mechanisms. Organizations like Lifeline in the communities that assist families in need of assistance may alter the life experiences of these single parents. Keswet (2010: 55) confirms that single-parent households can also seek counselling through churches, friends, non-governmental agencies and associations such as the Lifeline and Rape Crisis organization in Pietermaritzburg, which provides emotional wellness through counselling services.

### **The macrosystem**

The macrosystem level is the outermost layer in the person's environment. At this level structural factors are made that affect the lives of single parent's households, for instance, poverty, unemployment and inequality among single parents. According to Stepney & Ford (2000) macrosystems consist of cultural, political, economic, legal and the religious context of the society in which children and adults are developing. If the structures at the macro system do not fulfil the requirements of the policies, human rights would be violated. It also refers to the values, laws, customs and resources of a particular culture. For example, in KwaDambuza single-parents are not allowed to purchase land. Mooney *et al.* (2009: 22)

suggested that developing parenting programmes under policy implications that are specifically targeted at supporting parents to manage the effects of family breakdown on themselves and their children could help. “The increasing feminization of the labour market in South Africa can be attributed principally to legislative and government interventions. This would include entrenching gender equality in enacting legislative reforms to remove discrimination and other barriers to women’s independence and security, for instance in the form of Employment Equity Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998c), and the Skills Development Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998a). The broad based Black Economic Empowerment Act (Republic of South Africa, 2003) accelerating the participation of women through special programmes such as; affirmative action and equal employment opportunities, for an example; appointing women to national positions and encouraging the education of women and children” (<http://upetd.up.ac.za>), as most of the single parents are struggling financially and the majority of single parent households are female headed.

## **VALUE OF STUDY**

Through this study, I hope to provide valuable insights into the economic and psychosocial experiences of the single-parent households in KwaDambuza. In particular, I hope that the study will provide valuable insight into challenges experienced by male as well as female single-parent households. The findings reveal the availability of economic and psychosocial support systems.

The ultimate aim of the study is to make recommendations in developing programmes to assist single-parent households to cope better with the responsibility of child caring, and this would ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable members of society are addressed. In addition, the results will contribute to the growing body of knowledge among social service providers and will be useful in informing social workers of the challenges of single-parent households in KwaDambuza, so that they can respond with appropriate measures to address the challenges and needs.

Thus, understanding the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents of KwaDambuza, will serve to enhance social work services to the family and facilitate the development of strategies to strengthen and improve family relationships.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used:

- **Single-parent households:** can be defined as families where a parent lives with dependent children, either alone or in a larger household, without a spouse or partner ([www.encyclopedia.com/topic/single-parent-families.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/single-parent-families.aspx)).
- **Child:** according to the Children's Act cited from (<http://www.act.co.za>) a child is a person under the age of eighteen years.
- **Poverty:** ([http://sociology.about.com/od/P\\_Index/g/Poverty.htm](http://sociology.about.com/od/P_Index/g/Poverty.htm)) defines poverty as a condition in which people lack what they need to live; but the limits of "need to live" are a matter of definition. But the experience of poverty also depends on how much people have relative to other people in their society and the cultural.
- **Migration:** (<http://www.ask.com/question/what-is-migration>) refers to migration as the movement of people from one region to another. Different forms of migration include emigration which is movement out of a region, and immigration.
- **Patriarchy System:** A family, group, or government, controlled by a man or a group of men. It also refers to the social system in which family members are related to each other through their fathers. Patriarchal social system means social system in which the father is the head of the family and men have authority over women and children, (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patriarchy>).

## CONCLUSION

The researcher introduced and provided a broad overview of the study in Chapter one. The background of the study, the rationale for the research, value of the study, objectives of the study and research questions has been briefly discussed.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter one presented an outline of the background and rationale for the study. An overview of aims and objectives were also discussed in this chapter. The theoretical framework which is the ecosystem theory was outlined as a key conceptual framework that guided this study. Additionally the value of the study was also presented.

This chapter provides an overview of literature on the economic and psychosocial experiences of single-parent households. Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2007) argue that reviewing existing literature is to familiarise the researchers with the latest development in the area of research. The literature review created a conducive atmosphere to learn and get familiar with current trends and also understanding related studies on the economic and psychosocial experiences of both male and female single-parent households.

This chapter firstly focuses on global trends followed by the plight of single-parent households in Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. The discussion on the prevalence of single-parent households in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal follows. This chapter also presents the factors leading to changing family structure in South Africa which follows by an overview and critique of South African legislation framework. Lastly, this chapter discusses the implications of single-parent households on welfare-economic, psychosocial, parenting challenges and coping strategies.

#### **SINGLE- PARENT HOUSEHOLDS: GLOBAL TRENDS**

According to Burke (2009:3) separation and divorce are common phenomena in the community today, but still represent a major life stressor for the individual involved, with potentially strong negative consequences for the mental and physical health of all members of the family. What has been perceived is that marriage is increasingly becoming unpopular nowadays while divorce is increasing. “In the UK, the number of married couples fell by 262,000 to 12 million, while the number of cohabiting couples rose from 2.1 million to 2.9

million over the past decade”, (divorceattorney@wordpress.com). During the same period, “there were 1.8 million children living with unmarried partners” (divorceattorney@wordpress.com). Holborn and Eddy, (2011:3) indicates that single-parent households were two and a half times more likely to be living in poverty as couple-headed households. Across the industrialized world, about 15.9 percent of children live in single-parent households. The United States is at the higher end of the single-parent household range, with 25.8 percent of its children living with just a mother or a father (Rampell, 2010). In 1995 2.5 million children in the United States resided with male single-parent households, an increase from 1 percent of children in 1970 to 4 percent (Rampell, 2010). Male single-parent households in the United States are twice as common in white families (16%) as compared with black families (8%), (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/single-parent-families.aspx>).

Burke (2009) provides evidence of single-parent households in his qualitative study that was conducted in Australia on parenting after separation. Burke, (2009:3) estimated that 43% of all marriages in Australia end in divorce. In addition, about 50 000 children in Australia experience the effects of family breakdown resulting from separation and divorce each year (Burke, 2009: 3). Internationally, separation and divorce are cited as major life stressors and causes of single-parent households (Burke, 2009: 3). Another qualitative study that was done by Cheeseman (2011) in Australia with single mothers, on their experiences in community and other external influences relating to resilience between 2004 and 2006, revealed that on average 20% of families with children less than 15 years of age were headed by a single parent (Australian Bureau of Statistics-ABS, 2007). This study also revealed that since 1987, there has been steady increase in single-parent households, with figures reaching 23% in 2003 and dropping minimally to 22% by 2006 (ABS, 2007). In addition, Cheeseman (2011) stated that single mothers reported less perceived social support, lower levels of social involvement and less contact with friends than married mothers.

Broussard, Joseph & Thompson (2012) conducted a qualitative study in the USA with 12 female single-parent households, on stressors and coping strategies used by single mothers living in poverty. The study revealed that more than 42% of single mothers with children aged 18 and younger lived in poverty in 2010; 32.7% of white single mothers living below the poverty line, compared to 47.1% of black and 50.3% of Hispanic single mothers (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2011). According to the United States Census (2010), 27% of children live with one parent, a consistent emerging trend noted in 2000.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1949 (Article 16, 3) and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (Article 23, 1) define the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and is entitled to protection by society and the state. International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, 1966, Article 10 (1) says that state parties to the covenant recognize that the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment.

## **THE PLIGHT OF SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS IN AFRICA AND SUB SAHARAN AFRICA**

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights-ACRHR (1981), Article 18, defines the family as the natural unit and basis for society, which requires that states protect families and take care of families' physical health and morale, ([www.humanrights.se/.../African-Charter on Human and People's Rights](http://www.humanrights.se/.../African-Charter%20on%20Human%20and%20People's%20Rights)). ACRWC identifies the need to take appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights of the African child, noting with concern that the situation of most African children remains critical due to the unique factors of their social, economic, cultural and traditional circumstances, natural disasters, exploitation and hunger and, on account of the child's physical and mental immaturity he or she needs special safeguards and care September (2008: 143). Article 14 (1) of the ACRWC states that State Parties shall take measures "to ensure the provision of adequate nutrition. In addition, article 20(2) of the ACRWC obliges nation states to render all appropriate support and assistance including material support, to parents, especially male and female single-parent households and others who are responsible for the well-being and development of children (Eba, 2007: 271).

Bigmbe and Khadiagala (2004:155) argue that African families have been negatively impacted through the scourge of HIV/AIDS and consequences of the legacy of apartheid, as it put additional pressures on the sustainability of families and households. Yamano and Jayne (2005) conducted a study in Kenya, which shows that the rapid increase in adult

mortality due to the AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa raises a great concern about potential intergenerational effects on children as they grow in unsafe and vulnerable environments. Barnett and Whiteside (2006) also evident the above concern by stating that the two parent households are disappearing.

It is noted that there is another issue that is deterioration kinship based family structures in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is the increase in single-parent households, especially among young urban people. “As increasing numbers of women have joined the labour force, single and female headed households have become a discernible pattern on the African society landscape,” Bigmbe and Khadiagala (2004:163).

“Our preliminary estimates using Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data from four countries (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe), indicate that nearly half of all women will have experienced at least one episode of single-motherhood before reaching the age of 45,”(Clark,2010:1). Clark (2010:05) estimated that in all countries, the total likelihood of ever being a female single-household by the age of 45 is quite substantial: 30.0% in Ethiopia, 59.5% in Kenya, 61.0% in Malawi, 51.7% in Tanzania, and 68.8% in Zimbabwe.

Clark (2010) aptly maintains that despite limited research on female single-parent households, research on premarital fertility, divorce and widowhood all suggest that rates of female single-parent households may be relatively high and possibly rising throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. According to Clark (2010:02) there are three focal ways in which woman may become a female single-parent household. Firstly, a female person may give birth before she is married. It is estimated that 5 % of women in Ethiopia have a premarital birth, one in three women in Liberia will become mothers before first marriage and in addition, up to 50 % of women will become single mothers as a consequence of divorce or widowhood (Clark and Hamplová 2013). Premarital childbearing in Sub-Saharan Africa is quite common. A second pathway into a female single-parent household is through separation or divorce. Several studies have documented a rather astonishing rise in the rates of divorce in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even in countries where divorce was historically extremely rare, like Nigeria, today an estimated 10% of ever-married females have been divorced, Clark (2010:02). According to Takyi (2006), cited by Clark (2010:02), modernization and urbanization have brought about increasing levels of women’s autonomy, independency and greater participation in the labour market, which may lead to an increase in divorce rates. Studies also consistently show higher levels of divorce in matrilineal societies relative to

patrilineal groups (Arnaldo 2004; Takyi 2001; Takyi and Gymiah 2007). “Lastly, women may become female single-parent households following the death of a spouse which is also common in South Africa. Older widows may have adult children who are no longer residing in the household, and in fact, these adult children may be an important source of economic assistance to their mothers. Yet, given the relatively low life expectancy for men in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the typically large age differences between husbands and wives, and the continuation of childbearing throughout women’s reproductive years, a sizeable proportion of widows are left with the care of younger children. This may be an answer on the high number of female single-parent households when comparing to the low number of male single-parent households in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **PREVALENCE OF SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS: SOUTH AFRICA AND KWAZULU-NATAL**

This section outlines the extent of single-parent households in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal. It provides statistics of single parents in South Africa by province. South Africa has unique circumstances that affect the structure of, and situation of, single-parent households. They include the impact of apartheid, the migrant labour system, high rate of divorce, separation and HIV/AIDS pandemic. The above mentioned factors have intensely affected the structure and well-being of family members in South Africa.

The South African White Paper on Families Section 3 (2012: 31 cited in Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 Article 16,3) and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (Article 23,1) define the family as, “ the natural and fundamental group unit of society entitled to protection by society and the state”. In Chapter 2, principle 9, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Plan of Action (1994), and World Summit for Social Development (1995) assert that, “the family is a basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened in different cultural, political and social systems”. One of the international instruments relevant for the family is the requirement that governments formulate family-sensitive policies, promote self-reliance and participation of families, and take consideration of the aspirations and expectations of families (White Paper on Families, 2012: 32 cited in Melta, 1994). Sewpaul (2005:310) critiques the South African Family Policy in that it gives the impression of being uninformed by scrutinising how factors such as race, class and gender intersect to influence access to power, privilege, status and resources in modern South Africa. She further argues that the Policy does not pay much

attention to the most limiting and destructive structural forces such as; neoliberal capitalism and market-induced inequality on single-parent households in South Africa. Many single-parent households are still suffering financially and psychosocially. This poses a great threat to the South African single-parent households as they are on the increase.

The statistics indicate that the single-parent households are fast becoming the new norm in South Africa with the majority of children growing up with one parent. According to the South African Statistics (2010) more than 20 000 under 18 year old children are affected by divorce. Holborn and Eddy (2011) revealed that 9 million children in South Africa are growing up in households with an absence of the biological fathers. Only a third of children in South Africa are growing up living with two of their parents, 98 000 children live in child-headed households, 81% of whom have a living mother, and 9 million children are growing up with an absent, but living father, and this brings a concern as it infers that many South African children are in crisis, (Holborn and Eddy 2011).

“A breakdown of single-parent households in urban areas showed certain trends; in 2007 some 445 of all urban parents were single. Some 52% of African urban parents were single, as were 30% of Coloured parents, 7% of Indian parents and 24% of White parents” (Holborn and Eddy 2011:3). They further show that some 31% of African urban single parents were unemployed, as were 25% of Coloured, 14% of Indians and 5% of White single parents. The increase in the number of urban African single-parent households and the high unemployment rate among them are overwhelming.

Richter and Robert (2006) estimated that around 54% of men aged 15 to 49 years old were fathers; however, nearly 50% of these fathers did not have daily contact with their children in South Africa. This estimated statement raised a question to me; if this is also common with female parents? Additionally, it is not surprising seeing the White Paper on Families (2012:33) indicating the below statement with the focus on women. “*The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), Article 24 (1) obliges nation states to provide for women’s environmental, physical, economic and social needs*”. *The SADC Protocol on Gender Development (2008) Article 4 puts measures in place “to ensure that parents honour their duty of care towards their children and maintenance orders are enforced”* (The ACRWC of the Organisation for African Unity of 1990).

It is also critical to acknowledge that KwaZulu-Natal is a province with a history of political violence that resulted in many deaths which is a contributing factor to single-parent households. Disparities exist between female and male single-parent households per province in South Africa, as shown in Table below.

**Table 1: Provincial distribution of children living with only their fathers or mothers in South Africa**

Province	Number of single fathers	Number of single mothers
KwaZulu Natal	4.3%	43.1%
Northern Cape	2.9%	41.2%
Free State	3.4%	35.6%
Gauteng	4.0%	31.2%
Limpopo	1.6%	45.2%
North West	3.7%	35.4%
Western Cape	4.4%	28.7%
Mpumalanga	3.7%	42.4%
Eastern Cape	3.3%	38.9%

Source: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/Publications/Report-03-19-00/Report-03-19-002009.pdf> cited in Statistics South Africa (2009: 9).

According to the Table above, the Western Cape province has the highest percentage of children living with single parents, that is, 4.4% compared to 4.3% of KwaZulu-Natal, 2.9% of Northern Cape, 3.4% of Free State, 4.0% of Gauteng, 1.6% of Limpopo, 3.7% of North West, 4.4% of Western Cape, 3.7% of Mpumalanga and 3.3% of Eastern Cape.

The trend in the Table above also shows the highest percentage (45.2%) of children living with the mothers only in Limpopo compared to 43.1% in KwaZulu-Natal, 41.2% in Northern Cape, 35.6% in Free State, 31.2% in Gauteng, 35.4% in North West, 28.7% in Western Cape, 42.4% in Mpumalanga and 38.9% in Eastern Cape. Even though the above table shows that male single-parent households in South Africa are less common than female single-parent households, in the last past two years I have seen an increasing trend of male single-parent households in KwaDambuza.

The rate of teenage pregnancy is a major concern in South Africa given that the majority of the pregnancies are unplanned, unwanted, and non-marital (Cooper, 2004) and this leads to

an increasing number of single-parent households in South Africa. According to Statistics South Africa (2011:18) “about 4.5% of all females in the age group 13–19 years were reported to be pregnant in 2011, while in KwaZulu-Natal only about 15000 teenage pregnancies were recorded. These figures are consistent with results obtained in 2009 and 2010 which depict that just over 2% of girls between the ages 7 and 24 years, who were not attending any educational institution, blamed pregnancy for dropping out of school.”

Within the context of this study, since 2010 there has been an increasing phenomenon of male single-parent households, which count as one of the most pressing concerns facing KwaDambuza community. There was a need to understand the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents (both male and female single-parent households), in KwaDambuza. The empirical data in the most of South African authors such as Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, Capps and Zaff, 2006; Clowes, 2006; Flouri and Buchanan, 2003; Meintjes 2010 and Richter, 2006; have focused more on the effects of family structure on children. Naidoo (1998:18) study asserts that the extended family constitutes a legitimate system of social, psychological, and often economic support for the single-parent household in general.

## **CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

According to the White Paper on Families (2012) many social ills in South Africa are the result of either weak family systems or non-existent families, altogether. Most of South African families are facing a fundamental crisis and one of them is the increasing phenomenon of both female and male single-parent households. Shefer and Clowes (2012:533) cited in the Department of Social Development, (2011) indicated that among the forces that have weakened household life are absent fathers or mothers, alongside HIV/AIDS, high levels of poverty and inequality. The study done by Holborn and Eddy (2011) states that the history of apartheid, particularly the migrant labour system, poverty and HIV/AIDS pandemic, have profoundly affected the health and wellness of household members and have contributed to an increasing trend of single-parent households in South Africa. Approximately two decades of democracy have seen the number of children living without their fathers increase (Statistics South Africa, 2010); I have noticed a different trend in KwaDambuza which is an increase number of children living without their mothers in KwaDambuza and this maybe an evidence of weakened households.



## **Impact of past migration on family breakdown in South Africa`**

What is particularly of concern in South Africa is that both the number and proportion of children living with absent fathers is increasing in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly among Africans. When one would assume that as a result of the end of migrant labour system the number and proportion would decrease, Holborn and Eddy (2011:5). Migrant labour system is one of the most causes that increasing number of single-parent households in South Africa, particularly among men. Holborn and Eddy (2011:5) say that even though the laws establishing the migrant labour system have since been repealed, migration still exists. They further estimated that in 2001, some 15% households in South Africa received remittances from migrant workers as a source of income. Some 39% of female-parent households received remittances as one of the incomes, this evidences that there are still large numbers of males living in their households and working away from them. This goes without saying; poverty and high unemployment rates are the core causes of migration in South Africa.

Holborn and Eddy (2011) estimated that only 34% of children under the age of 18 years old were living in the households with an employed adult in 2008. This estimation simply suggests that two thirds of children in 2008 in South Africa, were growing up living in the households in which nobody is employed. The unemployment rate in South Africa was estimated to be 51% in 2010 (Holborn and Eddy 2011:56) estimated that 73% of 18-35 year old South Africans had a childhood where there was not enough money for basic things such as food and clothes and had never had a job, compared to 41% of those who had a childhood where their household had extra money for things such as luxury goods and holidays. This still suggests that those who are poor are likely to be poorer.

## **Impact of HIV/AIDS on families in South Africa**

According to the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, South Africa is one of the most seriously HIV-affected countries in the world, with 2011 estimates indicating that 16.6 percentage of the adult population aged 15-49 years was living with HIV, and that an estimated 5.4 million people were living with HIV in the country, (White Paper on families cited from Statistics South Africa, 2011). According to Dr Z.S.T Skweyiya (DSD, 2002), former minister of DSD, remarked that the overwhelming impact of HIV/AIDS cuts across all sectors of society. The consequences present major challenges for households as it is one

of the causes of the single-parent households. It is critical that sound, focussed and purposeful programmes are in place to address the crisis.

In a qualitative study conducted with nineteen family members who were caring for people living with AIDS in their homes in the Bhambayi community in KwaZulu-Natal, Raniga and Motloug (2011) concluded that the period of HIV and AIDS brings to the fore such structural imbalances and challenges evident in contemporary South Africa. This is evident by (UNAIDS, 2008) which estimated that in South Africa there are between 1 500 and 1 700 new infections a day, and approximately 5.7 million people living with HIV. The estimate statistic of new infections in South Africa brings a huge concern as Raniga and Mathe (2010) evident in their qualitative study with fifteen adolescent mothers, that high rates of poverty and inequality in Bhambayi in KwaZulu-Natal, positioned young African women in the defenceless position of having to engage in risky behaviour such as transactional sex with older men in community. Having been working with a learners' support group from UMngungundlovu District in Pietermaritzburg, learners shared their experiences regarding transactional sex with older men because of poverty. One of the learners pressing concern was that they were unable to negotiate safe sex with older men because of the huge age difference. Another reason for the learners to fall in love with older men was that they were after material things, which consequently made them felt pressured to agree to everything that older men demanded from them. A qualitative and quantitative study with 23 primary schools in Umgeni North Ward, Durban in KwaZulu-Natal done by Nagesar, (2008:20) indicates that South Africa has the fastest growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world, with more people infected than any other countries.

On a daily basis social work service providers are faced with dilemmas of how best to render assistance to families of people living with HIV/AIDS, as many deaths are rooted from HIV/AIDS related illnesses. Nagesar, (2008:25) cited in (Badcock-Walters, 2002) argues that the impact of HIV/AIDS aggravates the scale of existing management problems such as economic hardship, family care and personal trauma.

Another study conducted by Sewpaul & Pillay (2011) indicates that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and divorce has destructed the immediate family structure; the two parent family structure is being replaced by single-parent, grandparents-headed, or other alternative household structures (Sewpaul & Pillay, 2011: 290). The study further reveals that a small

minority 0.6% lived with their fathers only, compared with 13 % who lived with mothers only.

It is worthwhile to take note of the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South African society.

### **High rate of divorce in South Africa**

The rising divorce rate which contributes to high number of single-parent households raises a concern to me. Although an increasing number of people are choosing to raise children on their own, however in most cases both mothers and fathers become single parents through death and divorce.

According to the South African Statistics “The 2011 data on divorces reported in this statistical release covers data from 43 courts, based exclusively on divorces from civil marriages. From these courts, a total of 20 980 divorces from civil marriages were processed. This indicates a decrease of 1 956 (8,5%) divorces from the 22 936 cases processed in 2010, which may largely be explained by some 2011 divorce forms that did not reach Statistics South Africa before this publication. The total number of divorces generally fluctuated over the period 2002–2011, with the highest number observed in 2005 (32 484) and the lowest in 2011 (20 980).”

Lehohla, (2011:5) cited from the South African Statistics, says that the couples from the white population group dominated the number of divorces between 2002 and 2007, after which the black African couples had the highest number of divorces up to 2011. In 2002, 45, 2% of the divorcees were from the white population group whereas 22, 5% came from the black African group. By 2011, 35, 8% of the divorces were from the black African population group, and 32, 1% from the white population group. The proportions of the divorces from the coloured and the Indian or Asian population groups were quite invariable during the ten-year period. There is a notable increase in the proportions of divorces from the African population.

Family law White Paper on Social Welfare (Divorce) Act 1996 of 10 (1) says

*“Where the court grants a decree of divorce, the marriage, the subject of the decree, is thereby dissolved and a party to that marriage marry again.”*

*“(2) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that the grant of a decree of divorce shall not affect the right of the father and mother of an infant, under section 6 of the act of 1964, to be guardians of the infant jointly.”*

Family law (Divorce) Act of 12 (1) talks about the maintenance:

*“... where an application is made to the Court for the grant of a decree of divorce, the court may make an order requiring either of the spouses concerned to make to the other such periodical payments or lump sum payments for his or her support and where appropriate to make such person as may be specified in the order such periodical payment for the benefit of such (if any) dependent member of the family and, as respects periodical payments, for such period beginning not earlier than the date of the application and ending not later than the date of its determination, as the Court considers proper and specifies in the order.”*

According to family law (Divorce) Act 1996 of 33 (41)

*“Where the court makes an order for the grant of a degree of divorce, it may declare either of the spouses concerned to be unfit to have custody of any dependent member of the family who is a minor and, if it does so and the spouse to whom the declaration relates is a parent of any dependent member of the family who is a minor, that spouse shall not, on the death of the other spouse, be entitled as of right to the custody of that minor.”*

This statement places a burden on other children, especially when they love both biological parents and each child has a right to be cared for and protected by both parents.

The above mentioned Act is opposing the Children’s Act number 38 of 2005, chapter 3, section 18 which states that parent/s must:

- *Take care of their child/ren,*
- *Maintain contact with the child/ren,*
- *Be a guardian to the child/ren, and*
- *Make sure that the child has financial support. This means that both parents must provide for the child’s needs. How they do this depends on how much money the parents have. This is often called maintenance.*

According to Loffell, (2008: 86) laws and policies relating to children in South Africa, taken in conjunction with statements made by political leaders, indicate a strong commitment to the rights of children. She further reports that there are numerous policy processes and

intersectoral task teams in place to address these and other issues related to the protection of children.

## **OVERVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICAN FAMILY POLICIES AND LEGISLATION**

This section will focus on the national legislation framework and policies, namely the South Constitution of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996, White Paper on Families in South Africa October 2012, National Family policy (2005), Employment Equity Act No.55 of 1998 and Social Security Act (2004). According to Richter, (2004: 53) government actions are essential to support families in responding to their crisis.

The White Paper on Families' main aim of promoting family life and strengthening the family; resonates with sections 26, 27, 28 and 29 of the Constitution of South Africa. Section 26 is concerned with the right to adequate housing, while Section 27 enshrines the right to healthcare, food, water, and social security. With Section 26 and Section 27, the Constitution of South Africa clearly notes that the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures within available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of the rights (The White Paper on Families, 2012:33). Section 28 deals with the right of the child and Section 29 is regarding the right to education.

According to the White Paper on Families Section 4 (2012:36) the basic approach adopted in developing the White Paper on Families was to take into account the legislative and policy framework outlined in Section 3, to draw on the inputs from the consultative process on the Green Paper on Families (described in Section 1.2). The White Paper (2012:8) perceives the family as a key development essential and seeks to mainstream family issues into government-wide, policy-making initiatives in order to foster positive family well-being and overall socio-economic development in the country.

Bigmbe and Khadiagala (2004:155) define family as a unit of production, consumption, reproduction and accumulation, and has been profoundly impacted by the economic downturns that transformed the environments provide the contexts for understanding changes in African family structures.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990:

*“the states parties to the Convention are convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its*

*members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community*". The statement suggests that the social service providers, for instance social workers, have to give both male and female single-parent households priority when rendering the services as the families are put in a critical position. However, the above statement does not correlate with most studies conducted on single-parent households, which suggest that there is little that has been done by the state on assisting single-parent households.

National Family Policy Critique (July 2005) focuses on the principle that families are the core of society. Its aim is to protect and support the families through effective and efficient service delivery; the creation of an enabling environment geared towards the self-reliance of families and the promotion of inter-sectoral collaboration amongst stakeholders in the provision of services. According to Sewpaul (2005:310) National Family Policy is underpinned by a clear understanding of structural sources of privilege and of the forces of oppression, exclusion and poverty that bear on the lives of people, and that such policy aims at working towards justice. She further argues that the National Family Policy regulates job-creation to the corporate sector, thus supporting the notion that unemployment is a private issue as in its description of the roles of the various government departments, nowhere does the report indicate the issue of job creation. Family policy was perceived as a drive for assisting households such as single-parent households to prevent them from breakdown and vulnerability.

"Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is a coherent and integrated programme which is people-centred. It integrates the goals of growth, development, and redistribution," ([www.anc.org.za/show.php?m=231](http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?m=231)). The RDP policy insisted that the democratic state must play a foremost role in guiding the economy and the market towards reconstruction and development. According to Terre Blanche (2005) the policy's programmes focused on both the redistribution of wealth and the promotion of economic growth, on the supposition that if policy focuses merely on promoting economic growth, it would aggravate the existing inequalities, disseminate mass poverty and suppress economic growth as a result of monopolised economy.

It has been noted that the RDP policy has never been effective, as Visser (2009) ascertains, that since 1994 there has been raising dissatisfaction and complaints with service delivery and employment creation as embedded in the RDP policy. The state itself was unable to

mobilise adequate resources to congregate the basic needs of poor people such as job opportunities, housing, land, water, electricity and social welfare systems (Visser 2009).

The Department of Finance also introduced another strategy in 1996 which aimed at rebuilding and restructuring the economy in line with the goals of RDP and that strategy was the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy.

Visser (2009) states that GEAR policy was aimed at providing the country with a comprehensive and well-integrated macro-economic framework in order to confront the challenges of meeting basic needs, developing human resources, and increasing participation in democratic institutions of civil society. One of its initiatives is to help people acquire funds to open up their own businesses so that they can be self-reliant (Gathiram, 2008). Raniga & Motloug (2011) cited from authors such as Sewpaul (2005), Frye (2007) and Triegaardt (2009) argue that the bottomless levels of unemployment and poverty, coupled with the state's failure to render basic services, can be traced to the conservative macro-economic policy of GEAR. All single-parent households are thus regarded as part of the national economy and make contributions towards their growth. This calls for economic policy to be in line with the promotion of family life and strengthening of the family in South Africa. According to Sewpaul and Holscher, (2004) GEAR policy restricted government spending on social services and presented tax incentives to investors in order for them to draw the attention of corporate and factory investment. This negatively impacted some departments such as Department of Social Development as there was less funding directed towards public expenditure to address challenges of the societies. The Department of Social Development has wonderful and beautiful policies on paper but there is no one enforcing them to take place. For instance, in one of the small towns in KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Social Development with other government departments were supposed to lead the Victim Empowerment Programs (VEP) with relevant stakeholders such as Civil Societies, CBOs and NGOs to try and come up with possible solutions to tackle the crisis that communities are face with. However, the forums are no longer in place because there is nobody to champion them. These forums should be the platforms for the social service providers to discuss the issues facing single-parent households and try to come up with pilot projects to confront the challenges.

“The New Growth Path (NGP) combines both macroeconomic and microeconomic interventions, so that the country might collectively achieve a more developed, democratic,

cohesive, and equitable economy and society over the medium term, in the context of sustained growth. NGP asserts that if the labour absorption capacity of the South African economy and the rate of growth were increased, the implications for the family would be profound, meaning family and its members are central to the realisation of NGP” (Economic Development Department, 2010).

White paper on families (2012:50) ascertains that in 2001 the Department Of Labour (DOL) sought to tackle unemployment by introducing the Skills Development Programme (SDP), which aims to provide skills to empower people for employment. Cheeseman (2011:32) confirms that single motherhood has been identified as a challenging role in terms of financial hardships and poor mental health. Williams (2011) argues that being a parent is hard; being a single parent is at least as twice as hard. While single-parent households have to play the role of both mom and dad, they also have to fight financial problems with only one pay check, instead of two.

Department of Labour (2005:67) asserts its role as:

“To facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate legislation for Employee Wellbeing Programmes for workplaces to support families”. Sewpaul (2005:319) argues that this role does not address the needs of the poor people who are outside of the labour force and it only targeted the few individuals who are employed.

The current research shows that there is still a high rate of unemployment in South Africa, which means that what has been done so far to assist people needs to be revisited in order to ensure effective implementation of programmes. It is apparent that the development of infrastructure and the government’s expanded Public Works programme are inadequate to generate the required numbers of jobs.

According to Kotwal and Prabhakar (2009: 199) financial crises are a standing situation with most of the single-parent households, and as such, it becomes awkward to meet the basic needs of children such as food, clothing, school fees, maintaining the previous standard of living and meet personal expenses. Sewpaul (2005:319) cited from Samson, *et al* (2004:2) argues that South Africa’s system of social security substantially reduces deprivation and the progressive extension of the magnitude, scope and reach of social grants holds the potential to dramatically diminish the prevalence of poverty in South Africa. The South African government has been sympathetic by providing Child Support Grants (CSG)



to the low-wage single-parent households, although the grant is fairly low especially when a person looks at the cost estimation of raising the child. The government tried to increase the child support grant to R290.00 in April 2013 however, the grant is still very far off in being able to reach the child's basic needs. The South African Social Security Act 13 of 2004, Section 27 (1) (c), affirms that it is a constitutional right to have access to social security. However, there are children that are denied from receiving the child support grant because they do not have supporting documents to be in receipt of the grant. Richter (2010: 82) states that some low and middle income-countries have social security systems, which make income transfers to marginalized families. However, Hailu and Soares (2008 cited in Richter, 2005: 85) states that South Africa is well known for its right based approach to cash transfers, with a large programme for the elderly, disabled, orphans, and vulnerable children in poor households, and its emphasis on development rather than welfare. Currently there are different types of social assistance or social security. These social grants are paid to older persons, people with disabilities, caregivers of children with disabilities known as care dependency grant. Social grants are also paid to the caregivers of children up to the age of 18 years (child support grant, kinship care grant, foster care grant, war veterans and social relief and distress).

“The largest number of beneficiaries are poor children (68%)...”, (National Treasury 2007a, 2007b).

The child support grant aims at assisting the poorest children in their most vulnerable households. I would love to believe that the rolling out of the CSG has assisted poor households in trying to alleviate poverty. Samson, Ndlebe, Quene, Niekerk, Gandhi, Harigaya and Abrahams (2004) confirm that an optimistic relation exists between social grants and improved school attendance as households have additional resources to fund education. Woolard (2003) perceives child support grant as an economic relief, as they estimated that with the child support grant 48% of children would live in poverty. According to Kruger, (1998: 16) the child support grant cannot be paid directly to children and in order to accommodate the realities of family life, in particular the common separation of children and natural parents, it was proposed that the grants be paid to the primary caregiver. Nevertheless; this sometimes becomes a challenge, particularly where a parent is still young. In our day to day work we find that a 15 year old child has her own biological baby that she is looking after and when she tries to apply for the child support grant, she is told that she does not qualify. Mooney, Olive and Smith (2009) conducted an exploratory

qualitative study on the impact of family breakdown on children's well-being in London. The study revealed that financial hardship increases the likelihood of other variables associated with negative outcomes, such as poor housing, health problems, poor nutrition and fewer material resources for nurturing children.

Patel, (2008:75) cited from (Midgley 1995, Sen 1999) "Social assistance does not only reduce income poverty and inequality but it also enhances human capabilities and plays a positive role in promoting economic and social development."

Sewpaul (2005:318) argues that:

"The partial means tested grants according to the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI 2001, 2002), close the poverty gap by 23% and they exclude those poorest households that do not have members receiving UIF, state old age grant, disability grants and children qualifying for grants."

## **CHILDREN'S ACT NUMBER 38 OF 2005**

During the apartheid regime, South Africa was under a residual system of social welfare, which meant that remedial services were offered after social problems had manifested Dutschke (2008: 23). In addition, this system did not recognise that most social ills were a direct result of poverty and did not provide services that could prevent the occurrence of such problems. Social services for children have been neglected over the past years due to the absence of a legislative framework in line with the constitution and international law (Jamieson 2007: 10). Mooney, Olive & Smith (2009: 3) also affirms that in order to reduce the risk of a negative impact on child outcomes about the family breakdown, the child must be informed about the breaking down of the family before she or he figures it out. The child must not be treated as an empty vessel. The Children's Act 38 of 2005, which came into effect on 1 April 2010 was designed to replace the Child Care Act 74 of 2003 (Matthias and Zaal 2010: 57).

Children need support in meeting their basic needs such as food, health care, education, psychological support, and economic self-sufficiency. The Children's Act promotes the principle of preserving and strengthening children's own families as the first option of intervention for children in need of care and protection. It recognises that families do better

if they live in strong supporting communities and that the White Paper on Families (2012: 42) affirms and recommends the strengthening of the community support. According to the White Paper on Families (2012: 42),

*“...community members are often the first to respond to family crisis outside of the family members .... Community members have to embrace the value of Ubuntu, which demands that human life and humanity be treated with the respect due to it and to mobilise responsibly in the event that it is not”.*

Having been working with different families and communities, it has been observed that people have little support from their community members as is expected. Most people are suffering on their own.

September (2008) states that the key principles of the Children’s Act is to preserve and strengthen families; to provide care and protection to children in need of care, to provide services which promote and monitor the well-being of children and to develop and strengthen community structures to care for and protect children.

The White Paper on Families (2012: 23) cites child poverty as a major problem in South Africa. Child poverty has been increasing steadily and the main concern is that it seems to challenge various policy interventions (White Paper on Families, 2012: 23). According to the White Paper on Families (2012: 24 cited in Engle *et al.*, 2006), while poverty is a contributory factor, high rates of unemployment and financial constraints may contribute to large numbers of fathers and mothers failing to take responsibility for their children. However, there are fathers and mothers who choose not to take responsibility of their children and the New Children Act No. 38 of 2005 emphasises payment of maintenance grant from fathers and mothers that they can afford. Whatever the situation at home may be, single-parent households are little supported to continue caring for their children. However, this paying of maintenance sometimes does not work for some single-parent households as you can sometimes find that one parent is paying maintenance for ten children of his or her own, and you end up not getting a cent, as the money has to be distributed according to the number of children the parent has, and not forgetting to mention his or her expenses that would be also deducted from the same money.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS ON WELFARE**

The roots and drivers of single-parent households present with unique challenges, however, whether the root of single-parent household is divorce, separation, widowhood, loss of spouse parenthood, migration, choice or teenage pregnancy presents with lots of challenges. Williams (2011) affirms this by stating that being a parent is hard; however, being a single parent is at least as twice as hard. Keswet & Dapas's (2010) study revealed that some challenges of single parent households include; childcare and training needs, child support enforcement, loneliness, and psychological problems and we cannot leave out the economic challenges faced by single parents.

Kotwal & Prabhakar (2009: 197-198) states that the role of single parents is a challenging one especially when the family is headed by a woman, as single mothers tend to suffer from a feeling of rootlessness and lack of identity after divorce or widowhood. The sections below discuss the economic, psycho-social experiences and coping strategies of single-parent households.

### **Economic Challenges of Single-Parent Households**

Globally and in South Africa it is acknowledged that single-parent households experience deep financial challenges. Family breakdown and the resulting single-parent household status often lead to financial hardship and have highlighted that approximately 70% of single-parent households live in poverty, Mooney (2009:12 cited in Rodgers and Pryor, 2001). Cheeseman, (2011) complement the above statement that single-parent households have been associated with challenging roles, with disadvantages including financial hardship, and poor mental health (Cheeseman, 2011). In addition single-parent households have to grapple with meeting the needs of the household financially, which usually presents as a challenge. While single-parent households have to play the role of being both mom and dad, they also have to fight financial problems with only one paycheck, instead of two. Phoenix, Woollet & Lloyd (1991: 75) argues that single-parent households who bring up children alone have to avoid becoming possessive and to some extent have to assume the dual role of mother and father. There is never enough time for their job, child, or children, and finally, for themselves (Williams, 2011). Employment stress is higher on both male and female single-parent households, than two parent households. Sewpaul, (2005:319) argues that the growing levels of unemployment and inequality in South Africa mean that the country is faced with two options that will really have an impact on the quality of families.

She says the first is to increase labour-absorbing capacity and ensure gainful employment for people. Sewpaul, (2005:316) sees this as unlikely to happen.

According to Bigombe and Khadiagala (2004:155) opportunities have arisen from considerable socioeconomic changes that continue to alter the structure of the family away from traditional patterns, to new ones generated by the expansion of education, health care, employment and migration. They also critique this statement by saying the same forces that prompt momentous vistas for households have also produced multiple constraints among people.

### **Psycho-social Experiences of Single-Parent Households**

Single-parent households lack social and psychological support from their immediate environment (Cheeseman, 2011; Keswet & Dapas, 2010). A study done by Cheeseman (2011) confirms that single-parent-households reported less perceived social support, lower levels of social involvement and less contact with friends than married couples. Nevertheless, Naidoo, (1998: 18) finds extended family to constitute a legitimate system of social, psychological, and often economic support for the single-parent household in general. Naidoo (1998) conducted his qualitative study with 5 divorced Indian mothers drawn from the client-base of the Chatsworth Child Welfare Society (Durban).

Burke (2009:5) argues that single-parent households often exhibit marked emotional lability, characterized euphoria, and optimism alternating with anger, irritability, anxiety, loneliness, sadness, depression, and suicidality and associated changes in self-esteem, and it is important to note that both female and male single-parent households may experience the same situation. Kotwal & Prabhakar (2009: 197-198) state that the role of a single-parent household is challenging and tends to suffer from a feeling of rootlessness and lack of identity after divorce, separation or widowhood. Single-parent households that are through divorce, separation and death are confronted by numerous challenges of single parenting at a time when they themselves are going through their own private trauma. Atkins (2010) conducted a qualitative study on the mental and physical health of single mothers, as well as their psychosocial and socio-economic risk factors in USA. Atkins (2010:160) states that female single-parent households were found to be significantly more depressed than male single-parent households, however this will be evident in this study as the sample will be both female and male single-parent households. Crosier et al. (2007) states that single-parent

households experience more stressful life-events and increased mental health issues when compared to married couple.

Clarke and Dunn (2006:204) cited from (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002) argue that although divorce; separation and death of a spouse lead to an increase in stressful life events, such as poverty, psychosocial and health problems in parents, and inept parenting, it also may be associated with escape from conflict, the building of new more harmonious fulfilling relationships, and the opportunity for personal growth and individuation. Hence this study is also aimed at seeing the similarities and contrasts with other previous studies done on the similar topic.

### **Coping Strategies of Single-Parent Households**

Bigombe and Khadiagala (2004:163) say coping with the circumstances of family disruption in most African countries has entailed single-parent households among lower-income groups taking their children to live with relatives. In South African countries, childcare challenges and restrictions by many employers on children of their workers residing on their premises, has strengthened the role of African grandparents in caring for their grandchildren, Bigombe and Khadiagala (2004:163).

According to Bigombe and Khadiagala (2004:163)

*“Since the prevalence of single-parent households is becoming a major trend of African families, programs targeted at enhancing the economic opportunities of single-mothers, need to be better incorporated in national plans. Most African countries do not have legislation that guarantees maternity leave for single working mothers, policies that need to be adopted to respond to the new social trend. Childcare for single mothers is also necessary to reduce the social and economic burdens on the new family forms.”* Having mentioned the maternity leave for female single-parent households, it came to my mind that there are very few employers would grant paternity leave to male working single-parent households as it is perceived that the childcare roles and responsibilities are for female parents only.

A qualitative study with American female single-parents on their coping skills, conducted by Garza, (2004:14) cited from (Cairney and Boyle 2003) reveals coping mechanisms but not limited to coping with everyday stressors and the need for provision, economic survival,

social isolation, conflict avoidance, self-reliance, spiritual support, community and family support.

According to the White Paper on Families, (2012:37) and the Children's Act 38 of 2005; developmental social welfare services recognise that the family is the basic unit of society and plays a vital role in the survival, protection, and development of children. A study by Cheesman (2011: 33) shows that social support comes from a few friends or co-workers that contributed to their well-being by providing the opportunity to socialise and be involved in a network of peers with discussion of similar experience. A similar study conducted by Naidoo (1998: 18) found that extended family constitutes a legitimate system of social, psychological, and often economic support for the single-parent household in general. According to the White Paper on Families (2012: 37),

*The social development approach recognises that the family is the basic unit of society and plays a key role in the survival, protection and development of children. Its rationale is that families should be supported and their capabilities have to be strengthened for the purpose of meeting the needs of the members... the foregoing, certain families may require additional supportive services so that they can solve problems in human relations such as conflict, communication, parenting...*

Gill, Sharma & Verma (2003) conducted a study with 93 adolescents in the age group, 10-18 years, and their single-parent households (64 widows and 29 divorcees) from Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali in India. The study revealed, half of the participants in the study received support from the traditional community, with a diverse range of activities or groups including schools, toy library, playgroup, mother's group, free community activities and various sport activities.

According to the Principles of the White Paper on Families (2012), "*families have inherent capacities and strengths that sustain them in times of prosperity, as well as adversity. It is important to recognise these qualities, so that any intervention at family level will enhance these attributes.*" This approach simply means that the focus should be more than merely giving assistance but rather allow facilitation of individuals to become self-reliant, without being too independent on welfare grants and other people's support. According to social development approach, social grants are not seen as a solution but are seen as a short-term mechanism to address the immediate needs while other developmental strategies are being implemented.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided an overview of the literature on single-parent households in diverse contexts. The presentation commenced with focusing on single-parent households: Global trends, the plight of single-parent households in Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence of single-parent households in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal. Additionally, the changing family structure in South Africa as impact of a past migration on family breakdown in South Africa, impact of HIV/AIDS on families in South Africa, high rate of divorce in South Africa will be also discussed in this chapter. Overview of South African Family Policies and Legislation is discussed in this chapter. Children's Act 38 of 2005 is presented in this study. The discussion also focuses on the impact of single-parent households on welfare. The economic challenges and psycho-social experiences of single-parent households which form the foundation of this study were presented and critiqued. Finally, the coping strategies of single-parent households were also discussed.

The chapter that follows provides an overview of the research process as a whole. It presents the research design, context of the study, sampling, the process by which data was collected and also presents the method used to analyse data. It also discusses in-depth reliability, limitations and ethical consideration of this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**



## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the methodology that was utilised in this study. It discusses the research design, context of the study, sampling, the process by which data was collected and also presents the method used to analyse data. It also discusses in-depth reliability, limitations and ethical considerations of this study.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Cohen, Manion & Morris (2003) research design is directed by the notion of fitness for purpose. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) say that research design is a strategic framework for action. A qualitative research paradigm was utilized for the purpose of understanding economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza. In reference to Babbie and Mouton (2001) qualitative researchers have always been primarily interested in describing actions of participants in great detail and then attempting to understand these actions in terms of the participants' beliefs, history and context. In this case qualitative study was used to obtain rich and thick descriptions of the single parents' economic and psycho-social experiences. Rubin and Babbie (2005) confirms that qualitative description is inclined to be more concerned with transmitting a sense of what it is like to walk in the shoes of the participants through providing rich details about their interactions, meaning and environment in their day to day lives. In qualitative research, the researcher keeps focus on learning the meaning that participants attach to the problem or issue and not the meaning that the researcher brings to the research (Creswell, 2009: 175). According to Kelly (2006: 287) qualitative studies ensure that they make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world. This approach to research allowed the participants to engage in the discussions freely.

In keeping with qualitative research, the nature of the study was descriptive. Descriptive studies aim to describe phenomena accurately through narrative type descriptions. I used the qualitative method because it allowed for flexibility and probing which encouraged the participants to elaborate on their responses, thus providing rich and thick information. This is according to Deport and Fouche, (2005) and Creswell, (2009) who argue that qualitative

studies are longer and more descriptive as they describe phenomena accurately through narrative type description.

## **CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted at KwaDambuza which is in the Msunduzi municipality (UMngungundlovu district). “KwaDambuza is a low income predominantly rural area situated under Edendale. Edendale is divided into two areas, the first of which is categorized as the traditional area of Edendale proper, where virtually all land is privately owned. The second area however, is regarded as the more contemporary area of Edendale and it is where all land vests within the ownership of either the state or the provincial government. Much of the Greater Edendale area is densely developed with both formal and informal housing, supported in some areas by ancillary land uses and facilities. The current population within the Edendale area is about 300 000 people which comprises approximately 36% of the City's population” ([www.msunduzi.gov.za](http://www.msunduzi.gov.za)). “The transformation challenges that face Great Edendale area are formidable, as they need to be addressed within an environment that is bound by the constraints of high levels of poverty and unemployment; rapid population growth; lack of facilities and services, the AIDS pandemic; land legal complexities and the advancing rate of informal settlement” ([www.msunduzi.gov.za](http://www.msunduzi.gov.za)). KwaDambuza is one of my operation areas as a social worker. The increasing phenomenon of single-parent households particularly in males, counts as one of the most pressing concerns facing KwaDambuza community. There are a bigger number of male single-parent households that are nurturing and caring for children. I have observed that there is poor access to infrastructure. All the participants in this study are the Black Africans, Zulu speaking citizens.

## **SAMPLING**

Sampling is the process of selecting participants for the research study (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). According to Kerlinger, (1986 cited in Strydom, 2006: 193) sampling means taking any portion of a population as representatives. The sample in this study comprised 20 participants selected using non probability purposive sampling to select cases with a specific purpose in mind (Neuman, 2007). According to Strydom (2005: 202) a purposive sample is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher. For the purpose of this study, a purposive

sample was selected from the case files at LifeLine and Rape Crisis, Pietermaritzburg. LifeLine and Rape Crisis is a Non-Governmental Organisation that promotes emotional wellness for individuals and communities through counselling, community dialogues, skill development, training, networking and partnership within the private and public sector of its designated areas. As discussed in detail in Chapter One, my concern of working in KwaDambuza for the past six years was to notice an increase number of the male single-parent households.

In this study ten single-parent households were females and other ten single-parent households were males which came to 20 in total. Shefer & Clowes (2012:553) indicate that there is a strong policy-based perception that family life is under pressure and the dominant factor is that fathers are not playing their roles such as caring for their children. Thus it has become critical for this study to understand more how male and female single-parent households perceive their economic and psychosocial experiences. The participants had to be in receipt of LifeLine and Rape Crisis service for more than a year as I believed that a prolonged engagement might enable the participants to share more about the topic based on trust that has been built.

Having been employed by Child and Family welfare society of Pietermaritzburg for five years and LifeLine and Rape Crisis, Pietermaritzburg for one and half years, I noted an increased number of children being raised by female single-parent households in KwaDambuza. What was interesting was that there was also a noticeable increase in the number of male single-parent households in this area. I developed an interest to embark on this study to understand the economic and psychosocial experiences of both male and female single-parent households. I chose to use a purposive sample of single parents from KwaDambuza in Pietermaritzburg as in this area it was evident with an increase number of male and female single-parent household. They had to be between the ages of 20-42 years old. According to South African Statistics (2011:7) the median ages at divorce in 2011 were 42 years for males and 38 years for females, indicating that males generally divorced at older ages than females, with a difference of about four years. For the purpose of this study criterion sampling was appropriate, "Criterion sampling involves picking all cases that meet some criterion" Marlow & Boone (2010:146).

The following criterion was used in selecting the sample of 20 participants:

- They had to be single parents (ten biological fathers and ten biological mothers heading the households)
- They had to be residing in KwaDambuza for five years or more.
- They had to be in receipt of lifeline services for more than one year.
- They had to be willing to engage in a discussion of their economic and psychosocial experiences as single parents.
- They had to be willing to exchange ideas and share their life experiences in a group setting.
- They had to be between the ages of 20-42 years old

## **PREPARATORY INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS**

I wrote a letter to the Board of Management to request the permission to conduct my research with LifeLine and Rape Crisis. Later I had to send my organisation an ethical clearance that was obtained from the Research Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, which permitted me to conduct my study. I was then granted with permission to conduct my study with the organisation's clientele and also utilising some of the organisation's facilities, such as computer and boardroom, to conduct the focus group discussion. After being granted permission to conduct my study in my work placement, I then requested my colleagues to assist me with the selection of the participants.

After selecting the prospective participants from case files in my work placement at LifeLine and Rape Crisis, three weeks were needed to meet with all participants individually to introduce my study to them.

The pre-arrangements were made by calling the participants telephonically to establish their willingness to participate in the study. Thus, an informed consent letter was used to explain the purpose of the study and guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity and that participation was voluntary (see appendix 2). The interview process consisted of two sessions. The first session was an introductory session where the researcher introduced the study and clarified the purpose of the study to the participants. I translated the interview questions (into isiZulu) and discussed the contents of the consent forms with the participants and also requested permission from the participants to record the interviews with audio tape. Participants were informed about their right to withdraw from the interviews or discussion

and that the findings of the study would not bear their names or be used against them. After the discussion, the participants were given an opportunity to read their consent forms so that they would be clear about the content of the study. All the participants were given the informed consent forms to fill in their details and give their signatures as consent. The informed consent forms were all signed.

## **DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

In this study, data was collected using two methods, one was semi-structured individual interviews and one was focus groups. All the participants were contacted two days before the interviews and I reminded them that I was going to visit them in their homes to conduct the interviews, and reminding them that the five females and five male participants who will be interested in group discussion needed to come to LifeLine and Rape Crisis for the focus group discussion. All the participants were found in the homes as per our agreement and the ten participants that were interested in participating in the focus group discussion showed up, even though most of them came a little bit late. Both interviews were conducted in IsiZulu and later translated into English.

As indicated above in understanding the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents at KwaDambuza, I needed to use both semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions to collect the data required.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

In semi structured interviews, participants are asked prepared questions in a systemic and consistent manner and participants are allowed to discuss issues outside of the confines of the questions (Berg, 1995). Researchers use semi-structured interviews in order to gain detailed information on the participant's beliefs or perceptions or account of, a particular topic (Greeff, 2005: 297). I used an interview schedule with themes as a guide and open ended questions in obtaining in-depth data. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) explain that a semi-structured interview is conducted by using open-ended questions that are contained in an interview guide with a focus on the overall objectives of the study. Interview schedule helped both the participants and I to engage in the discussion more openly.

In this study, semi-structured interviews also made allowances for multiple and in-depth responses to questions and also allowed for more engagement between the interviewees and myself. Sukhraj-Ely (2009: 6) argues that semi-structured questions create an avenue for the interviewees to think about their perceptions, ideas and to extend their thinking on issues that will promote emotionality and feelings. I developed a set of questions that were prepared in advance to prompt the interviewees to discuss their experiences, challenges, coping strategies, emotions and feelings in greater detail, based on the key objectives of this study. These questions were adjusted according to the level of understanding and need for clarity of respondents. Each interview took about forty five minutes to an hour per participant.

The individual interviews allowed for collection of preliminary information about the topic, after which a focus group discussion was held composed of five male and five female single parent households selected from the individual interviews purposively. According to (Devers and Frankel 2000) researchers select information-rich individuals, group, organizations or behaviours that provide the greatest insight into the research objectives and questions. The individual interviews were conducted at the single parent households' residences mainly for two reasons: firstly, 16 out of 20 participants were unemployed; and secondly, I wanted to ascertain the participants' living conditions.

I made certain that there was consistent, mutual understanding of meaning and power with the single parent households throughout the data collection. Morris (2006) says that the power hierarchy between researchers and the interviewees was replaced by egalitarian and genuine relationship.

### **Focus group discussions**

Focus groups have three essential strengths that are used in qualitative methods. De Vos (2005) identifies the essential strengths that are shared by all qualitative methods namely: exploration and discovery, context and depth, and interpretation. The study also used focus group discussions which consisted of ten participants that were willing to be involved in the discussion. The focus group composed of five male participants and five female participants selected from the individual interviews. A focus group discussion was used to triangulate the responses from the individual interviews and further explored the key themes that required elaboration from the interviews. I found focus group discussion as a powerful tool in exposing reality and investigating complex behaviour. The focus group session

triangulated the in-depth interview as to involve the KwaDambuza single-parent households in collective action with a commitment to improving their life circumstances and assisting them to overcome isolation and learned helplessness (Dominelli, 2002). Kruger (1988:18 cited in Struwig and Stead 2003:99) views a focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment and where little is known of the subject matter, as is the case in this study. Denzin (1989 as cited by Mouton 2001: 197-198), explains that groups have their own identity in terms of structure and meaning and a group discussion focuses on access to the participants' level of meaning. A focus group discussion is much cheaper and quicker to run than intensive one to one interviews and responses tend to be more complete and less inhibited (Wimmer and Dominick 1997:97).

The purpose of the focus group was to clarify or re-evaluate previous responses that needed or required elaboration. Thus the information obtained from individual interviews was validated via focus group discussion. The focus group discussion was not only going to validate the information from the semi-structured interviews but also to clarify responses from the group discussion that might warrant elaboration. Greeff (2005: 299) states that focus groups are the means to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, product or service.

In the case of the focus groups, the focus group discussion guide was evaluated by the research supervisor in advance. In the focus group the communication techniques and group facilitation strategies were used to encourage full participation and cooperation. The focus group discussion indeed helped me to obtain in-depth information.

All the focus group and interviews were conducted in the language that was understood by every participant which was IsiZulu (see appendix 1).

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

De Vos (2005: 333) defines data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. All the individual interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim and analysed using the open coding technique to identify themes and sub-themes (Creswell, 2003: 153-155). Vithal & Jansen (2002: 27) recommend three steps in data analysis which this study followed and include:

- **Scanning and cleaning of data:** The raw data was firstly transcribed, then arranged and organized for analysis by reading of the data, scanning for incomplete, inaccurate, inconsistent and irrelevant data, as well as to organize collected data into relevant “piles”.
- **Organizing the data:** The data was arranged into a controllable format or into groups in terms of descriptions, common words, phrases, themes, or patterns. The information was then coded and categorized accordingly.
- **Representing the data:** This provided meaningful summaries or interpretations and took the form of tables, selected quotations from responses to a question in an interview. This allowed the researcher to identify important information from both the individual interviews and group discussion perspective, relevant to the research topic. The researcher also utilized discourse analysis since it allowed the researcher to move beyond what is obvious to what is less obvious and yet to the completely obvious to empower the researcher to reconstruct the meaning of all things.

## **VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY**

Babbie & Mouton (2006) state that perception and accuracy are important qualities in research measurement. They further indicated that reliability refers to the likelihood that a given measurement procedure will yield the same description of a given phenomenon in case the measurement is repeated, whereas validity refers to the extent to which a specific measurement provides data that relates to commonly accepted meanings of a particular concept. According to Bowling (2009), reliability refers to the reproducibility and consistency of the instrument however, Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) argue that interpretive and constructionist researchers do not assume that they are investigating a stable and unchanging reality and therefore do not expect to find the same result repeatedly.

According to Bowling (2009) validity is an assessment of whether an instrument measures what it aims to measure. It is the extent to which the observable or empirical measures are accurate and stable with freedom from random error and repeatability (Bless and Higson-



Smith, 1995). The interviews and focus group discussions were recorded (with Verbal permission from the participants) to ensure that transcription of data was accurate.

I conducted in-depth interviews and focus discussion groups using semi-structure interview schedule with single-parent households. In the focus group discussion I made certain that everyone was given a chance to respond. Making use of two data collection techniques (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) enhanced the trustworthiness and reliability of the data. In reference to Green & Thorogood (2004), the use of different methodological approaches are seen as adding depth, such that the whole research programme moves towards a richer understanding. Furthermore, the use of triangulation comes from a metaphor that taking two readings will enable one to pinpoint the 'truth' more accurately than one reading because it challenges the biases that come from only one perception.

The participants were assured with confidentiality in order to ensure reliability of the data collected, while I ensured that I remained neutral, non-judgmental and none biased towards certain views of participants. By doing so, I aimed at maintaining validity in understanding the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza, focusing on the lived experiences of the single parents. The questions that were asked were written in isiZulu to allow the participants to respond in a free way. The research supervisor also assisted in reviewing the analysis and verifying the interpretation of the data.

In reference to De Vos (2005: 351) credibility is the alternative to interval validity in which the goal is to demonstrate that the enquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. Since the selected participants were single parent households who had received LifeLine and Rape Crisis services for more than a year, trust was easily established which enabled the participants to share more about the topic. All the counsellors and social workers at LifeLine and Rape Crisis were involved in identifying single-parent households in their case lists. Therefore, credibility was enhanced when I shared the information with my colleagues who had knowledge and understanding of the background of single-parent households in KwaDambuza.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Researchers are required to keep participants' needs foremost in mind when designing and conducting a study (Halonen *et al*, 1999). The University of KZN Statement of Ethical Practice guidelines were reviewed. The professional ethics with regard to the rights of the participants and responsibilities of the investigator was also applied (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:56) with attention paid to the vulnerability of the single-parent households. Simultaneously, I ensured that an accurate version of the phenomenon under study was obtained (Babbie, 2004:64-66, Creswell, 2003:64-65). The following ethical aspects received attention in this research.

According to Dane (1990:44) cited by Strydom, (1998:25) an ethical obligation rests with the researcher to protect subjects against any form of physical discomfort which may emerge within reasonable limits from the research project. Babbie (1990:340-341) states that respondents can experience more concrete harm, for instance, with regard to their family life, relationships or employment situation. He further mentions that the fact that negative behaviour of the past may be recalled to memory during the investigation could be the beginning of renewed personal harassment. For this reason I had the firmest of scientific grounds if I extracted sensitive and personal information from subjects.

According to Strydom (2005: 57) ethics is a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents. For the purpose of this study the following ethical considerations applied to this research such as treating participants with respect, dignity and confidentiality. The participants were assured of confidentiality of their information given during the study so that they could feel safe. This helped me because the participants were free to express themselves during the interviews. Further, the participants were informed that their details would not be disclosed in this study. Strydom (2005:61) mentioned that violation of privacy, the right to self-determination and confidentiality can be viewed as being synonymous. Privacy implies the element of personal privacy, while confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner.

Respondents were provided with information on the background of the study and were informed that participation would be voluntary and that they could withdraw from

participation at any stage of the investigation. Respondents were assured of confidentiality of information obtained (Neuman, 2000:283-284). Each participant had to sign a written consent form. In reference to Boulton & Parker, (2007:2188-2189) informed consent is generally regarded as the main mechanism for providing protection for the rights and welfare of individuals. Strydom, *et al* (1998:27) argues that the informed consent ensures full knowledge and cooperation of subjects while also resolving or at least relieving any possible tension, aggression, resistance or security of the subjects. Respondents were allowed to express themselves in the language they preferred. In reference to Strydom, *et al* (1998: 25) obtaining informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures which will be followed during the investigation, the advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed and the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives.

Hidden observation was not conducted therefore ethical issues with this regard were not to be arising. The study involved discussion of sensitive topics; however the sensitive topics were kept to a minimum during focus group discussions and were discussed in one-to-one interviews. It was expected that there would be no pain or discomfort that would be experienced by the participants. The participants that needed face to face counselling were successfully referred to Lifeline and Rape Crisis, Pietermaritzburg for further counselling. I then debriefed the participants by telling them the complete nature of the study after the interviews were completed, (Halonen et al, 1999).

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study was limited to 20 single-parent households within the age group of 20 to 42 since it is a qualitative research. The study focused only at KwaDambuza in Pietermaritzburg, therefore it limited generalizing to other areas. The study design did not incorporate interviews with other people to confirm the information that was obtained from the single-parent households. Some of the interviewees might not have been honest in their responses while others might not have been open to speak about some issues relating to the study. However, it was explained to the participants that the study was not about who has experienced the most challenges in the economic and psychosocial area, rather it was about their perceptions about the topic.

The study did not include other race groups as the study was done among the Zulu speaking group only. The findings are contextualized within the area where the research was done.

The issue of losing partners is very sensitive to some people and so some participants were not open to speak about some issues relating to the study. Other participants were not honest in their responses for instance in the “expenditure and budgeting theme”. They thought that if they told the truth about how they use their child support grants, I might decide to cancel the grant as I am a social worker by profession.

Lastly, some participants were very emotional during interviews. However, the participants were informed before the interviews started that they had the right to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable. Some questions like how they became single parents reminded them of the past and triggered the pain and trauma in their lives. This was a limitation itself, as this hindered me from probing further. As a professional social worker I was able to observe changes in participant’s disposition. And therefore participants that required counseling services were referred to LifeLine and Rape Crisis, Pietermaritzburg for face to face counselling.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter an overview of the research process was provided. The research design that was used in this study was described and discussed. I showed that the research study was qualitative and that the approach was descriptive. The sampling was discussed. The data collection and data analysis processes were discussed including the use of the interview schedule, (semi-structured and open ended questions), and focus group discussion guide used in the data collection were outlined. The validity and credibility that were used in this study were discussed in detail and the limitation of the study and ethical issues of the study were highlighted.

The following chapter discusses the findings and analyses of the study. Chapter four presents the findings obtained from the qualitative semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions, undertaken on economic and psychosocial experiences of single parent households in KwaDambuza.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### STRUCTURAL AND INTERCONNECTED CHALLENGES IMPACTING THE PLIGHT OF BOTH MALE AND FEMALE SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

#### INTRODUCTION

When looking at the poverty trap in KwaZulu-Natal, it becomes very clear that this province is under second economy as Frye (2007) states that as a result of the macro-economic policy of GEAR, poverty and unemployment grew that have negative impact on both male and female single-parent households. Frye (2007) indicates that ANC (2004) referred to the poverty trap of the second economy that prevents the economy from being able to produce the internal savings that would enable it to accomplish the high rates of investment it needs to end its condition of underdevelopment. She further argues that second economy sees the underdevelopment and poverty of the poor people and working poor as being triggered solely by past pauperisation. According to Triegaardt (2009) cited in (Padayachee, 2005: 558) argues that during the GEAR era, economic growth was low and employment rates decreased in the sector such as mining, manufacturing and construction.

GEAR policy has failed to create job opportunities for single-parent households as it promised, instead, people are losing their jobs. Poverty leads to single-parent households being psychological unwell as they are unable to tend to the households needs. This then leaves them with the feelings of inferiority. Atkins' (2010: 160) study revealed that female single-parent households were significantly more depressed than male single-parent households were. Cheeseman, (2011: 32) discovers a number of risk areas relating to female single-parent households, including a high incidence of mental health issues. This means that female single-parent households are more at risk than male single-parent households and that has been evident in my study. This study was unique because it was aimed to understand the economic and psychosocial experiences of both male and female single-parents in KwaDambuza, not necessarily looking at single mothers, as the literature that is available mainly focuses on single mothers.

This chapter provides the analysis of data that emerged from one focus group and in-depth semi-structured interviews with twenty single-parent households who were selected purposefully. It comprises ten male and ten female participants who were heads of their households. A comparison between male and female single-parent households will be

discussed in the presentation of the findings. The findings of this study are presented in two main sections. Section one begins with a demographic profile of the 20 single-parent households. The Second section presents four main themes that emerged from the data analysis and are closely interconnected. Theme one discusses the structural impact of poverty and unemployment on both male and female single-parent households and discusses two sub-themes: Household income and family expenditure and implications for education of children. Theme two provides insight into the psychosocial challenges experienced and discusses two sub-themes: intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges of both males and females single-parent households. The third theme discusses parental responsibilities and child care as a sub-theme. The fourth theme discusses the blatant lack of support systems that negatively impact both the male and female single-parent households and discusses one sub-theme: access to service provision.

Names of the participants in this study have not been provided in order to ensure confidentiality of participants.

## **SECTION ONE**

### **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS**

**Table 4.1- This table provides a summary of the demographic profile of the participants**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>No. of children born</b>	<b>level of education</b>	<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Reasons for being single</b>
1	27	Female	2	Grade 12	Unemployed	Separation
2	24	Female	2	Grade 7	Unemployed	Husband Arrested
3	27	Female	4	Grade 11	Unemployed	Death
4	30	Female	1	Grade 11	Unemployed	Death
5	30	Female	2	Grade 6	Unemployed	Death
6	36	Female	4	Grade 8	Unemployed	Death
7	40	Female	3	Grade 7	Self-	Death

					employed	
8	40	Female	2	Grade 6	Unemployed	Separation
9	40	Male	2	Grade 5	Unemployed	Death
10	40	Female	1	Grade 9	Self- employed	Death
11	35	Female	2	Grade 10	Unemployed	Divorce
12	38	Male	3	Grade 8	Unemployed	Separation
13	36	Male	3	Grade 7	Unemployed	Separation
14	40	Male	2	Grade 6	Unemployed	Separation
15	36	Male	4	Grade 8	Employed	Death
16	26	Male	1	Grade 10	Temporary employed	Separation
17	28	Male	1	Grade 12	Employed	Separation
18	38	Male	2	Grade 10	Employed	Death
19	34	Male	2	Grade 9	Unemployed	Divorce
20	38	Male	3	Grade 8	Unemployed	Divorce

From the above table it is evident that the five out of twenty participants (25%) were between the ages of 24-29 years and fifteen were aged between 30-40 years old (75%). All the twenty participants were single-parent households. Ten male single-parent households and ten female single-parent households were purposely selected.

Table 4.1 illustrates that 23 biological children were cared for by the female single-parent households and it is interesting to note that 23 biological children were cared for by the male single-parent households. Other researchers like Holborn (2011), Shefer & Clowes (2012) have shown that males do not take some responsibility in caring for their children, it was a positive thing that there are male single-parent households who carry the burden of caring and providing for their children without the partner's support. The myth about males not taking care of their biological children is being questioned and challenged. It is evident in this study that male single-parent households do take care of their biological children. They are nurturing and caring for them.

It is evident in this study that most of the female single-parent households had an additional burden of feeding their nieces and nephews who were residing in the same household.

However, to some single-parent households the children are central to them as they often provide support, nurturing environment, joy and love. In this case the microsystem refers to the relationship and interaction a human being has with his or her immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000: 27). Therefore in this study, the microsystem is the single-parent households and the children that are cared for. It will also include other members of the extended family residing within the household such as nieces, nephews and cousins.

It is worthwhile to note from the table 4.1 that at the time of the study four (40%) out of ten female single-parent households had primary education and three (30%) out of ten male single-parent households had primary education. Five (50%) of female single-parent households had acquired some secondary education. With male single-parent households six (60%) acquired some secondary education. Only one (10%) from male and one (10%) from female participants had completed their secondary level of education. Neither of the participants had tertiary education and in most cases the participants blamed their poor background that hindered them from furthering their education. Chant (2009) female-parent households often have lower levels of education than their male counterparts. It is not surprising that there is high level of unemployment rate. From the table 4.1 it is evident that eight (80%) out of ten female single-parent households were unemployed and two (20%) female single-parent households were self-employed. It can be concluded that high level of unemployment amongst African women is due to a low literacy level. According to Haddad (1999) literacy is critical for income generation. Furthermore, most of the females do not have access to the same education as males, which jeopardises their ability to secure employment. Six (60%) of male single-parent households were unemployed, three (30%) were employed and one (10%) was temporary employed.

From the table 4.1 six (60%) female-parent households had lost their partners through death, two (20%) female single-parent households were on separation, one (10%) female single-parent household was divorced and one (10%) had her partner in prison. When comparing to the male single-parent households, the five (50%) male single-parent households were on separation, three (30%) male single-parent households had lost their wives through death and two (20%) male parent-households were divorced. It is worthwhile to note that the table 4.1 shows that there were many deaths and separation in male partners than female partners. "One important factor to take into account regarding the situation of men in crisis in South Africa, is long-term effects of the migrant labour system, to which African and others races were subject. Men had to come into cities and towns to seek work, and were separated from

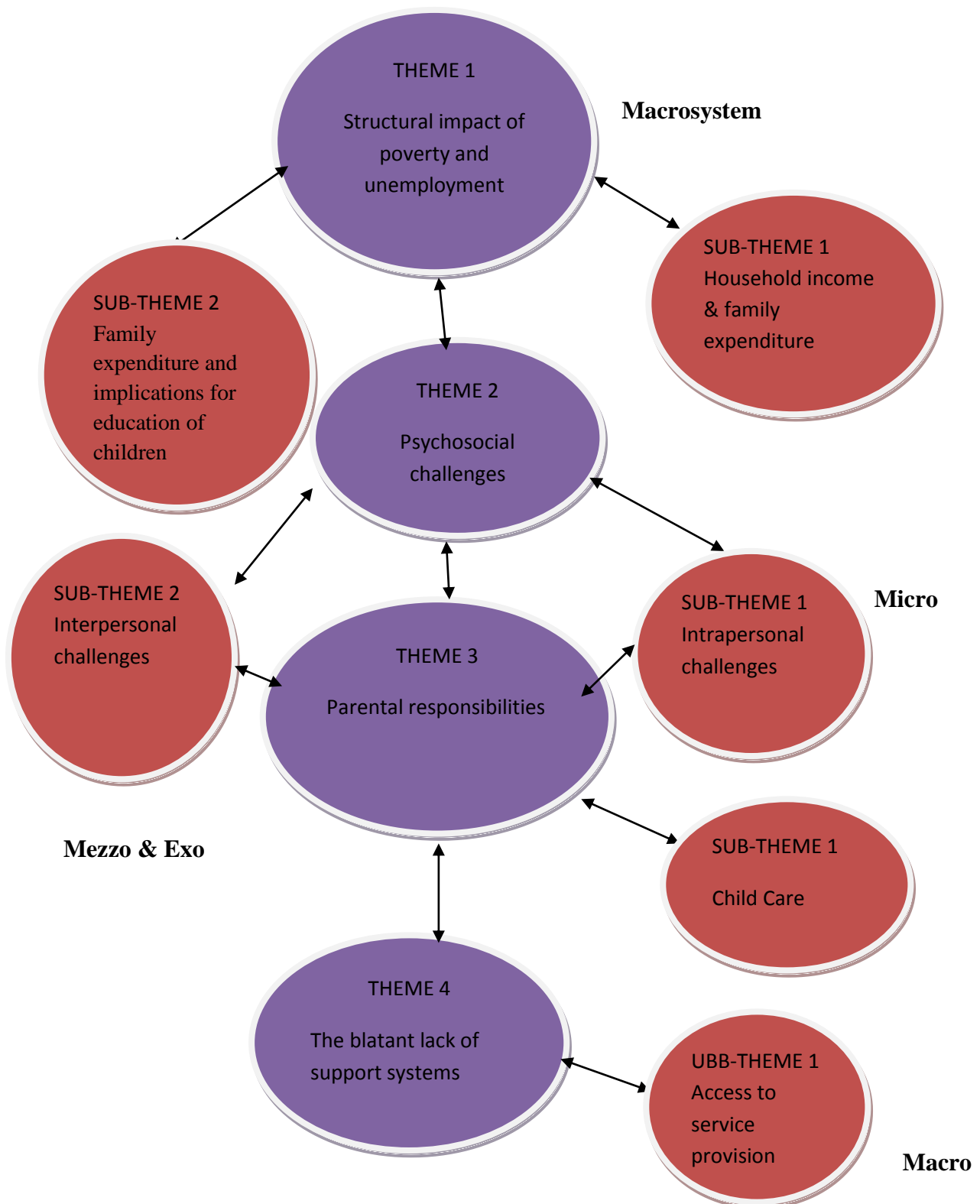


their families who were forced to stay behind in homeland areas” (Holborn and Eddy 2011: 5). HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa has had a profound effect on the number of single-parent households. It has also affected the health and well-being of family life members and has placed an added burden on children (Holborn and Eddy 2011: 4). When taking this into consideration, it was interesting to examine the biographical profile of the single-parents in order to understand their economic and psychosocial experiences.

Figure 4.1 below exemplifies four major themes and seven sub-themes. Themes and sub-themes are as follows: the structural impact of poverty; households’ income and family expenditure, education of children. The second theme is psychosocial challenges: intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges. The third theme is parental responsibilities: child care. Finally, the fourth theme is the blatant lack of support systems and the sub-theme is access to service provision.

Even though these themes will be discussed separately in this Chapter; they are closely intertwined as the findings are conceptualised using ecosystems theory.

**INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS IMPACTING BOTH MALE AND FEMALE  
SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS**



**Figure 4.2: Challenges encountered by single-parent households**

**THEME 1: STRUCTURAL IMPACT OF POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT**

The rising of unemployment rate especially among women and unsure forms of employment resulting in people becoming financial unstable are evident in Table 4.1 which illustrates that 80% of female and 60% of male single-parent households were unemployed at the time of the study. According to Raniga and Simpson (2010) the unemployment rate in the country is still high, especially in black women, as they make up the majority of the informal, unpaid workforce and thus remain on the bottom rung of the social strata, meaning the high unemployment rate does not only have a negative impact on the single-parent households, but it affects the whole of South Africa. Single-parent households are perceived as more impacted negatively with high unemployment rate only because they depend on one pocket, unlike the two parent households where there might be two adults employed in one household. Burke *et al.*, (2009:4) cited from (Smyth, 2004) state that separation and divorce invariably involve financial changes and economic stress and different residence arrangements require different financial cost. The entire participants in this study have reported to have experienced noteworthy economic disadvantages. According to Kotwal and Prabhakar (2009:199) financial crises are a standing situation with most of the single-parent households. Atkins (2010: 160) also confirms that single mothers have greater exposure to on-going financial strain, stresses of care giving and other sources of stress than other mothers. “Financial crisis is a standing situation with most of the single parent families. It becomes difficult in meeting the basic needs of children such as food, clothing, school fees, maintaining the previous standard of living and meet personal expense,” (Kotwal & Prabhakar 2009:199). It is apparent that the adoption of a neoliberal, capitalist economic system, through GEAR is still ineffective and inefficient in dealing with the challenges of structural inequalities, unemployment and poverty (Triegaardt 2009) as it is more aimed at focusing on upholding economic growth, minimising debt rather than creating job opportunities and welfare reform. The macro-economic policies have failed to meet socio-economic needs of people. Those who were poor are poorer and those who were rich are richer. The poor people are still kept in disadvantaged, oppressed and disempowered positions. Unemployment rate is still high as is evident in Table 4.1 Below is an extract capturing some of the participants’ views:

*Nowadays, jobs are very scarce. I was talking to my neighbour Mr Gumede about the scarcity of job opportunities. Since I got injured I never secured a permanent job.*

Participant 18

*I am not working but I applied for the grant for my both children... Jobs are very scarce especially if you are not educated. Participant 1*

*... I came here because I was looking for job opportunities. Jobs are also scarce here in big cities. I decided to move from my birth area after the death of my husband who was supporting me financially. Participant 8*

The results from the current study revealed that female participants when comparing to the male participants were financially unstable, as the Table 4.1 shows 80% of female participants were unemployed when comparing to 60% of male participants who were not employed at the time of the study. Gender dimensions of poverty and unemployment indicates that unemployment is higher for women than men. According to the South African Statistics (2007:12) black African women have the highest rate of unemployment at 30.8% when comparing to 21.1% unemployment rate for men. "South Africa is one of the most unequal countries as with poverty; the pattern of inequality manifests itself in its racial, gender and regional dimensions." (STATSSA, 2007:11). Broussard, Joseph and Thompson (2012) conducted a qualitative study on stressors and coping strategies used by 12 female single-parent households living in the context of poverty and used narrative interviews to capture their lived experiences. Broussard, *et al.* (2012: 191) affirms that, jobs with benefits are limited; neighbourhoods are deteriorating and unsafe, and community, extended family and personal support is scarce for the female single-parent households. This is an indication that female single-parent households are a vulnerable population who are more likely than the male single-parent households to suffer from mental and physical health disorder. In addition a greater percentage of female single-parent households than male single-parent households live below the poverty line. Economic disadvantage is linked with lower academic achievement and increased behavioural problems among children as evident in the focus group discussion. According to the focus group discussion female single-parent households tend to be more severe and pose bigger challenges for them in taking care for their children, than male single-parent households. According to Chant (2007) female single-parent households encounter financial constraints more than male single-parent households solely because they are deprived of male's income. Although male single-parent households are slightly better educated than female single-parent households, on average, both groups are less likely to be college graduates and more likely to have dropped out of high school than married parents and this is evident in the above table 4.1.

From the Table 4.1 two (20%) of male participants mentioned that they were no longer employed because they were retrenched from their previous jobs. The inefficiency of state owned companies, however, is another one reason for the loss of money. The most damaging legacy has been job losses. More jobs were lost as a result of privatization. Some of the private owned companies are closing down and this factor jeopardizes the job opportunities for people. I can strongly argue that the process of globalization penetrates households in direct and indirect ways, as it is not a distant phenomenon but is experienced locally. Hobson and Morgan (2002:8) argue that male single-parent households lose jobs as a result of the restricting of work and employment, and unemployment policies are governed by transnational organizations, both corporations and governmental. Below are the participants' comments:

*... I was employed by one of the big firms in Hammarsdale and I got injured. The firm could not use me anymore and I was retrenched just like that. Participant 14*

*I was working in the firm and I got fired. Participant 19*

The findings of this study show that the majority of single-parent households experienced difficulties in providing adequate care and the basic needs of their children due to the fact that most participants are unemployed and this was also confirmed in the focus group discussion. This is evident by the White Paper (2012:18) cited from Holborn & Eddy (2011:3) that the unemployment rate among urban single-parent households was high. "Women and children were still more likely than men to experience financial hardship after divorce, even after the introduction of the Child Support Scheme and increases in government income support, together with increasing availability of work for women" (Burke, 2009:4). The high rate of unemployment may contribute to large numbers of single-parent households failing to take responsibility for their children because they are financially unable to do so. Two (20%) out of ten female participants were self-employed and others were surviving with piece jobs and social security grants.

The findings reveal that most of the participants are unemployed because they have low levels of education. Only two (10%) out of twenty participants completed secondary level of education. 90% of all participants blamed their harsh background for not completing their secondary level of education. The following are some of their comments:

*I could not even finish school; I dropped out in grade 11. Only if my parents were alive; I was going to finish school...*Participant 4

*... I cannot help T because I never reached where he is now. I dropped up at grade 10.*  
Participant 3

*When looking at my mother's situation, I feel very bad. I have nobody to blame but myself. Only if I studied we would not be suffering like this.* Participant 18

*It is difficult because I am still living a tough life. I could not even finish school; I dropped out in grade 11. Only if my parents were alive; I was going to finish school and be like other children.* Participant 4

The macrosystem level is the outermost layer in the person's environment. At this level policies are made that affect the lives of single-parent households; for instance poverty, unemployment and inequality among single parents. However, the question rises if the policies, for instance (GEAR), that are in place are effective and efficient enough in meeting the needs of poor people. According to Stepney & Ford (2000) macrosystems consist of cultural, political, economic, legal and the religious context of the society in which children and adults are developing. If the structures at the macrosystem do not fulfil the requirements of the policies, human rights would be violated. It also refers to the values, laws, customs and resources of a particular culture. For example, the focus group discussion revealed that in KwaDambuza people are not allowed to purchase land if they are not married. As evident most single-parent households are renting rooms in KwaDambuza as they do not have partners to buy land with. It is said that they are not allowed to buy land because the community is worried that they may take other people's partners within the community as they end up staying as tenants. Some participants in the focus group reported that they have been renting rooms for more than eight years. It is no doubt that social workers have lot of challenges that they are faced with in dealing with the direct impact of macro-economic policies on people's capacity at a micro level to access resources to meet people's economic and psychosocial needs.

### **Sub-Theme 1: Household income and Family Expenditure**

This part of the discussion explored the participants' access to income and expenditure which is crucial in meeting the needs of the households. At the time of the study out of ten

female participants, eight (80%) female participants used child support grants as the source of income. It is interesting to note that only one (10%) out of ten male participants in this study used child support grant to provide for his children and some are surviving with piece jobs. Four (40%) male participants were employed and six (60%) were unemployed and they were also surviving with casual jobs. The basic needs provided for the participants include, food, educational needs, paying for rents, clothing and paying for funerals. Kotwal, *at al.*, (2009:199) affirm it becomes difficult for single-parent households to meet all the basic needs such as food, clothing, school fees, maintaining the previous standard of living and meet personal expense. “The struggles faced by single-parent households cannot be seen as a private matter since they are profoundly linked to public, structural concerns such as poverty, economic exclusion and gender inequalities,” (Raniga and Mathe 2010). This was evident by participants’ responses as they explained as follows:

*I am the one who is responsible for buying food, clothing, paying for funeral cover and school expenses.* Participant 1

*I do everything in the house by my own. I have to see that I put food on the table; my child goes to school (Ngiyaphanta).* Participant 4

*I buy food, clothes and pay school fees for my children. I pay rent and I also have needs as a person. I also save money for my children as I was advised by a social worker to do so. ... I also joined a food stockvel for the Christmas and I pay R250.00 monthly.* Participant 7

The sixth female participant was unemployed, surviving with a child support grant for her four children. She also tried some casual jobs like doing washing, ironing and cleaning for people. She used to make an income of R500.00 monthly out of her casual jobs. She shared that the bulk of her money went towards food. She used to pay school fees for her own children, pay for the transport money and buy clothes for children. She felt that her monthly income was not adequate to cover all the monthly household’s expenses. Some of the comments for the participants:

*My children are suffering. ... I mean they do not get what they want like other children at school. I am not able to meet all their physical needs like food, school expenses and clothes. We sometimes finish the grocery before the end of the month.* Participant 6

*“Kunzima sisi ukuba isingle parent” meaning it is awkward to be a single parent. Sometimes we finish food before the end of the month and we struggle. My brother and*

*nephew eat a lot as they are on drugs. They eat more than four times a day. We sometimes sleep without food. Sometimes my child goes to school without breakfast. He also comes back home hungry and still finds pots empty at home. Participant 4*

*I receive grant once a month, so during the month we run short of food. I take food through credit from our local shop. I then pay after pension day. But I thank God that they eat at school, I real do not know how were they going to survive if they were not provided with food at school as I cannot even give them pocket money to buy chips and sweets. Participant 5*

*T is spoilt; he loves clothing and nice food so he always complains because I am unable to do so. Participant 9*

*... At times I do lay byes for all of them. I buy cheap clothes from Mr Price and PEP store. I also buy from cheap stores like China stores. Participant 3*

Despite the economic challenges the single-parent households may face they still do try and meet those basic needs like food and sending their children to school.

The seventeenth male participant shared that he had a stable income. He was employed as illustrated in Table 4.2.1. He was employed at Edgar's as a cashier, earning R4500.00 per month. He had only one child to care for. He indicated that it was not that hard for him to financially take care of his only child as he was employed. He indicated that he spends R700.00 for the groceries, buys clothes for his child seasonally and saves about R500.00 per month for his child. The rest of the money went towards his needs and transportation. It was fascinating to note that this participant with the highest source of income when comparing with other nineteen participants had the least number of dependent (one) hence he was able to meet the needs of his household.

Due to the extreme levels of poverty at households' levels (micro-level), most single-parent households survive with social security grant as a means of generating an income. It is evident in the Table 4.2.1 that 80% female participants were unemployed and 60% male participants were unemployed. The interview revealed that eight out of ten female participants were in receipt of child support grants in respect of their children. According to Triegaardt (2009: 4) indicate that social grants provide more than half of the income of the poorest 20% of households. She further argues that social pensions contribute significantly



to supporting impoverished, rural and female single-parent households. Some commented as follows:

*I am not working but I applied for the grant for my both children and I am getting it now although it does not certify our needs in the household.* Participant 1

*I am in receipt of the child support grant and I used to receive disability grant too but it was cancelled the time they changed doctors for us.* Participant 4

Two (20%) female participants reported that their households had no source of income as they were not collecting the child support grants. One participant from the focus group discussion shared that she did not have the necessary documentation that would have allowed her to apply for the CSG. Bearing in mind the eco-psychosocial status of single-parent households, this is a concern for social workers as parents' capacity is already over broadened since there are inadequate resources to sustain these households in the communities. One female participant shared that she was intentionally not in receipt of the CSG. She commented as follows:

*I am not in receipt of any grant because I do not have time to stand queues. However; my mother and I have planned that my mother shall go to apply for the child support grant since she is the one who takes care of my child.* Participant 3

Only one out of ten male participants reported that his child was in receipt of child support grant, however the child support grant was only collected by the grandmother of the child. He commented as follows:

*... My mother also receives the grant in respect of Z. We could not apply for A because his mother went off with his birth certificate.* Participant 19

One shared that she is in receipt of the kinship grant in respect of her grandson and the family uses this grant as means of generating an income. She said:

*I always go to my praying place and pray thanking God that I am in receipt of the child support grants in respect of my two children and also kinship care grant in respect of D.* Participant 7

The above statements show the importance of social security grants in trying to ease the burden and challenge that single-parent households are facing in day to day life. The

participants from both individual interviews and focus group discussion indicated that the social grants only, cannot meet all the necessities of the household, however; it is better than nothing. The social grants play a huge role in the lives of single-parent households that are struggling financially.

Three (30%) male participants reported that their mothers are supporting them with their old age pension grants.

*My mother does help with her old age pension grant. She adds on the monthly expenditure like in grocery.* Participant 18

Bigombe, *et al* (2004:164) indicate that a major source of funds for multigenerational support for grandchildren are pensions from grandparents, the post-apartheid South African government has continued to make transfers in the form of the state old-age pension to extended families. They further argue that “pensions have enhanced the status of elderly household members as income earners and provided lifelines to poorer older household”, Bigombe, *et al* (2004:164). The old age pension grant was meant for the senior citizens to rest and enjoy being old, however; the grant is now utilised in meeting almost all the needs of the households and some senior citizens are being abused and beaten if they refuse to part with their old age pension grants. The foundation of the elderly abuse within the family is largely attributed to poverty caused by the high unemployment rate.

### **Sub-Theme 2: Family expenditure and implications for education of children**

Smith (2008:13) cited from Brown (2012) indicates that schools are there to prepare the next generation of workers and that education is the best economic policy. Education is the key to unlock the locked doors in the future and through it children can have a good and fulfilling future. Therefore it is of critical importance that children access good education. Access to education for children should not be determined by any limitations such as financial constraints, thus we applaud the Government for granting children from disadvantaged backgrounds with free education. However Olivier and Strydom (2010:143) discovered that some school-going age children were not attending school as they could not afford school fees. According to the South African Constitution under Section 29 (1) (a) of the Bill of Rights, grants children with the right to basic education.

Some single-parent households are faced with the need for financial support to cover the school disbursements such as payment of school fees, excursion fees, school uniforms, school photographs and pocket money.

Three (30%) of ten male participants and two(20%) female participants were finding it hard to pay for the school fees, however some were able to come up with some strategies of getting the school fees for their children paid. In a quantity of cases schools do not provide the essential support to poor children in terms of school fees exemptions as stipulated in the South African schools act, number 86 of 1996. Below there are some of their comments:

Male participant's remark:

*... I pay my children's school fees in instalments...* Participant 18

Female participant's comment:

*T does pay school fees and he pays R180.00 annually. If I have not paid it, they keep on sending letters to remind you as a parent about the school fees until you pay.* Participant 6

One female participant informed that her two children had to drop out of school because she was not affording to pay the school fees for them. This was what she said:

*X and M had to drop out school fees because I was not affording. I thought they would go out and look for piece jobs so that they could help us but they are lazy.* Participant 8

The above extracts illustrate that being a single parent, having nobody to support you financially, has negative impact on children particularly on their educational aspect. Smith (2012:51) says free education aims at tackling educational inequality and to give greater power to parents and learners to choose a good school. Based on the finding of this study, there are participants that reported that their children are not schooling because they are struggling financially. The free education policy is questionable.

Eight (80%) out of ten female participants shared that they do not pay for the school fees for their children and the schools provide them with free stationary. Seven (70%) male participants also indicated that they do not pay for the school fees for their children. However; all the participants are expected to pay for the excursion fees for their children. The participants explained their experiences as follows:

Some female participants explained as follows:

*The school plays a vital role in my children because they do not pay the school fees. The school provides them with text books, pens, rulers, rubbers and colour pens. Participant 1*

*My children are attending school for free. They are not expected to pay their school fees as the principal and other teachers know my story. Participant 5*

Male participant said:

*N and F are both schooling in one school. Fortunately they are not paying school fees. Participant 20*

The above extracts indicate that most of the single-parent households are benefiting from the states' schools as they are granted with school fees exemption.

Most of the participants stated that their children were lucky enough to be provided with lunch in their schools under the school feeding scheme projects. According to the participant, the feeding scheme encourages some children that are from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend school on a regular basis. Zajda (2008:90) et al supported the statement by saying "For some children, school meals are the only regular meals they receive in a given day." They also believe that if a child is hungry he or she lacks concentration. The following is one of the female participants' comments:

*They all attend school on a regular basis because they like schooling as they get food from school and they sometimes come home with food parcels and bathing soaps. Participant 3*

Male single-parents households were very grateful for the fact that their children were provided with food at their school. They verbalised that schools came as their rescue in their lives as they sometimes felt lazy to cook for their children.

Male participants' appraisals:

*My child at primary school is benefiting from the feeding scheme. Participant 13*

*S and A's school is providing them with food so that our children cannot cry with hunger which might lead to lack of concentration. Participant 14*

All ten female and ten male single-parent households shared that the priority needs were food, clothes and school uniform. However; one male and two female participants felt

terrible as they were unable to pay for school excursions for their children as they did not have enough money. The following was how they expressed their feelings.

Male participant's comment:

*My older child is doing grade 12 and they will be having matriculation dance. She asked me to give her money to pay for the matriculation dance and I was so sad to tell her that I real did not have it. Participant 13*

Female participants' views:

*I cannot forget to mention that schools are also supportive because we were told not to pay school fees for our children but only those that cannot afford. However, there are things that need you as a parent like a week ago my first born wanted R25.00 to pay for a class picture. I did not have money but I had to lend it because I did not want my child to feel like she is not like other children at school. Participant 2*

*I am not able to meet all their basic needs of my child. Sometimes I am unable to pay school excursion. I am feeling bad about this. I do talk to my child that I do not afford. She does not understand because she is still young. Participant 3*

The above extracts show the difficulties of single-parent households in paying for the school excursion for their children.

Despite the financial challenges the single-parent households maybe faced with, that does not stop them from sending their children to attend school. Ten male and seven female participants that were interviewed mentioned that all their children are attending school on a regular basis. These are some of their comments:

Male participants' comments

*Every child attends school; no child is allowed to stay at home unless she or he is sick. Participant 12*

*My children are attending school regularly. The teachers do not have any complaints regarding my children's attendance at school. Participant 19*

The above extracts illustrate that most single-parent households perceive education as an important tool in life.

Two female participants shared that they are experiencing problems with their children who like to truant classes. This was what they shared:

*My child does not like school. If I did not wake him up he would not go to school. You will find him sleeping. If you ask him why he is not going to school he would lie saying that the teachers would be attending their meeting or he would say he is sick.* Participant 4

*... T dropped out of school in grade 9...* Participant 7

Zajda, Biraimah & Gaudelli (2008:19) argue about the factors that contribute to educational access are household wealth, urbanicity, household characteristics, reputation and gender. Zajda, et al (2008:19) say household wealth is consistently found to be a critical predictor of basic education attendance. The Department of Education (2001) recognizes that the emotional needs of child must be met, which single-parent households find it hard to cope with. Prabhavisnu (2006) congruent the argument by supporting the argument presented by the department. He further designated that families undergo intense emotional pressure during death. It is a period that that permits dignity and significance as the culture of the entire family comes to the forefront.

According to the Department of Education they address the following but not limited to:

- *The involvement of families in the education of children*
- *Ensuring that life skills training at schools incorporates family issues*
- *The promotion of parental involvement in schooling*

(White Paper on Families 2012:48-49)

This brings a question, if these programmes implemented by the DOE are effective or not to the school learners, as it is evident in the face to face interviews of this study that some school learners are dropping out of schools because they are unable to cope due to emotional disturbance.

One female participant stated that her children are not attending school because she was not affording. *...X and M had to drop out school fees because I was not affording.* Participant 8

What was found interesting was that all the children that dropped out of school were the boy children living in female single-parent households and “By looking at gender in secondary school, the study will show whether the pattern found in primary school continues in secondary school, that girls are more likely than boys to attend and graduate.” Zajda *et al.*,

(2008:20-21). Juffer, (2006:173) says that the children of female single-households are more likely than those of two-parent households to drop out of school or be expelled from school, to become juvenile delinquents, to take drugs and to commit adult crime. She further argues that without fathers at the household, sons become unruly as she considers fathers as first line of defence of a household, guarding their wives and children from unsavoury lures and dangerous predators. Juffer, (2006:173) also indicates that the household is less safe and the streets more threatening without a father.

Five (50%) female participants reported that their children were struggling in school as their school progress was reported not to be satisfactory. Choung and Operio (2011:2) confirm that the death of the child's parents might place a child at risk for educational hindrances. Some participants in the focus group discussion shared that they find it awkward to help their children with school work as they did not finish school themselves. According to Berk (2010), it is crucial for parents to have a relationship with their children's school to ensure that they benefit optimally from the school environment.

*N is not doing well at school. He is repeating classes. I think it is because he misses his father. He always asks his father's whereabouts and I lie to him saying that his father is in Johannesburg. Participant 5*

*A is reported not to be doing well at school. The teachers are saying he is a slow learner and he forgets very easily. Participant 6*

*... He wants to give up in his studies as he is doing grade 8 at the age of 19 years. Now, the children who are in the same age passed standard 10. He has an eye problem. I took him to the sangoma. The sangoma told us that he has idlozi (ancestors) and the sangoma predicted that he will not finish school. Participant 11*

The extracts above indicate that some children had been affected by the loss of one of their biological parents in their lives and that impacted negatively in their school performance and this statement was evident in the focus group discussion. This is supported by Subbario and Coury (2003 cited by Richter *et al.*, 2004:32) when they say children do get affected emotionally by the loss of their parents. This could lead to long-term effects of children such as learning disabilities, hopelessness, fear, psychosomatic disorder, low self-esteem, low levels of life skills and so forth. However; Webster-Stratton (2001:6) says that widespread support for involving parents in their children's learning grows of convincing

evidence suggesting that family involvement has positive effects on children's academic achievements, social competency and school quality. Duncan & Richard (2012:185) argue that academic outcomes are strongly influenced by family income, parent education and home environment. For an example a child that is from a poor background would be profoundly affected by what is happening in his home and community.

## **THEME 2: PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES**

There is no hesitation that single-parent households experiences augments psychosocial stress associated with their roles and responsibilities as single parents. Cheeseman, Ferguson & Cohen, (2001) cited from (Crosier, Butterworth, & Rodgers, 2007) find single parents experiences more stressful life-events together with increased mental health issues, as compared to married couples. Burke, McIntosh & Gridley (2009:4) confirm that the stress of separation and divorce places both men and women at a risk for psychological and health problem.

It is appropriate to argue that single parents' nurturing and care giving roles results in lots of psychosocial challenges. This is presented into two relations which are intrapersonal (Micro) and interpersonal relations (Mezzo and Exosystem).

### **Sub-Theme 1: Intrapersonal challenges (Microsystem)**

All the participants from both individual interviews and focus group discussion shared that they are faced with the complex social dilemma of hurting in their single-parent households. This is a result of an interaction between the participants and their social system. The research design was based on the ecosystems perspective and the main idea is that individuals are shaped by and are active shapers of their social context (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2001).

All the participants commented on the stress that is caused by single parenting. What was noticed in this study was that male participants seem more stressed than female participants. Most of the female participants shared that they had lately involved themselves in drugs and alcohol in order for them to try and deal with their stressors. Some are depending in their faith which is God.



All the participants had indicated the hardship of raising a child as a single parent. The role of a single parent entails that the parent takes on all the responsibilities that may have been shared by their spouses. Participant 4 commented as follows “*I am forced to do all the things that were used to be done by his father while he was still alive.*” All the male and some female single participants of this study found the roles and responsibilities of single parents straining and draining in all forms, for instance draining physically, emotionally and psychologically.

#### Male participants’ experiences

*It feels very hard for me to speak to F as she is a girl child. There are things that I feel ashamed to talk about with her as she is a girl child. I sometimes do not know when and how to talk to her about issues of boys. I play a role of being a mother, a father and a friend at the same time in my children.* Participant 20

*Raising a child as a single parent is a very ugly situation; especial if you are a male person and raising a girl child. There are things that hinder you from practising parenthood.* Participant 19

*It is a burden to me and hurting because everything has to be done by me as my wife is dead. It is not nice especial N has reached that stage where she needs a close monitoring from a female person. I always wonder who is going to guide her as my mother is very old and on the other side I do not courage to talk to her about boyfriends stuff. I am scared to talk to her because it will be like I am encouraging her to get herself a boyfriend at her age. I cannot talk to her about the changes of her body.* Participant 18

#### Female participants’ views

*I find it very difficult to head the household and to look after the children. Nevertheless my children ease the burden out of me because they are still cooperative and respectful.* Participant 2

*It is hard especial if you are not working. I hate being a single parent. It is double hard for me because I am living with a mental challenged child.* Participant 11

*It is awkward to raise the children without their father especial the boy children. In most cases boy children are troublesome.* Participant 6

*It is stressful. My life is not progressing. I have persistent headache caused by stress. I am trying my best, my life is not progressing. It is painful if my child goes to school without food.* Participant 4

The above extracts illustrate the stressors that the single-parent households go through in their lives.

All the female participants found it hard to take decisions in their households without a second opinion. It is indicated below the experiences of the female participants in terms of decision making.

*It is very hard but I believe whatever happened; happened for the reason. Even now I still find it very difficult to head the household without a father to support me in decision making.* Participant 1

*It is more than hard to raise children without their father. You make all the decisions and giving guidance to the children as a parent. You sometimes make a mistake and no one will tell you that you have gone wrong.* Participant 7

*... You sometimes need a second opinion when taking decisions like I wanted a best school for my child but I had to decide on my own which school was going to suit my child.* Participant 10

*It is hard to take decisions at home especial if you are a single parent; you have got nobody to support you in decision making.* Participant 1

The above extracts show that most female single-parent households find it hard to take decisions in their households that will impact their lives and the above extracts are evident in the focus group discussion. This implies that they did not perceive themselves as people that could make wise and sound decisions in their lives as that brings fear of being independent. However this is not surprising, when thinking of men being the head of the families and women treated like little submissive people in their families; it gives an answer to the reason for them to feel inferior.

Eight (80%) female and four (40%) male participants shared that they learnt to be self-independent in a hard way. For some participants losing their partners unexpectedly was a sharp learning curve for them to live an autonomous life. Some commented as follows:

Some female participants:

*He loves his child but once he gets a new girlfriend he would forget that he brought a soul on earth and we used to fight a lot until I said enough is enough. I used to ask him money and he would think that I wanted to support my family because he knew that we were poor. I then decided to go back home. Participant 3*

*I had told myself that I will have to cope with the situation because it will not change. Participant 6*

*As I said before I do not just sit and wait for Father Christmas to come with food parcels... Participant 8*

It was noteworthy that some female single-parent households were proud of themselves as they were able to adopt the 'traditional male' role and responsibility of being providers of their families. However; some were finding it hard to cope.

Male participants' comments:

*...But on the other side I feel proud of myself that I could manage to raise my children on my own. Participant 12*

*My wife was employed as a cleaner in one of the organisations in town. She was also contributing towards the monthly expenditure but now everything is looking for me. Participant 15*

The traditional ideology that male single-parents cannot take responsibility of raising their children is questionable. The above extract shows that male single-parent households can effectively take responsibility of their children.

For some reasons many single parents feel constantly shattered, they often feel physically and emotionally exhausted and find themselves yelling more at their children. One male and one female participant shared their ongoing battle with depression and anxiety. Atkins (2010:155) affirms that depression is prevalent among single mothers and produces negative psychosocial and health outcomes for the parents, their children and their families.

They commented as follows:

*I was diagnosed with diabetes and depression, I was referred for counselling at LifeLine and Rape Crisis and it helped me to deal with my sentiments. Participant 7*

*The separation between my wife and I has disturbed me emotionally in such a way that I was diagnosed with depression. I think I got depressed since it came as a shock of my life realizing that I have got no wife while children are still young as I thought that by going out to look for a job would be a solution on our misunderstandings. Participant 9*

The above extracts are the indication that some single-parent households hardly coped with the fact that they are single-parents and it was regardless of gender or age. A single parent's ability to function well depends on his or her holistic well-being (physical, social, emotional and mental). However, as Atkins (2010:155) affirms depression is prevalent among single mothers and produces negative psychosocial and health outcomes for the parents, their children and their families.

Tracy, Robins & Tangney (2007:13) cited from (Lewis H.B. 1971; Lewis M. 2000 Tangney & Dearing, 2002) indicate that shame involves negative feelings about the stable, global self, whereas guilt involves negative feelings about specific behaviour or action taken by self. Supporting this distinction, this study has shown that participants who blame poor parenting on ability are more likely to feel shame and those who blame poor performance on the effort of parenting are more likely to feel guilt.

**Shame:** participant 7

Female participant's comment:

*I admit; I am not good in disciplining children...*

Male participant's comment:

Participant 20: *... even if I wanted to, I could not because I am not a good father to them.*

## **Guilt**

Female's participant commented as follows:

Participant 1: *I regret the decision I took over my husband. I think I made a big mistake by letting my husband go.*

The above extracts indicate that some single-parents can present with feelings of shame and guilt after losing their partners and this depends on the individual.

The participants expressed a persistent feeling of loss when talking about their partners. For some it was the fact that they did not get to know their partners well, their preferences and the type of people that they were and that the opportunity to do so had passed. Some of the female participants cried openly when talking about their lost partners. Most of them expressed that they were not coping with the loss of their partners. One young female participant in the focus group recalled that for her it was worse when other women talked about their husbands in her presence and she did not know what to say. She usually responded by walking away.

Ten female and nine male participants indicated that their children and them are still grieving with the loss of their parents and partners. The trauma related to the loss of the partners is reflected in the following accounts given:

Female participants commented as follows:

*...my first husband died and he left me with one child. I then went back home because I was still young and I wanted my mother's support. I got myself another boyfriend; he also died in 2011. I think I have a bad luck (**crying out loud**) Participant 5*

*... I knew I could not release my husband in jail and he indeed wronged people but I am not saying he deserved what he got. I had hope on him. I sometimes become angry at myself and blaming God that why he gave me this burden that I cannot carry on my own. I hate living. Participant 2*

Some of the male participants' comment

*My wife passed away in 2010 just before the world cup. I will not say she was sick because she became dizzy and she complained about tiredness. I then quickly went to the well known traditional healer Mr. M to seek for assistance. He told us that my wife was bewitched by her family because they were jealousy that I gave her marriage. I could not look at them during the funeral. They pretended as if there was nothing wrong. I could not understand it and what was worse of all was that they were crying like other people who were hurt. The death of my wife was a mystery. Participant 18*

*I am not getting used to the situation. I always think that she is still going to come back. It is indeed hard for me. What comes in my mind all the time is that we do not appreciate them when they are still with us but the minute they are gone we feel the gap and emptiness. Whenever I am in town I see people who look like my wife and I sometimes stopped and starred at them.* Participant 15.

The findings above depict the intense loneliness that the single-parent households were still feeling because of losing their partners. The depth of their grief was evident in the interviews.

The above extracts are the indication that there is no time frame for grieving and healing. Some people may take years to heal and some can take months to heal but what is significant is that a person cannot get healed without going through a process of grieving. Furthermore to note, is that people are different, as they are different they respond or react differently even in same situations. That is why there is no size fits all solution and there is no solution that is suitable for every situation. Peterson, MFT and Warner (2003:228) ascertain that losing your love, it could be through death or divorce, is one of the most painful experiences a person ever faces. They further state that whether a person is grieving because of death or divorce, that person can expect a lot of ups and downs and unexpected twists on the road to recovery.

The anger at the participants own predicament is usually directed inwards, causing feelings of worthlessness, powerlessness and helplessness. Seven (70%) of female and eight (80%) male participants mainly indicated that they experienced powerlessness or worthlessness as they were heading households on their own. Some of the participants' comments were:

One female participant reported as follows:

*... It is heart breaking to hear that your husband is living with another wife. I did not leave that time; I stayed because I did not want to give that woman freedom to stay with my husband. I still wanted to give them some hard time till 2007 where I said **"thank you"**. My husband did not stop there by bringing a second wife in the family. He infected me with Human Immune Virus (HIV) and I decided to divorce him in 2007 after finding out that he infected me with HIV.* Participant 10

Male participants shared as follows:

*I stayed few months in 2009 and I received a letter from Court telling me to sign the divorce papers. In fact she signed the divorce papers first before she even informed me about what was happening. I still had a hope in us. I had no choice but to sign them. I tried to get my mother's support but she gave me a cold shoulder.* Participant 19

*I am worried about my son B because it is his final year this year in school. "Ngiyothi webani kusabele bani?" meaning who will I shout for help?* Participant 14

The above extracts indicate that some participants felt powerless, helpless and worthlessness as they were left with all duties, roles and responsibilities of heading their households. One male participant stated that he found it awkward to handle the households as a single-father:

*I am a male; I cannot stay with children on my own. My children were used to their mother because they spent quality time together. I also had to ensure that they were well fed which was difficult for me. My wife spoilt me because those were all her duties in the house.* Participant 15.

This was an indication that some women are often left with the sole responsibility and role of caring for children and that includes providing and preparing food for the children. This situation has changed over the years and it is challenging the family unit structures. The unequal sharing of role and responsibilities between males and females results from the widespread existence of gender status beliefs and stereotypes that males are head and females are house-keepers.

Two (20%) male participants expressed their strong feelings about being seen as failures. Subsequently they ended up regarding themselves as failures too. They commented as follows:

*My ex-wife family never loved me as I was from a poor family. They would tell me that I do not have good qualities of being their son in law. I never got peace and that disturbed my soul. I would sometimes wish to kill myself because I also knew that I was a failure as I could not give my ex-wife everything she wanted. Life was not easy. I then decided to cheat on my ex-wife as I could not get peaceful sleep with her because she always reminded me how useless and powerless I was.* Participant 13

*... I may say I am failing to support my children on my own; I real need a second person to support me. There are things that I cannot afford to do for instance buying a car. I feel that*

*my last born F wishes that I could buy a car. I remember one day she came back from school telling me about her friend who was brought to school by her father with his car. To F it was like I am a failure because I only walk her to and from school and carry her school bag. She wishes that I could do more. ... I also remember one day her class teacher called me to school because F stole her classmate's lunch box as she did not have something to eat on that day and I was so disappointed...* Participant 20

The above extracts are indications that some male single-parent households perceive themselves as failures especially if they are unable to provide for their households. The background has a big impact on this, for instance, the society has traditionally perceived males as providers of income for their households and when they are unable to provide they then regard themselves as failures.

The feeling between the male and female participants on the fear of engaging in intimate relationships was mutual. Some participants felt uneasy to introduce new partners to their children. Some had fear of unknown, for instance, they are uncertain whether they are ready to move on or not. They sometimes fear that they might also lose the new partners like they lost them before. They say once beaten, twice shy. Some commented as follows:

Female participant:

*... I had decided that I stay and suffer on my own.* Participant 2

*... If I have a new boyfriend I try by all means to hide because I do not want to expose them to my private life. I respect them because I want them to respect me in return.* Participant 5

Male participant's comment:

*... The most thing I find it difficult is to introduce a new girlfriend to my child because I do not know how would he feels if he sees a new mother. as I am a man I think I have to sit with him and explain what happened between his mother and I and also explain that I also need a new partner to help me caring for him as my mother is aging.* Participant 17

It is exhilarating to note from the above responses that some of the parents have respect for their children, as most children do what they see, and not what they are told to do. Some comments above show that some single-parents were still uncertain about their future with regard to intimate relationships. Kaufmann, (2006: 141) says that rejecting the possibility of autonomy and opting for integration into a family therefore demands compensation.



All female and male participants felt obligated that they have to look good and do well in front of their children, as children are born without social knowledge or social skills and they eagerly look for someone to imitate. As the participants were all single parents, they were the first teachers and role models to their children. In most cases children are more affected by what their parents do than by what their parents say. Unfortunately for the participant's children they only learn from one side of their parents about how to behave in life.

One female participant said:

*A good parent becomes a role model to her or his children. I have failed my children for several times and I want to try to be a better mother to my children. Participant 5*

One male participant stated that:

*My two children are teenagers and they need a close attention from me as I am their father. So I have to ensure that I behave well so as to gain respect from them. Participant 12*

Even though the participants have challenges in rearing their children, they try by all means to exhibit a positive view of themselves so that they can be a good example to their children.

Through loss, one might feel a need and a desire to belong and to be accepted. One may end up losing the sense of self because of the desire to belong. You feel voiceless because you cannot openly express yourself anymore. Your opinion does not matter anymore just because you want to be accepted. You desire for your children to regard you as a role model because you want their love and acceptance, and at times it becomes rather daunting to be different people at once because different people have different expectations, and to adapt to all is both physically and emotionally taxing. Some participants indicated that to be different and unique to some individuals like friends, relatives, neighbours, own children and everybody else; may cause conflict. Some participants expressed that they could not take decisions based on their own judgements in their households as they wanted approval from their parents. Some commented as follows:

Male participants stated that:

*My mother is the one who set all the rules at home. My mother always says that I spoil my child because I hate seeing my child crying. I do not like a person who hit my child but there is nothing I can do. Participant 17*

*... Yei, I do not know either but what people say is that a real man does not cry, he becomes strong for his children. If you cry they see you as a weak man so who would like to be seen as a weak man. Crying is for coward men. But I still feel that it is too much for me.*

Participant 15

Some female participants' comments

*... I sometimes ask my mother (maternal aunt) or my maternal grandmother if I want to decide on something to help me in reaching in that decision. I use them as my references.*

Participant 1

*... One neighbour used to send my child to shop without notifying me or asking permission from me. I did not like that but I kept quiet for the sake of piece. She also used my child to beg for food from people. She has her own children but she never used them. I feel awkward to speak to this neighbour because I sometimes ask favours from her.*

Participant 3

All the female participants and three male participants felt obligated to adapt in the new life.

They commented as follows:

Female participants

*It is not easy but I have accepted and beside I had no choice but to accept the situation as it was.*

Participant 2

*Before the death of my husband, I was not attending church but now I have turned to Him because he is my only source of strength. Now I have to stay at home everyday. I only go to church because I am the only one who has to cook at home. I cannot attend night services at church because I have to look after the house as they are many thugs in my community.*

Participant 4

*It is very difficult to head the household and look after children. There is no one else who can look after my children except myself and I have accepted that.*

Participant 5

One male participant indicated that:

*Heading a household as a single parent changed my life; as a result my children come first in my life.*

Participant 12.

This is an indication that few people learnt good things through losing their partners and they grew out of the situation they faced. To me however this means that some challenges can be the solution at the same time.

However; seven (70%) out of ten male participants found it awkward to adjust in the new life and some of them commented as follows

*I am not getting used to the situation. I always think she is still going to come back. It is indeed hard for me.* Participant 14

*It is not nice especial now that N has reached that stage where she needs a close monitoring from a female person. I always wonder who is going to guide her as my mother is very old and on the other side I do not have courage to talk to her about boy stuff.* Participant 18

*Life is real difficult; my ex-wife left us in times where we needed her mostly. I so wish that she can come back. When thinking about her I feel like crying. I do not have shoulder to cry onto. My ex-wife was my pillar of support.* Participant 20

The above responses show that most of the male single-parent households found it hard to adjust in the new life style. However; they have accepted their parental roles which make it better for them to cope with some of their responsibilities. This has been evident in Bigombe's, et al (2004:165) study when they state that women's main role as daily household and farm managers remains in close conventionality with the traditional expectations and therefore they have been known as better able than men to achieve the social values embedded in their gender roles. Nowadays, with the changes in households and persisting patriarchal structure of powers, men are being threatened to change their old traditional expectations and learn to do things that were known as roles of female people.

### **Sub-Theme 2: Interpersonal challenges (Mezzo and Exosystem)**

Interpersonal relations target relationship approaches. The participants were asked if they received any support from people they are close to, like extended family members, neighbours, or churches. This question was asked in order to understand the level of support received by the single-parent households. The main focus was also on influencing the types of relationships that single-parent households had with the people with whom they most regularly interact. This study revealed mainly problems within single-parent households such as lack of support, lack of emotional bonding between family members, lack of

discipline or supervision of children. It also included the need for training in parenting skills. Such programmes are aimed at improving the emotional bonds between parents and their children, encouraging parents to use consistent child-rearing methods, and helping them to develop self-control in bringing up children.

Eight (80%) female participants and five (50%) male participants mentioned that they often feel that they have no time for themselves, whether it is to spend time with friends or to look for jobs. Even if they can find time for these individual pursuits, they may be so tired that they have no energy for them. They sometimes experience a lot of anger out of nothing and they feel socially rejected.

Six (60%) female participants reported that through being single parents, they have lost friendship with people they were close to. "Divorce also disrupts social networks, as measured by loss or change of friends, change in contact with filial kin and disrupted socialising," Burke, (2009:5). They commented that sometimes there is no time to visit friends or sometimes friends run away from them. Here were some of their comments:

*When my husband was still staying with us I used to have many friends and spend some time with them. Heading a household changed my life as a result I am no longer having strong relationship with my friends. Participant 2*

*I am a busy person. I do not have time to sit and relax because I now know that I have to work hard for everything as my husband passed away. My social life is dead and it was buried with my husband on the same day. Participant 7*

*I cannot involve myself in the community gatherings because I have a child to look after. I cannot attend funerals, weddings and other ceremonies due to my situation. People have stopped inviting me because I do not have time. Participant 10*

A significant finding was that most single-parent households have less time for pleasure due to the lot of responsibilities that they carry out at their households.

Five (50%) male participants felt the same about losing their friendships through being single-parents. They commented as follows:

*I hardly spend some time with my friends. I do not have time to sit and relax because I now know that I have to work extremely hard for everything as I am staying with children. I use to love people and love their company but now I do not have time for them. Participant 9*

*All my friends are gone. I am left alone. Those that I knew pretend as if they do not know me. I am left in nowhere but I thank God that my children are now staying with me although I am struggling. Participant 13*

*All my friends are laughing at me; saying I am gay how come that I chased away a wife and left alone with children. Some are saying I am helping myself with my children (**raping them**). Participant 14*

The above extracts are the indication that most single-parent households are affected by the fact that they have to play roles of being both parents at the same time and they end up having no time to spend with their close people. Their responsibilities lead to isolation and loss of their liberty as evident from their responses.

Five (50%) of female participants shared that they do not have any support from their extended families. Some participants said that they did not receive support from their extended families because they were residing in other provinces. The following extracts are about their challenges with the lack of support from their extended families.

*My family is very insensitive and they do not care about what is going on in our lives. We hardly have contact with our relatives. Participant 6*

*...We do not receive support from the extended family. My uncles live with their families within the area but I do not receive any help from them. They do not even call me and ask how I am doing with children. My younger brother's wife does not like people who are visiting their house. I used to visit them before with children. If you are in their house, his wife becomes very active, for example she would do a spring cleaning in order to avoid spending time chatting with you. Participant 11*

The interview showed some family dynamics experienced by the single-parent households. As much as it is expected that family members should play a significant role in the upbringing of the children, that does not often happen.

Five (50%) of male participants also reported that they do not get any kind of support from their extended families. Below are their comments:

*I do not get help from anybody. Family members are selfish; once you share your dream with them they steal it. They have never been helpful. My siblings are rich but they would never support me. I am real struggling.* Participant 12

*My family has turned against me so I am not counting on them...* Participant 13

*I do not have any support from my extended family as I told you that I left them at E... because they were bewitching my family. I do not want anything that has to do with them. I am suffering like this because of them.* Participant 14

The above extracts are an indication that participants had the primary responsibility of providing both financial and emotional support to their households. This study also revealed that participants attempted to reach out to the extended family for support, however the extended families showed no compassion towards them, implying that they did not perceive themselves as having a shared responsibility in raising the children. There is a Zulu idiom which says *a child is a child of a nation*, meaning raising a child can be a shared responsibility but the support of this idiom is little shown in this study.

Nevertheless, five (50%) male and five (50%) female participants mentioned that they were receiving moral support from their extended families. When commenting on the matter they said:

Male participant's voice:

*The great support I get is from my aunt who stays with us. My cousins help where they can. They also help me with buying clothes like trousers, t/shirts and shoes for my child. But what I have noticed is that my cousins help me for the sake of the neighbours not because it is from their hearts. Some of the people like to be seen as generous in front of other people.* Participant 16

Female participant's comment:

*As I mentioned before that the only support I get is from my maternal aunt and sometimes from my maternal grandmother. Life is tough for me.* Participant 1

The above extracts illustrate that these extended families played a vital role in giving support and strength to the single-parent households by providing emotional support. In the joint family set-up, the workload is shared among the members, often equally. Other senior members of the household such as grandmothers babysit infants in case their parents are working. They are also responsible for teaching the younger children their mother tongue, manners, and etiquette in the absence of the parents. Grandparents often take the leading roles due to the fact that they have the most experience with parenting and maintaining a household and this eases the single-parenting burden. According to Mooney, *et al.*, (2009:19) parents are often unable to adequately support their children when a family breakdown occurs due to their own distress and children often seek and gain support from those outside the immediate family such as grandparents and friends. They further indicated in the findings that children who felt close to their grandparents were found to have fewer adjustment problems.

Seven (70%) of female participants see their neighbours as helplessness in their lives. Some even mentioned that they get something that they have worked for.

*I cannot count on the neighbours, the only thing they know is to gossip about people. If you look good they say you are the prostitute. They always gossip about my family and house. They laugh at us that we are poor.* Participant 3

*Nothing comes for "mahhala" for free; I work for everything I get. I do not have support either from my neighbours. I get something if I worked for it.* Participant 4

*People are not trustworthy. I had an agreement with my neighbour that I was going to build a house for her but she went to look for another person. I was so disappointed because I had hope that I was going to get some money to add on my expenditure.* Participant 8

In the focus group, it was revealed that neighbours mind their own business and there is little time to check how one is doing. They stated that you suffer your own problems and try to find a way out on your own. One female participant shared that her nearest four neighbours are also single-parent households, so she was not anticipating any support from them as they are also suffering like her.

The above extracts illustrate that the neighbours do not play an active role in giving emotional and moral support to the single-parent households. Interestingly, most of the participants' neighbourhoods are single-parent households.

Only two (20%) out of ten female participants acknowledged the assistance they get from their neighbours. Their sentiments on the matter are as follows:

*My neighbour helps me indeed, she bought my son school shoes as his old one were small for his feet. They also do support us emotional.* Participant 6

*Some people do help. One of my neighbours gave me her old clothes to give my children. However, I could not use them because they were very old (laughing). I do have close relationship with my neighbours. They support us emotional. They are very kind and generous.* Participant 7

The above extracts are the indication that some neighbours can play an important role in lives of the single-parent households because they support them, as they are the closest pillar of support. Good relationships between the neighbours and the single-parent households enhance conducive environments which are crucial for economic and psychosocial support, when the need arises (Mezzosystem).

Eight (80%) out of ten male participants shared their difficulty with getting support from their neighbours.

*I would not say more about my neighbours. They are scared that I might rape their children. They do not trust me anymore. They do not understand that I am not a rapist, it was just a misunderstanding between my ex-wife and I. If my neighbours see me talking to their children they scold them and shout at them. They tell them not to talk to me.* Participant 13

*The neighbours are also useless to me. The only thing they know is to gossip and spread disgusting and untrue stories about me. They say I am over protective to my children only because I sleep with them.* Participant 14

The above extracts illustrate that the lack of support from neighbours is similar to the challenges experienced by the female single-parent households, as 80% of male single-parent households also stated that they do not have support from their neighbours.

However; two male participants mentioned the importance of their neighbours in their lives. They acknowledged their neighbours as being of their great assistance to them. The participants explained their experiences as follows:



*My neighbour is a nurse. She helps me by explaining things that are related to S's health as she is on ARV treatment. She is very helpful. She works in the clinic and gives us amandla pap.* Participant 12

*The neighbours sometimes do help us at home like if we are short of something they lend us. Neighbours are the first people who get to know your problem before your family so I try by all means to keep peace between my neighbours and myself.* Participant 16

The above extracts show that there are few neighbours who play a vital role in lives of other people.

The mezzosystem is the second level in the ecosystem model, and in this study it encompassed the connections among mezzo systems such as neighbourhoods (Berk 2000: 28). It is characterized by interactions between different systems, for example, it included the interaction between the single-parent households with their neighbourhoods. Some neighbours played a vital role in the lives of some single-parent households because they supported them as they were the closest pillar of support. The good relationships between the neighbour and the participants enhanced conducive environments which were crucial for economic and psychosocial support, when the need arises.

Nine (90%) of female participants acknowledged the moral and spiritual support from their churches (*Exosystem*). Some of their comments:

*I sometimes receive spiritual support from church if it happened that I attended the church service other than that there is no support. I think that was why I fell for the alcohol.* Participant 3

*The people that we can count on are my mother's fellow Christians; I must say they are very supportive. As I told you before that we did not have money for burying my maternal grandmother but they helped us from the beginning to an end of the funeral without expecting anything in return. ... We also receive moral support from my mother's church as they know and understand our story.* Participant 5

*I do receive emotional and spiritual support from my church. The members of the church still visit us although the household is headed by a single parent. ... Sometimes the members of my church conduct Thursday prayers in my house.* Participant 7

Only one (10%) out of ten male participants shared that there is moral support from his church.

*... But I still get full support from church and they do not judge me for my mistakes. At church is where my soul gets peace, I real appreciate the moral support I get from church.*

Participant 13

The above extracts illustrate that churches are the sources of strength and support to some of the single-parent households. Interestingly only one male participant acknowledged the support of his church. This raises a question about the man's ego. Most men do not believe in crying for help and they see churches as a women thing.

Seven (35%) out of twenty participants in this study mentioned that some of their children are presenting with behavioural problems. Surprisingly; not even one male participant reported on the behavioural problems presented by their children. This was supported by Holborn & Eddy (2011:4) cited from International research echoed by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on the effects fathers have on their children's development, argues that the presence of a father can contribute to cognitive development, intellectual functioning and school achievement. All the children that were reported to be misbehaving were mostly boy children under the care of their mothers. "Boys growing up in absent father households are more likely to display 'hypermasculine' behaviour, including aggression", Holborn *et al.*, (2011:4). As it has been mentioned before that some participants are caring for adolescents and they find it hard to control their behaviour. Some participants shared that some of their children are involved in drugs and alcohol. Some are rude and un-cooperative. They would not want to participate in the house chores and some would even drop out of school. The following are some of their comments:

*... He is ruled and misbehaving. He spends his time smoking dagga and drinking alcohol.*

Participant 8

*T does not conform to the house rules and I am failing to discipline him as he is now old. He is uncooperative when it comes to the house rules. He even says that the rules do not suit him.* Participant 3

*I always hit S because he is not behaving well.* Participant 1

*I am the one who is responsible for disciplining my child. He sometimes goes missing from home. He would leave without forwarding information to me. If I ask him when he is back he tells me that he is tired watching my brother fighting with me. He also adds some stress in my life. He goes out and roaming around with his friends and sometimes not come back home. Participant 4*

As most of the participants felt that they were struggling with getting support from their immediate environment, they then indicated the great need of parenting skills programmes. Eight (80%) out of ten male participants felt that they needed to be equipped with parenting skills. They also felt that they needed some sort of support groups that will help them in sharing experiences and coping mechanisms in caring for their children as single-parent households. However, some male participants were not trained on how to raise their children. Furthermore, they always thought caring for children is for female persons only. The following are some of their experiences:

*We wish we could be supported in raising our children for instance having programmes that will teach us how to community with our children. Participant 20*

*I also so wish that we can have an organisation that will teach us, the single parents on how to talk to our children especial if they are opposite sex because we find it hard. What I can say I am not confident enough to talk to the girl child about how to behave in life. Participant 17*

*... What is also critical is to get some parenting skills especially for the male persons to be able to raise their children accordingly. Participant 16*

The above extracts illustrate the need for male participants to be supported with information and skills on how to raise their children on their own as it is an unusual thing to them.

Four (40%) female and two (20%) male participants reported that they did attend parenting skills programmes. They also stated that the programme was beneficial to them as they learnt different skills on how to deal with and discipline children. One of the female's experiences was expressed as follows:

*... I also attended parenting skills training at LifeLine & Rape Crisis which helped me very well as I learnt how to be a good parent. Participant 6*

The above response shows that the parenting skills enhancement can help lots of single-parent households in their parenting process. Mooney et al. (2009: 22) suggested developing parenting programmes under policy implications that are specifically targeted at supporting parents to manage the effects of family breakdown on themselves and their children could help.

### **THEME 3: PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

For me to be in a good position to understand the economic and psychosocial experiences of single-parent households in KwaDambuza, the parental responsibilities had to be explored. “Parenting behaviour and the quality of the parent-child relations play a critical role in understanding children’s well-being in relation to family change,” Mooney, et al., (2009:11).

Five (50%) out of ten female and eight (80%) male participants reported that they take turns with their children in undertaking household chores. The following experiences with household chores were shared by the participants:

One male participant’s comments:

*I have taught him to wash his socks and polish his shoes when he comes back from school. They clean the house and they also clean the yard on weekends.* Participant 18

Female participants’ comments:

*I am the one who is responsible for tidiness of the house and cooking. He also participates in doing home chores. He is responsible for washing dishes and fetching water from the communal tap.*

He is also responsible for washing his school uniform but under my supervision. He also does ironing. Participant 10

*They clean the yard as you can see. I cook during the week and I reach them to cook during the weekends even though they are boys. I want them to learn to do things on their own because I may die before they get their own girlfriends to spoil them.* Participant 5

*We all have roles and responsibilities in the house. I am the one who does the most things for my children like doing the cleaning because I am not working. E and A are still young but they do help there and there, like we all participate in doing gardening.* Participant 2

From the above extracts it is apparent that children raised in single-father households become responsible faster than children raised in single-mother households.

One participant shared that her mother does everything in the house and the child does not do anything because she is still young. The participant expressed this as follow:

*My mother took over; I do not have time for my baby. It is like my mother is her mother. I wish I was working so as to thank my mother for taking care of my baby. I would admit to you that I have less love for my child.* Participant 3

One male participant stated that his child is only two years old so he is still too young to participate in the house chores and that frustrates them. The participant shared this as follows:

*My child is still a baby so the only thing he does is to eat, cry and sleep.* Participant 16

The above findings indicate that single-parent households who are caring for younger children have more of a parenting burden than single-parent households with grown children as they do not have anybody to help them with the house chores. These single-parents have to take care of the young children and also look after the households. They have to make sure that children are fed, bathed, clothed and on the other side ensure that these children grow in a safe and secure environment. Twelve (60%) out of twenty participants were caring for their own children that were younger than 10 years old. This is a critical age group in child development, a stage which needs close monitoring, supervision and greater care. Eight (40%) participants were caring for the adolescents between the ages of 11 to 18 years old. Meyer, Moore and Viljoene (1995) find this developmental stage also as more critical, as it is where there is identity confusion among the adolescents. Thus it causes the adolescent to clash with rules of society and with persons who are close to them. Meyer, *et al.*, (1995) further mentions that some children in the adolescent stage may withdraw or fall in love, turn to drugs and alcohol to relieve anxiety.

## **Sub-Theme 1: Child Care**

Single-parent households fulfil all the parental roles and tasks in the households, such as bathing children, finding school for them, helping children with homework, attending parental meetings, and providing guidance and support to their children. Single-parent households acknowledged that they have to be both mother and father to their children. Phoenix, Woollet & Lioyd (1991:75) argue by stating that single-parent households have to avoid becoming possessive and to some extent have to assume the dual role of mother and father. In this research some participants' responses on the matter included the following:

Male participant

*I have to make sure that my children do not sleep without food. I make sure that they go to school. I guide and give them support of which sometimes it becomes hard to do so. I play a role of being a mother, a father and a friend at the same time in my children. Participant 20*

*I see if they have warm clothes for winter because I do not wish to see my children suffering like I did while I was still young. I make sure that there is food on the table for them all the time. I want to see my children growing up like any other children and I want them to be happy. Participant 19*

*I look after my children. I ensure that they have all the basic needs like food and going to school. I make sure that the grocery that we buy will last for the whole month. I pay for the school expenses. I make sure that the environment at home is conducive for the upbringing of the children. Participant 14*

Female participant

*I am the one who find school for the children. As we talk today I am returning admission forms for T and D as they will be starting in the new school in the following year. It is my responsibility to ensure that all children are attending school on a regular basis. I am also responsible for attending their school meetings. I also assist the younger ones with their home works. Participant 7*

The participants in this study informed that they were fulfilling many care giving roles and responsibilities in their households. Some participants find it hard to do all the roles and responsibilities of the household. Evans (2010:8) says that the household management embraces allocation of tasks, paying school contributions, organising school, budgeting,

resolving financial problems, future planning and making decisions, as was evident in the focus group for this study. It is apparent that single-parent households are challenging under the best of conditions. Coping with childrearing for single parent households becomes more difficult because of responsibility overload, when one parent makes all the decisions and provides for all of the family needs; task over-load, when the demands for work, housework, and parenting can be overwhelming for one person; and emotional overload, when the single parent must always be available to meet both their own and their children's emotional needs. Alone or in combination these result in problems for the single parent households, including loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

#### **THEME 4: THE BLATANT LACK OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

Psychosocial support on the other hand strengthens a sense of being a “cared for and loved, esteemed and a member of network” within the parents as well as motivating and sustaining their confidentiality. (Cobb, 1976: 379). Psychosocial support is commonly available through the parents’ family, extended family members and friends, professional counsellors or therapists. From a psychodynamic perspective, psychosocial support facilitates a positive interior self-representation for the single-parent households.

Regardless of theory, it is hard to comment on the effects of social support as the relationship between such support and health or well-being has empirically been inconsistent (Rini, Dunkel Schetter, Hobel, Glynn & Sandman, 2006). Limited studies have shown positive effects of social support (Norris & Kaniast, 1996, Rini et al., 2006). Apart from the limited evidence, this form of support during hardship has commonly been regarded as a critical aspect of good health care.

A first source of support identified by the female single-parent households was God. However, despite them attending church meetings and services, they do not feel comfortable to share their difficulties with friends from church, in case they do not keep the information confidential. Some responses included:

*I have my praying corner where I talk to God and this helps my stresses go away.*  
Participant 8.

*I always ask God to give me strength to face my situation.* Participant 4

According to Berk (2010), older adults attach great value to religious beliefs. The findings of this study confirm this as the female single-parent households have turned to God for guidance, protection and assistance.

### **Family and friends**

As revealed above, psychosocial support can be accessed from the expectant single-parent households' extended family and friends. It has been noted that the support of a greater social support network is generally required. The vigour of family or friends as a support can be significant.

The findings from the focus group discussion indicated that there are few support systems to assist single-parent households. In this section the findings on the social support of the single-parent households are discussed. Broussard, *et al.*, (2012:193) state that lack of support leads to poor mental and physical outcomes and worry about support, heightens stress. This is a concern because single parents lack several forms of support. The topics emerged, included challenges in relationships with community leaders.

All ten of the female participants reported that they do not get any support from their community leaders such as ward councillors, ambassadors and community care givers. Some commented as follows:

*I do not get support from the local councillor; they have made several empty promises to us. They make us sign things but they never come back with the feedback. Our councillor promised us Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP) houses, toilets and stoves but we did not receive any of those. The only assistance I got from my councillor was the proof of residence which was needed by my bank. Participant 7*

*People who are in positions never help us. They have made false promises to us. We were promised free houses but we have not got them till to date. The councillors are good in canvassing but when it comes to service delivery they fail. They have failed us for several times. Participant 8*

*Several promises have been made by a ward councillor. He promises RDP houses, toilets, tarred road, hall but we had not seen any development in this area. I applied for "umxhaso" RDP (house) long time ago but we still awaiting help. Participant 11*



The above comments are an indication that most of the poor people have not been assisted accordingly. They commented that they vote for their leaders but once they are in leadership positions they forget about their existence.

It is exciting to see that there are community leaders although they are few who are acknowledged for doing their good work. Two (20%) of male participants acknowledged that as follows:

*I am glad for the fact that the councillor accepted me in the area after I was arrested.*  
Participant 17

*There are people in our community that can stand for our problems, people like councillors and izinduna. These people were chosen to represent us because they are wiser than us. They help us by taking our complaints to the big offices as we do not know anything. They open closed doors for us.* Participant 16

The above extracts illustrate that few single-parents do value the importance of their community leaders in their lives.

Most of the participants were not satisfied about the services that the ward councillors should be rendering. They commented as follows:

Male participants' comments:

*We as the community almost attend community meetings monthly but there is no way forward. I am real tired of people making us sign lot of things but neither of them come back and tells us what is going on.* Participant 14

*... The ward councillors and the committee call upon community meetings and we raise our grievances there but there are no follow ups, we do not get any feedback after the meetings.*  
Participant 19

The above findings indicate there is poor service delivery from the ward councillors.

One male participant indicated that he does not get time to know exactly what is happening in his community as he is a very busy man. He commented as follows:

*I do not know anything that is happening in my community because I am always at work. If I am not at work I am busy doing my washing at home and cleaning my house.* Participant 17

The above extract is the indication that some people do not involve themselves in the issues of development planning in their community. This is a big concern because at the end of the day people complain saying that their grievances are not taken into consideration.

Most of the single-parent households complained about the services rendered by their community care givers.

*There are people in this community called “onompilo” meaning community care givers but I real do not know what they are doing in our community. I heard that they also visited my house; unfortunately I was at work so I could not talk to them. What I heard was that once they know your problem they turn to gossip about you.* Participant 15

*The community care givers always come and visit us in our homes. They make us fill in forms and it ends there.* Participant 19

The above comments illustrate that there is still lot to do in order to ensure that people are benefiting from the social services that should be rendered to them. It is a concern that the CCGs come to visit people and make people sign papers and nothing is done afterward. The question that rises is that, do the CCGs have enough amenities to support people that need their services?

One male participant whined that ambassadors from his community are not taking the needs of the poor people seriously. He commented as follows:

*We have turned to be the playground of people like the ambassadors would visit us and do the home checking but there is nothing done thereafter.* Participant 20

### **Sub-Theme 1 Access to service provision**

The service provision has a direct impact on people’s everyday lives and its performance influences their ability to function effectively. The government departments such as Department of Social Development (DSD), Home Affairs, South African Social Security Act and Non-Governmental Organizations like LifeLine, and Family and Child Welfares are mandated to provide basic services such as promoting emotional wellness for individuals through rendering effective and efficient services to relevant people.

In many instances the provision of these services has been very slow, poor and has not met the expectations of many inhabitants, who perceive service providers to be self-serving and neglectful of their needs.

Three (30%) female participants acknowledged the effective and efficiency of social workers in the Department of Social Development (DSD).

*Social workers do help. I have a friend who was helped by social workers. We together used to live a nomadic life and the social workers found her child wondering in the street. They took him. The child is living a peaceful and wonderful life in the children's home.*

Participant 2

*Social Development provided me with food voucher as I was assessed as a needy person.*

Participant 6

*I have good relationship with social workers as my grandchild is in receipt of the kinship grant. She visits us two times a year checking how we are doing. D also told me that the social worker does visits him in the school to check his school progress.*

Participant 7

It is a big concern that there was only one (10%) out of ten male participants that appreciated the assistance of social workers. This is what he said:

*I am very grateful to the social workers who helped me in getting my children back. I am happy that they entrusted me that I can manage to take good care of my children.*

Participant 13

The indication may mean that there are few male people who seek the social workers' assistance, as the society may perceive men as strong people. In most cases men are not expected by society to release their pain through crying. They are often reminded that "a strong man does not cry, but he becomes stronger for his family". Sometimes when they are crying they are shouted down by the senior people, saying "you cannot cry in front of your children, what are they going to say when seeing you crying."

Most male participants thought that they were being strong in not seeking help; on the contrary, female participants admitted to their difficulties and they could be considered the strong ones. The female participants believed that counselling could help them to see that things can change. They also mentioned that counselling could help people see their family's strengths and the positive steps they might already be taking. Some felt that some

people can make good decisions through counseling. The following comments were mentioned:

Female participants' comments:

*...I did not want to admit that fact but now I am healing because I have received counselling from LifeLine & Rape Crisis. Participant 10*

*I also wish to thank LifeLine & Rape Crisis counsellor who was so supportive and understanding. I think I have to ask the LifeLine and Rape Crisis counsellor to help me with breaking this ugly news to my children. Participant 5*

*... I was about to kill myself but LifeLine and Rape Crisis showed me that there is life after the death of our beloved ones. Participant 4*

One female participant shared that she was offered counselling but it did not work for her as she still finds it hard to forget about her husband. She said:

*LifeLine and Rape Crisis did offer me counselling and it did not help me as I still find it hard to forget about my husband. Participant 4*

It is apparent that dealing with the past can help an individual to move on with life rather than dwelling on something that could not be changed. As shown from the comments above counselling does help people deal with their sentiments. The participants indicated how difficult it was to deal with their emotions on their own up until they decided to seek help from counsellors who understood and supported them unconditionally. However, people have different and unique ways of dealing with their loss. Some people might prefer not talk about their past as it might trigger pain and trauma in their lives and some may feel that telling and re-telling their stories might help them move on with their lives.

One female participant shared that she sometimes gets food parcels from her social worker. She said:

*... The social workers also provide us with food voucher and parcels. They spoil our children in December taking them out. Last year they went to the camp. They were provided with all necessities like food and they bought them Christmas gifts. Participant 7*

The above female participant expressed her gratitude to DSD for providing her with food parcels in times of difficulties as she stays with orphans and with her own children.

According to Stver, Bollinger, Walker and Monasch (2007:21) structures of public aid is obligatory to offer vulnerable and orphaned children with sufficient food, clothes, education and psychological support. However, this might create dependency in other people. There is a idiom which says *'if you have given me fish, you have fed me for the day but if you teach me how to fish, you have taught me how to get my own fish even if you are not there I can still live a sustainable life'*.

There is no single participant who shared that he or she does not need anything or any person to assist them in their parenting. According to Berk (2000) the ecosystems theory views the person as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment.

The exosystem refers to social settings that do not contain the developing person but affect experiences in the immediate settings. In the context of this study, the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) or churches conceptualized as the exosystem. Organizations like Lifeline and Rape Crisis in KwaDambuza community assisted single-parents in need of assistance, and also altered the life experiences of the single-parents. Keswet (2010: 55) confirms that single parents can also seek counselling through churches, friends, non-governmental agencies and associations such as the LifeLine organization in Pietermaritzburg which provides emotional wellness through counselling services.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided an insight into economic and psychosocial experiences of single-parent households. I presented the findings in respect of the key questions outlined in chapter one.

It can be inferred from the findings that the legacy of apartheid, unemployment, violence-related mortality and HIV/AIDS pandemic have negatively contributed in family breakdown in South African countries. There are still many children in KwaDambuza who are growing up in unsafe, unfavourable and unsecured households through the absence of either a father or a mother figure in their lives.

90% of the both male and female single-parent households in this study had not matriculated; therefore it is of critical importance to note that interventions aimed at addressing challenges of single-parent households take into consideration the level of education of the participants in order for it to be effective.

This chapter divulged a great need to investigate a comprehensive set of actions including psychosocial, educational and support systems, to ease the burden carried by single parent households.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the focal findings: the conclusion and recommendations drawn from chapters four and five. The aim of this study was to understand the economic and psychosocial experiences of single-parents in KwaDambuza. The objectives of the study included: understanding the economic stressors associated with parenting, psychosocial experiences, understanding the coping strategies, and to ascertain the current support networks of single parents, and present recommendations to service providers in respect of gaps in services for single parents in KwaDambuza.

The key questions that the study addressed included:

- What are the economic stressors associated with single parenting in KwaDambuza?
- What are the psycho-social experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza?
- What are the coping strategies of single parents in KwaDambuza?
- What are the recommendations single parents and service providers make in the provision of economic and psycho-social support services to the single parents?

This study was qualitative in nature and in-depth interviews as well as the focus group was conducted among the twenty single parents which were ten male and ten female single parent households and they were all interviewed individually. Five male and five female participants participated in a focus group. All the participants were once married and ended up being single parent households.

Both individual interviews and the focus group discussion were guided by semi-structured interview guides. The data was analyzed and discussed using content and thematic analysis. The ecosystems theoretical framework was utilized in this study. The ethical considerations and the limitations of this study have been discussed in Chapter Three. The main intention of this chapter is to attain conclusions and make recommendations based on the literature review and the findings of the study.

This chapter is presented as follows; there are conclusions presented at the beginning and followed by the main findings of this study which are linked to the specific objectives of the study. Finally this chapter presented the recommendations. The overall results show that single-parent households find it hard to cope with the challenges they are faced with.

## **POVERTY AND ITS IMPACT ON BOTH MALE AND FEMALE SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS**

The key factor underlying single-parent households is poverty and HIV/AIDS and this study divulged that single-parent households are faced with many challenges in their parenting role as they depend on one pocket instead of two pockets. The main findings are presented as follows:

The majority of single-parent households reported to have experienced difficulties in providing sufficient care and basic needs of their children, due to the fact that most participants are unemployed. All the female participants were not employed and only two were self-employed. Six out of ten male participants were not employed and the rest were surviving with piece jobs and social security grants. It is concluded that the high rate of unemployment among the single parents contributed to failing to take responsibility for their children because they are financially unable to do so.

Sixteen participants were unemployed and they were seeking for job opportunities. Most participants indicated that they had casual jobs that could not provide reliable income as they were paid peanuts. Few participants mentioned that they have tried to send their curriculum vitae (CV) to different places but they have not been selected. Some felt that they could not even try to search for work as they did not complete matriculation. Subsequently; the child support grant turn out to be the only source of stable income, on which all the members of the single-parent households relied.

All the participants spotted limited income as an unenthusiastic experience. Eleven participants receive a child support grant of R290.00 a month to assist them meet the basic needs of the child. However, the money that they receive is used to meet the needs of the entire family, not only for the child. It can be concluded that the child support grant has become a source of income for the whole family, and it is consequently seen as insufficient to meet all their needs. The implication is that the participants' primary need is monetary



and from the experience of the researcher, families living in poverty and those who experience unemployment are more likely to have a dysfunctional family environment.

Inadequate housing is a huge challenge facing the whole country. This is evident by the increased number of informal settlements in all main urban areas in South Africa. Sixteen participants experienced a problem with inadequate housing and lack of appropriate accommodation that impacted on the household in terms of privacy and space. These sixteen participants had no financial means to extend their homes. Some participants were renting houses as they could not afford to buy or build their own houses. The most concern was felt when the girl and boy children had to share the same sleeping space. Inadequate housing is not only a South African problem and it is not a challenge that is facing only single-parent households. A research done by Wingate-Lewinson, Hopps & Reeves (2010:9) cited from (Colton, 2003, Stone, 2006 & Tanner, 2001) evidences that some of the causes contributing to unaffordable and inaccessible housing are decreases in the public housing stock, low income wages, larger home designs, higher land costs, gentrification, slow growth regulations and the resistance of community residents to building affordable housing in their communities. There is little that has been done by the state to reduce poverty in South Africa. Even though housing was absolutely a challenge for the single-parent households, the family adapted to the maladaptive environment.

Most participants reported that they did not pay school fees for their children since their children were granted school fee exemption, in both primary and high school levels. Furthermore, the participants indicated that they did not have to worry too much about the pocket money for their children at school as the feeding scheme plays a vital role in lives of their children. They believe that the food that the children are given makes them concentrate in class and it encourages the children to attend school on regular basis as they know that when they are at home they might not eat for the whole day.

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES OF SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS**

In line with the second objective to understand the psycho-social experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza. The findings confirmed that the both male and female single parents find it hard to deal with the loss of their partners. Very few of the participants went for counselling. This has resulted in some of them experiencing forceful feelings of

loneliness and emptiness. Most of the participants still missed their partners and shared a preference of having them by their sides. The conclusion reached is that few of the participants received grief and bereavement counselling.

The feelings of anxiety and stress emerged to exist. This was evident as all participants made comment on how their experience augments psychosocial stress associated with their roles and responsibilities as single parents. Most of the female participants commented that they have lately found themselves caught up with drugs and alcohol in order for them to try and deal with their stressors. Some are depending in their faith which is God.

All the participants shared that they often feel they have no time for themselves and for pleasure. They have lost friends through the fact that they do not have time to spend with them. They also shared that they often experience lot of anger out of nothing and they feel socially rejected.

For various reasons, most single parents feel constantly devastated and traumatized. They often feel physically and emotionally exhausted and find themselves yelling more at their children and yelling about life as a whole. Their tremendous trauma sometimes pilots to suicidal tendencies. Two participants shared their on-going battle with depression and anxiety, and as a result, they are on treatment for depression.

Most of the single parents mentioned that they feel pressured to do well in front of their children. They strongly feel that they should be role models by setting an example. They become leaders in their households and take charge. They feel that they need to do what needs to be done and lead the way without asking or needing guidance. They also shared that they need to possess the qualities that their children would like to have and they have to affect their children in a way that makes them want to be better people. They felt that they have to try by all means to shape their own personal growth and progress before they influence their children. Most of the single parents in this study indicated that they do try to inspire their children to study further by using the opportunity they have and also to try to live up to their potential. I strongly believe the finest roles models make people see the possibilities within themselves.

All the female participants and few male participants felt obligated to adapt in the new life. In their comments it was made apparent that the participants found it awkward to adjust in

their new life style. Nevertheless; they have made peace with their situation and accepted their parental roles, which eases their burden of being single parents.

The issue of stigma appeared to exist. This was evident as all participants made reference to the appearance of other children. Single parents seemed very concerned about being unable to provide materially for their children. They wanted their children to look the same as the children that are coming from affording families. It can be concluded that when rendering counselling services to single parents, social workers need to be mindful that stigma does exist and respond accordingly.

All the female participants revealed that they find it difficult to make sound decisions in their households. Some female participants feel better if they consult their seniors before they decide on something. Whereas the male participants felt that they have to take a final word in their households. They felt that they do not need any second approval from what they have decided on.

Most female participants reported to have experienced difficulties in controlling the behavioural problems of their children especially, with boy children. It can be concluded that boy children do not behave well if there is no father figure at home.

Single-parent households are the disciplinarians in their homes. A momentous finding was that the female single-parent households indicated that they find it hard now to use physical punishment as the children are familiar with the law and would call it child abuse. This was different to when interviewing the male single-parent households as they indicated that they strongly use physical punishment to discipline their children, as they believe that the children behave better if they are physically disciplined. An important finding when it came to both decision-making and disciplining was that the children accepted it, as in their culture it was anticipated that they would not question or chat back their elders. However; one parent shared that she once physically punished her boy child and he hit her back.

## **SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS**

Most female single-parents identified God as the pillar of their strength. Few participants identified their extended families and few friends as the source of support for them. However, the family only offered moral support, not financial support, and financial support

was what they needed mostly. It can be concluded the single parents do have support systems.

All the participants that were in receipt of child support grant acknowledged the assistance of the grant, however; they complained that it is too little to cover the needs of the households. Most of the participants also indicated the psychosocial support they were granted by LifeLine and Rape Crisis, in order for them to try and cope better with their living conditions.

The participants were fascinated in attending programs such as a parenting program that was held by the LifeLine and Rape Crisis. Those that did not get an opportunity to attend the programs wished to attend them, and those that attended wish to attend more programs, as they believe that the programs help them develop more knowledge, capacities and skills to care for their children. The conclusion reached is that participants perceive the reimbursement of workshops and programs and social workers need to respond to this appropriately.

The third assumption of the study was that restricted support systems exist for single parents. The study did substantiate that limited support systems do exist for the single parents.

Based on the conclusions reached in this study, the recommendations will be discussed in the next section.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations will be discussed in two parts. Firstly, recommendations will be made at practice level. Secondly, recommendations will be made at a policy level.

### **Recommendations at practice level**

- The ecosystem theory that provided the framework for this study offered a podium for understanding how single-parent households interact with their surroundings including persons within their environment. Each level was distinguished to have an effect on single-parent households. This study has shown that single-parent households perform a significant role in the care of their children. The findings

further illustrate that the psychosocial stressors and economic costs of single-parent households are extensive. The death, divorce and separation are involving grief. Denial, anger and sometimes avoidance are part of the grieving process. Based on this study, interventions by social work professionals and counsellors to provide economic and psychosocial support could be hypothesised to progress the quality of life of single parents. Thus, I recommend that single parents to be kind to themselves by making an effort to deal with their sentiments.

- In the view of the single-parent households in this study they perceived the need to increase the number of parenting programs to help them to ease their parenting burden. Thus, it is recommended that social workers increase the number of parenting programs to assist the single parent households to reach their high potential levels in raising their children.
- In view of the single-parent households requesting added child support grant, social workers require to adopt a more developmental approach to social services and not persuade dependency on material relief. This would mean capacitating participants in income generation and skills development that could improve their financial circumstances so that they can have a financial sustainable life. It is also advised that the state has to try to ensure that the resources that encourage small businesses for people are accessible to everyone, especially those that are more vulnerable and disadvantaged. I also urge the single parents to collectively commence the self-help projects. According to Ibrahim (2006:398-399) self-help initiatives are any informal income-generating or social activity initiated by a poor community to achieve permanent improvements in their individual and communal well-being.
- Furthermore, to assist single parents to adjust and cope better with life, social workers and counsellors need to render grief and bereavement counselling to the single parents, as the inability of some single parents to deal with the loss of their partners could result in depression and suicidal thoughts.
- One of the findings showed that some participants, in order for them to cope with their situation, decided to involve themselves in the usage of drugs and consuming alcohol. Social workers with the assistance of SANCA should engage single parents in joint programs to address effects of alcohol and drug abuse.

- Some participants shared that some of their children finished matriculation but could not go to tertiary level due to financial constraints. They expressed how sad they were to have their children finished matriculation but unable to further their studies. The participants did not have information about available financial support in tertiary institutions such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and bursaries to help their children with furthering their studies. Therefore, there is a great need to slot in the Department of Education (DOE) to provide parents and scholars with access to financial support systems.
- Most of the participants shared that they are renting rooms as they are financially unable to buy or build their own houses. A collective planning, organizing and empowerment of disadvantaged families experiencing housing challenges is indispensable in this stage. Intervention must be done in order to prevent more strollers.
- Social workers should conduct support groups with single-parent households because they could benefit from and support each other as they share similar situations.
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) must examine the value of utilizing the services of social services professionals to assist social workers in meeting the needs of families that are in need of support.
- Social workers need to make certain that they attend more training, workshops, meetings and so forth, to ensure that their skills and knowledge are updated to be able to render more effective and efficient service delivery to their clients.
- Service providers need to ensure that social workers are supported in all forms and debriefed monthly for them to cope better with the stresses of their jobs and to prevent burnout.

### **Recommendations at policy level**

- The interdepartmental collaboration between South African Social Security Agency and Home Affairs should be developed to facilitate the process of applying for the child support grant. This goes without saying that there must be consistency in the

requirements to apply for the grant between the departments so that the clients are given the accurate information.

- The Department of Social Development has to ensure that the National Child Protection Registers are functioning effectively and efficiently so that service delivery will be not affected.
- The Department of Social Development has created policies that are intended to facilitate services to families. They have to ensure that service providers are well capacitated and trained on implementing these policies and to make certain that the adequate funding is available to implement policies. The policy has to empower families to have resilience in dealing with challenges they are facing and be able to access and utilize resources. Families should be capacitated with relevant skills and knowledge regarding socio-economic issues, without creating dependency.
- There has to be a strong networking and partnership between the Department of Social Development and Non-Governmental Organizations in order for them to deliver optimal services to their clientele.

### **Recommendations for further research**

- This study only represented a sample of 20 African male and female single-parent households from a low income, predominantly rural area in KwaDambuza, and therefore the findings cannot be generalized. Furthermore, the study did not incorporate interviews with other people, for instance children, relatives, neighbours and friends to confirm the experiences of the single-parent households. Therefore there is a huge need to conduct the same study with a larger sample using a more representative group in other areas to attain a more holistic perspective.
- The sample was limited to the LifeLine and Rape Crisis Pietermaritzburg. Additional research needs to be embarked on elsewhere to confirm these findings. The similar qualitative research should be replicated with a bigger sample in all provinces to avoid generalizing.
- It is recommended that a follow-up from this study needs to be undertaken, using qualitative methodology, with key informants such as service providers to confirm the findings of this study.

- It is crucial that the qualitative research must be conducted with social work practitioners through non-governmental organizations across South Africa, to understand the gaps and address the challenges that are encountered when delivering the services to the clients.
- Further study using qualitative methodology should be conducted with both step fathers and mothers caring for their step children, to learn of their economic and psychosocial experiences and challenges with their caregiving.

## **CONCLUSION**

The upsurge of both male and female single-parents in KwaDambuza is an indication of two main challenges encountered by single-parent households. Firstly, the macro-economic policies that promote, employment growth and redistribution have negatively impacted the vulnerable people such as single-parent households as it has profoundly increased unemployment rates and poverty, particularly among the poor. Secondly, the scourge of HIV/AIDS has caused many service providers to over stretch their budget in trying to reduce high mortality rates especially among South Africans. The absence of one parent in the household affected the single-parent households' ability to provide basic needs and care for their children.

It is hoped that the multi-disciplinary team would benefit from these findings and also from the recommendations that are presented in dealing with challenges faced by both male and female single-parents. Social workers rendering the interventions to both male and female single-parent households need to advocate and lobby for equality, adequate living conditions and access to basic education, for children on a micro, mezzo and macrosystems.



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**PHASE ONE INTERVIEW GUIDELINES**

The interview guide will include the following themes

**1. Family demography**

- Name:
- Age:
- Gender:
- Employment:
- Receipt of state grant:
- Number of children living in the household:
- Age of children living in the household:
- Family background (as a single parent):
- The roles and responsibilities of the single parent:

**2. Psycho-social experiences of the single parents**

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

**3. Economic challenges of single parents**

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

**4. Coping strategies adopted by single parents.**

- Tell me, how have you been coping with raising a child or children on your own?
- Let say the money that you get does not satisfy the needs of the household, what do you do?
- What are the available support networks you have as a single parent? (probe: extended family, neighbours, community ,members, service providers, Lifeline services etc)

#### **5. Question 4: Recommendations**

- What recommendations do you make in the provision of economic and psycho-social support?

## ZULU VERSION

### UHLAKA LEMIBUZO

#### 1. Imininingwano ngomndeni wakho

- Igama:
- Iminyaka:
- Ubulili:
- Uyasebenza:
- Ngabe sikhona isondlo ositholayo :
- Izizathu zokuba umzali ongayedwa:
- Sekuyisikhathi esingakanani?
- Zingaki izingane ohlala nazo ekhaya?
- Mingaki iminyaka yabo?
- Imvelaphi yomndeni wakho:
- Indima nomthwalo wemfanelo owudlalayo njengomzali ongayedwa:

#### 2. Izimo ngezengqondo kanye nenhlalo abazali ababodwana ababhekana nazo

- Ngitshele ngezimo ozaziyo ekukhuliseni umntwana ngaphandle komunye umzali?
- Kukuthinte kanjani empilweni ukuba ngumzali ongayedwana?

#### 3. Izimo ezingokwezimali zomzali ongayedwa

- Ngabe ikhona yini imali oyitholayo ekulekelelayo ekukhuliseni abantwana njengomzali ongayedwana ekhaya?
- Ngabe imali oyitholayo iyazanelisa izidingo zasekhaya?
- Ngitshele ngokusetshenziswa kwemali ekhaya lakho.

#### 4. Ukumelana nezimo njengomzali ongayedwana.

- Ubhekana kanjani nezimo zokhulisa abantwana njengomzali ongayedwana?
- Uma imali oyitholayo ingazanelisi izidingo zasekhaya nenzenjani?
- Ngabe uluphi uxhaso olutholayo njengomzali okhulisa abantwana ngayedwana? (ukuqonda kabanzi: umndeni wonke, omakhelwane, umphakathi, izinsiza mphakathi, usizo lase Lifeline, kanye nokunye)

**5. Izincomo**

- Iziphi izincomo ongazenza ekubhekeleni ngokwezimali, ngokwezengqodo kanye nenhlalo njengo mzali ongayedwana?

## **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINE**

Title of the research

**Understanding the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza.**

### **Personal Details**

Gender:

Number of years being a single parent:

### **Key questions**

#### **Challenges**

- Tell us about the challenges of raising your child or children as a single parent?

#### **Support services**

- How can you describe your relationship with your family?
- How often do you discuss your concerns?
- What kind of support do you get from your family?
- What other coping strategies in dealing with the challenges of being a single parent?
- What are potential resources that are available in responding to the challenges of single parents in KwaDambuza?

### **Question 3: Recommendations**

- What would be your suggestions concerning the challenges faced by the single parents?
- What do you think can be the best way to deal with the challenges of the current single parents?
- What do you think needs to be improved by the service providers in KwaDambuza to accommodate the needs of the single parents?

### **Communications of the topic**

- Discussion on the various inputs in order to identify the most important ideas that the participants made about the topic.

### **Vote of thanks**

- By me as a researcher to the participants

## **UHLAKA LWEMIBUZO EQENJINI**

### **Isihloko sophenyo**

Ukuqonda ngezimo zomnotho, zeqqondo kanye nezenhlalo abazali abakhulisa abantwana ngabodwana ababhekana nazo KwaDambuza.

### **Iminigwano yakho**

Ubulili:

Mingaki iminyaka ungumzali okhulisa abantwana ngawedwana:

### **Imibuzo ebalulekile**

#### **Izindlela**

- Awusitshela ngezindlela abazali abakhulisa abantwana ngabodwana ababhekana nazo?

#### **Uxhaso**

- Ungabuchaza kanjani ubudlelwane bakho nomndeni wakho?
- Uxoxa kangaki ngezinto ezikukhathazayo?
- Ikuphi ukwesekelwa okutholayo emndenini wakho?
- Iziphi izindlela ozisebenzisayo ekubhekaneni nezindlela zokuba umzali oyedwana?
- Iziphi izinsiza mphakathi ezitholalayo ukusiza izindlela zabazali abangabodwana KwaDambuza?

#### **Izincomo**

- Iluphi uncomo nemibono obungayibeka ngokuphathelene nezindlela ababhekana nazo abazali abangabodwana?
- Ucabanga ukuthi iyiphi indlela engcono manje engasetshenziswa ukubhekana nezindlela zabazali abangabodwana?
- Ikuphi ocabanga ukuthi kumele izinsiza mphakathi zikulungise ukuze kusizakale abazali abakhulisa abantwana ngabodwana KwaDambuza?

#### **Ingxoxo ngesihloko**

- Ingxoxo ngamaphuzu esibone ebalulekile esihlokweni sophenyo.

#### **Ukubonga**

- Umphenyi uzobonga kubantu ababe ingxenye yophenyo lwakhe.



**APPENDIX 2**

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS**

P.O. Box

Pietermaritzburg

3200

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Dear Sir / Madam

I am a master's student at the University of KwaZulu Natal. In part fulfillment of the degree, I shall be conducting research with single parents. The purpose of the research is to understand the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza.

Your participation in this research is essential and will be highly appreciated. You will be part of the individual interviews and if you choose to also participate in one focus group discussion. No identifying details will be required of you. All responses will be kept highly confidential. The researcher will not at any point in the research or the report identify any participant. The interviews will be audio taped and the data will be analyzed. The research will be conducted under the supervision of the School of Applied Human sciences at the University of KwaZulu Natal (Howard College). Your participation in the research is voluntary and no payment will be made for your participation. You may withdraw from the research at any point with no penalty.

Should you require any additional information, kindly contact me or the supervisor.

It would be appreciated if you could complete the consent form below and return it.

Yours faithfully

-----  
Cynthia S. Ndlovu

Student 0333424447

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Dr. T. Raniga

Supervisor 031 2602792

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**INFORMED CONSENT:**

I am willing / not willing to participate in the research outlined above.

(Delete whichever is not applicable)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ the undersigned understand the consents and conditions of the research and consent to me to participation in the research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

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**DATE**

ZULU VERSION

IMVUME YOKUBA INGXEENYE YALOLU PHENYO

P.O. Box

Pietermaritzburg

3200

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Ngiyakubingelela

Mina ngingumfundi wamabanga aphezulu wase Nyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natali. Ukuze ngikwazi ukuthi ngiliqede leli banga kumele ngenze uphenyo kabanzi ngabazali abakhulisa abantwana ngabodwana, ngokuqonda kwabo mayelana nezimo ezithinta umunotho, umqondo kanye nokuphilisana nomphakathi.

Ukuba kwakho ingxenye yalolu phenyo kubalulekile futhi siyakuthakasela kakhulu. Uzoba ingxenye yemibuzo ngaminye uma futhi ukhethiwe uzoba ingxenye yeqembu kodwa lokhu sizokwenza ngemvumo yakho. Angeke sibhale okanye sifune imininingwano yakho. Zonke izimpendulo zizoba imfihlo. Umphenyi uyathembisa ukuthi akukho lapho azokhipha khona imininingwano yakho. Abanye kungezeka ukuthi badlule ebunzimeni ubukhulu, kodwa labo abazondinga ukululekwa bazobe sebedluliselwa kwinkhululekano yaseLifeline elulekayo nephilisayo ngokomphefumulo. Uphenyo luzoqoshwa. Lolu phenyo lizokwenzeka ngaphansi kophiko lesikole sonhlalakahle eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natali (Howard Kolishi). Ukuba ingxenye yalolu phenyo akuphoqi muntu kanti futhi akuzokhokhela. Ungakwazi ukuyeka noma inini futhi ngeke ujeziswe ngalokho.

Uma udinga ulwazi olubanzi, ungathinta mina noma umphathi wami.

Ngingajabula uma ungacwalisa lemvume bese ungibuyisela yona.

Yimina Ozithobayo

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Cynthia S. Ndlovu

Umfundi 0333424447

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Dr. T. Ragina

Umphathi 031 2602792

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IMVUME:

Ngiyavuma / angivumi ukuba ingxenye yalolu phenyo.

(Cima lokhu okungekhona)

Mina, \_\_\_\_\_ oshicilele ngenhla ngiyaqoda ngalemvumo  
kanye nemibandela yalolu phenyo nokuba ingxenye yophenyo.

\_\_\_\_\_  
UKUSHICILELWA

\_\_\_\_\_  
USUKU

No. 14 Princess Street

Lifeline, Pietermaritzburg

3200

08/03/2013

To: The Board of Management

Dear Sir/Madam

**RESEARCH TOPIC: ECONOMIC AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE PARENTS IN KWADAMBUZA**

I am a GBV coordinator (social worker) and a student at University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am currently undertaking research to understand the economic and psychosocial experiences of single parents in KwaDambuza. I humbly request that the Board of Management allows me access to single parents who are in receipt of services from Lifeline through case files. Participation by clients will be voluntary and anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured.

The recommendations of this study will be made available to the Director and staff as it may serve to enhance intervention strategies provided to single parents.

I thank you for your time and your assistance in this research and should you require further details kindly contact me or Dr Raniga, my UKZN Research supervisor.

Ms S. Ndlovu

Researcher

Dr T. Raniga

Research Supervisor: UKZN

