SOCIAL WORK SERVICES WITH CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS IN ZIMBABWE. THE CASE OF MUTARE DISTRICT.

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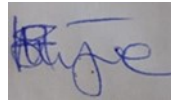
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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES WITH CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS IN ZIMBABWE. THE CASE OF MUTARE DISTRICT

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Social services appear to be more concentrated in urban areas of Zimbabwe, with little or no social work activities in remote parts of the country. Orphans and vulnerable children living in remote areas face high rates of child abuse, neglect, poverty, child headed households, hunger and lack of access to social services. They experience a severe lack of resources with little or no social work, so Zimbabwe can be said to be lagging behind the UN Millennium Development Goals on children's rights.

 The main goal of the study was to explore and describe the views of teachers and community members about the challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children living in remote areas of Mutare district. The study used qualitative applied research using non-random purposive sampling to recruit five teachers from two local schools in Mutare district and a snowball technique to recruit nine community members from the study population. The researcher conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with five teachers and a focus group with nine community members. The research was based on developmental social work and human rights theoretical frameworks. The researcher followed a thematic data analysis process and ensured the quality and reliability of the results through triangulation of data collection methods and thick descriptions of the data.

Some of the main findings of this study showed that many children in difficult circumstances face many vulnerabilities and structural problems such as poverty, hunger, sexual abuse, lack of shelter, disease and have very limited or no access to social services.

This study drew some conclusions about the difficulties faced by orphans and vulnerable children living in remote areas of Mutare district such as high levels of poverty, child-headed households, hunger, child labour and severe lack of resources and services.

The main recommendations of the study are that the Department of Social Development must be strengthened with the necessary resources to effectively respond to problems affecting orphans and vulnerable children living in remote areas of Zimbabwe.

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CHAPTER 1: INTORDUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

Children's well-being and the need to protect them from all forms of harm had gained traction globally especially with the adoption of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child in (UNCRC) (1989), calling for the special protection of all children and ensuring their human rights (Kaime, 2005:i). Child protection is an essential international policy and programming priority involving various efforts (Collins, 2016:1). Although The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been almost universally ratified, the rights of millions of children remain unrealised in some parts of the world (UNICEF, 2019:2). In many regions however, the sense of renewal and hope for children's rights is muted by the impact of problems such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, diseases, food insecurity, abuse, and exploitation, as well as the impact of a changing climate continue to deny millions of children their rights every year (UNICEF, 2019:2). Further, child participation poses a significant challenge in practice for various reasons including age discrimination, denial of opportunities, as well as tokenistic and irrelevant participatory efforts (Collins, 2016:1).

Zimbabwe's recurrent socio-economic challenges disproportionately impact girls and boys in food and nutrition health and education access plus ensuring child protection against violence and harmful practices (Nhapi, 2020:125). In 2019 multiple natural hazards, including food insecurity, flooding and the risk of outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases, contributed to Zimbabwe's humanitarian situation deterioration (UNICEF, 2019:2). Zimbabwe faces an economic downturn characterized by hyperinflation (175 per cent) and limited access to basic services. According to a Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee 2019 report nearly 5.5 million people in rural areas, including 2.6 million children, and 960,000 people in urban areas need humanitarian assistance. (UNICEF, 2019:2). According to UNICEF (2019:2), children from disadvantaged backgrounds are badly marginalized not only in access to and completion of education but also in terms of the quality education. Over 67% of Zimbabwean's school children do not have access to holistic, quality education that will ensure they can reach their full potential (UNICEF, 2019:2).

At national level Zimbabwe has a progressive legislation with respect to children. This is epitomised by Section 81 of the Constitution (2013) which is a Bill of Children's Rights, as well as by Children's Act, Chapter 5; 06 (2001). The foci of the Children's Act includes providing care and protection to all children in Zimbabwe, the establishment of children's courts and registration of institutions for reception and custody of children (World Vision, 2018:7). Zimbabwe, like most countries of Southern Africa, having ratified the UNCRC in 1990, had put in place a comprehensive policy and legislative framework in compliance with its provisions, as well as in accordance with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) of 1990 (World Vision, 2018:7). This took the form of the Children's Protection and Adoption Act (No. 22 of 1971) and the Children's Protection and Adoption Amendment Act, (No 23 of 2001) (Department of Social Welfare Zimbabwe 2001:1). Other pieces of legislation are the Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy of 1999; Education Act 5/1987, 26/1991, 24/1994 (s. 70), 19/1998 (s. 15), 22/2001 (s. 4); the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2004 – 2010, demonstrating systemic intent (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:2).

Zimbabwe, in relation to the bleak economic outlook and social problems confronting the young people has consistently scored relatively high on promulgation of laws and policies meant to protect children (World Vision, 2018:13). This high score shows general political commitment by the government in protecting children's rights (World Vision, 2018:13). It is worth noting that the second highest area of ranking is service provision and the government has put in place general measures for the provision of the rights (World Vision, 2018:13). According to World Vision (2018:13), the question however is about the quality of the services that is being provided, this is explained by the lowest score, which is on capacity. Low capacity speaks to limited resources (financial, human, infrastructure) allocated by the state party to ministries relevant to children (World Vision, 2018:13). Whilst coverage may have a national character, the results here are showing that the quality of those services would need to be improved (World Vision, 2018:13). Low capacity also speaks to limited resourcing of the institutions that deliver on child protection in Zimbabwe (World Vision, 2018:13).

Additionally, national polices and laws establishing the legal infrastructure in Zimbabwe for the coordination of programmes and services for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) have not been fully implemented because of a shortage of resources—material, financial, and human (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014: 52; World Vision, 2018:7). Moreover, Zimbabwe is facing unprecedented and alarming growth of the number of orphans and helpless children hence the need to prioritise social work services to children in difficult circumstances to ensure their rights (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014: 1). Most importantly, as far as care-giving especially of children living with disabilities is concerned, in various parts of Sub- Saharan Africa; it encounter various issues such as caregiver burden, stress, feelings of loneliness, isolation, and uncared for, anger and frustration, shame and embarrassment, stigma and labelling, discrimination (Mmangaliso and Lupuwana, 2021: 2). Across the world stereotypes, prejudice, and stigma contribute to the discrimination and exclusion experienced by people with disabilities and their families in all aspects of their lives (Nhapi, 2020:125).

In traditional society in Zimbabwe, communities and families—nuclear, extended, and clan—were responsible for providing childcare (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). An increasing number of children are no longer able to grow up in the traditional social set up or institutions, thus necessitating out-of-home care in the form of children's homes (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). In old African society, children were just as vulnerable, but they could get consolation from the extended family and the community because there were strong value structures that stretched to child protection (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). Families and relatives were closely knit together. Phrases like child needs a village to raise them emerged from traditional African society (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). In the event that the immediate family was no longer there, the child had readily available safety nets and these nets related to the nuclear family and the community (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). The concept of Ubuntu has continued as a central tenet of Zimbabwean culture, but there has been cultural diversity as a result of the forces of globalization (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). This has, to some extent, removed away some of the values imbedded within the notion of Ubuntu (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). For instance, with the intrusion of Western cultural values, there is now a value system shaped by individualism (tantamount to selfishness), where a thick line has been

created between the nuclear and extended families (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90).

Traditionally children were regarded as important to society, hence, their safety has been solidified an issue of particular concern to the whole community (World Vision, 2018:7). Zimbabwe as a nation is endowed with rich cultural practices when it comes to children and how they are taken care of and protected; this is enshrined in the cultural adage that the child does not belong only to his immediate family but also to the community at large (World Vision, 2018:7). Within the Zimbabwean context, customarily orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) also referred as children in difficult circumstances (CDC) were taken care of by the extended families who would be accountable for providing for and supporting them and would also be supported by the community through for example the Zunde Ramambo care and support network (World Vision, 2018:7). In old times, in an African society, children were just as vulnerable, but they could get consolation from the extended family and the community because there were strong value systems that extended to child protection (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). Such family and communal informal support networks were conceptually referred to as Ubuntu (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). However, the difficult socio-political and economic context resulted in the overstraining of government resources leading to the inability to cater for all vulnerable children and families. This was worsened by the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS pandemic which has seen over 1.6 million orphans and vulnerable children needing urgent care and protection (World Vision, 2018:7).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic that has bedevilled the whole world has become one of the major challenges that has faced the effective delivery of child protection services in Zimbabwe (Mwapaura et.al. 2022:17). As the systems are interconnected, during COVID-19 the social welfare department mainly focused on the quarantine centres and the prevention of the deadly virus thus child protection services were hampered as most probation officers were taken to provide services such as emotional support to returning children (Mwapaura et.al 2022:17). The COVID-19 induced lockdown regulations impacted negatively on child protection service delivery

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as most funding was channelled toward fighting the deadly global pandemic while Non-Governmental Organisations operations were limited due to the WHO regulations and requirements to work from home, limit social interactions and protect the vulnerable Mwapaura et.al 2022:17).

The key definitions used in the study are provided in the section below.

1.2 Definitions of key concepts

1.2.1 Children in difficult circumstances: There are various interpretations of children in difficult circumstances. In Zimbabwe, Child Welfare policy in terms of Children's Act, Chapter 5:06 (2002), children in difficult conditions, also referred to as orphans and vulnerable children; are those in danger of suffering physical harm or emotional trauma, children who are disabled, orphaned children, and vulnerable children (Zimbabwe Department of Social Welfare, 2001:6). In the case of this study, children in difficult circumstance include orphans, disabled children and other less privileged children living in rural areas.

1.2.2 Child: ARTICLE 2 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC): meaning of a child is every person below the age of 18 years (ACRWC, 2015:1). In this study, children were those under the age of 18 years.

1.2.3 Social work services: In 2001, the Government of Zimbabwe adopted a contextual definition of social work in its first legislation regulating the phenomenon, the Social Workers Act 27:21, First Schedule (Section 4(2). The Act defines social work as a profession that supports people's well-being and the betterment of human society through the development and systematic application of scientific knowledge of human and societal activities and social services. Professional social workers aim to satisfy the needs and aspirations of individuals and groups at national and international level, while constantly bearing in mind the need for promoting social policy. Their techniques include psychotherapeutic case-work, social-dynamic group-work and planned community intervention (Zimbabwe Department of Social Welfare,

2001:5). Social work services in the case of this study referred to those services targeting vulnerable and disabled children in remote areas.

1.2.4 Remote rural areas: These are under developed areas in the country side. In this study, these areas are those houses and villages far away from cities and areas where most people live, and which are difficult to reach.

1.3 Rationale and problem statement

Children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe have been receiving limited to no social work interventions in so far as their psycho-socio-economic conditions are concerned. As a result, child vulnerability and social exclusion of vulnerable children in Zimbabwe's remote areas due to economic hardships are ongoing social problems and the phenomenon seems to be worsening (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:1). The complexity of challenges facing children in difficult circumstances in remote parts of Zimbabwe in the light of inadequate to no social work service interventions or experienced professional social workers is alarming and has far reaching consequences on their present and future well-being (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:1). The study therefore, aimed to explore the extent and severity of challenges being experienced by children in difficult circumstances, living in remote communities in Zimbabwe and the implications these challenges have for their future well-being and their rights.

Although there was information about facilities for orphans and vulnerable in some searches conducted, an analysis of numerous databases such as Social Work Abstracts, Research Africa, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, Sabinet African Journals and Social Science Research Network (SSRN), resulted in no data specifically focusing on children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe.

Consultation of the online library of the University of Pretoria revealed some minimal data on children in difficult circumstances living in rural areas generally, however, this was also limited in relation to the Zimbabwean context. With this background, the study explored the vulnerability of children in rural areas in Zimbabwe, and the depth of their difficulties in the light of inadequate availability of professional social workers. The well-being of children is fundamental and world over there has been a plea to ensure their safety and well-being to protect them from all forms of harm (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, 2018:1).

Reduction in social services expenditure by the Zimbabwean government because of economic contractions had led to accessibility of social work services by vulnerable groups, such as children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas of Zimbabwe to be severely compromised Council of Social Workers Zimbabwe (CSWZ) (2016: 9). Lack of adequate spending in social services by the government, especially in remote communities has resulted in many vulnerable children being exposed to poverty, lack of access to social services and increased child abuse and neglect (UNICEF, 2019: 3). This is working against the government vision 2030 mantra of "leave no one and no place behind" (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021:7). Therefore, this study was set with the aim of exploring the magnitude of problems affecting children in difficult conditions living in marginalised areas, given the economic and social welfare environment in Zimbabwe and the implications it has on their rights and future well-being. The Zimbabwean Department of Social Welfare's vision and commitment to provide aid and support to vulnerable children and to promote self- reliance and social security should be provided even in marginalised communities (Department of Social Welfare, 2000:1). There was therefore a need to examine the views of those working with children, about social services for such children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas.

1.4 Goal and objectives

The research question for the study was: What are the views of teachers and community members involved in work with children in difficult circumstances regarding social work services for such children living in a remote area of Zimbabwe?

1.4.1 Goal

The purpose of the study was to find out the observations or views of teachers and community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances about social work services for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe.

1.4.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

-        To explore the views of participants about the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by children in difficult circumstances.

-        To explore implications of a lack of social work services for children in difficult circumstances living in a remote area.

-        To explore what support is available for such children in difficult circumstances living in a remote area.

1.5   Chapter outline

The research report was divided into five chapters as follows.

Chapter 1: General introduction to the study

This chapter provides an introduction, context and background to the study. It presents the objectives of the study, statement of the problem and definition of key points.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

This chapter is devoted to a literature review of previous research and included social work in Zimbabwe and social policy; challenges affecting disadvantaged children living in remote areas of Zimbabwe; provision of social services to children in difficult circumstances and the theoretical framework underlying the research.

Chapter three: Research methodology and ethical aspects

This section is dedicated to explaining the nature of the study, research methodology, sampling, data collection, data analysis and data quality, and ethical aspects.

Chapter 4: Empirical evidence: presentation and analysis of data

This chapter presents the results (data), interpretation and analysis. As this study is qualitative, the results are presented in summary form.

Chapter 5: Main conclusions and recommendations

The fifth part presents a summary and a shortened version of the research. The results, key findings, recommendations and limitations of the study were discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Social welfare policy and social work practice: The Zimbabwean context

2.1 Introduction

Children's rights and the desire to safeguard them from all forms of maltreatment is at the core of social work practice through the department of social welfare in Zimbabwe (CSWZ, 2016: 1). As a result, ensuring the safety of all vulnerable children is in line with the United Nations Convention on the rights of all children worldwide (CSWZ, 2016: 1). Provision of social work services to children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe remains one of the main problems affecting the normal life of orphans and vulnerable children. Social workers are front-line professionals who provide health services to children and their families to strengthen and sustain families, increase the desire for recovery, and unlock their full potential for health and well-being (CSWZ, 2016: 1).

Trends in Zimbabwe indicate that the trajectory of child abuse and neglect continued to rise with an estimated 39% of children experiencing maltreatment (UNICEF, 2021:2). In practical terms, state provision of children's services is non-existence leaving children and families with limited support (UNICEF, 2021:2). There is therefore a heavy reliance on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and donor support to fill the gap in service provision (Mutambanengwe, 2022:5). Underfunding of the state department for social protection and social development entails that the state only responds to the neediest households and respond to the extreme cases of child abuse and neglect using highly individualistic, costly and procedural typical of Western child protection orientation (Mushunje, 2017:11). Mushunje (2017:13) noted that there is a mismatch between the increased number of vulnerable children requiring social work services and the number of social workers and available resources. In Zimbabwe, the emigration of social workers and other social care professionals regionally and internationally results in reliance on paraprofessionals and volunteers offer child protection services (Mutambanengwe, 2022:6).

The chapter focused on the social welfare policy, social work practice, the state of Zimbabwe's orphans and vulnerable children, the legislative and policy framework for

children's rights in Zimbabwe and the nature of social welfare provision in Zimbabwe. Child welfare services in Zimbabwe, international and regional child welfare policies, depletion of social services professionals in Zimbabwe and finally the theoretical framework of developmental social work and human rights is discussed and interrogated in the this chapter.

2.2 The state of Zimbabwe's children

2.2.1 Socio-economic conditions

Children in Sub-Saharan Africa are known to fare worse than children in most other regions (UNICEF, 2019:1). For example, in South Africa, the circumstances in which children have to grow up include exposure to crime, violence, abuse, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, lack of social assistance, poor education are heard on a daily basis (Louw and Louw, 2014:6). Similarly, these same conditions are evident in the Zimbabwean environment where 4.5 million children live in rural areas where they have limited access to social services and information (World Vision, 2018:7). Those living in urban areas, however, are not immune, around 72 percent of the population in Zimbabwe lives in consumption poverty with 1.6 million children living in extreme poverty (World Vision, 2018:7). In fact, the state of African children has become an issue of international concern and it is understandable that UNICEF (2019:1), states, that to be a child in Africa is to walk a fragile path to adulthood.

Orphan hood and child vulnerability in Zimbabwe have been exacerbated by a collapse in social, political and economic support systems adding to chronic poverty, HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:2). Poor communities in Zimbabwe are trapped into vicious cycles in which poverty and diseases mutually reinforce each other, a situation likely to be transferred between generations (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:2).

The orphanage centres in Zimbabwe tend to absorb very few orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) compared to what extended family households do (Ringson and Chereni, 2020:100). Thus, the extended family orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) care and support is still intact despite the increase of OVC challenges due to HIV/AIDS and other socio-economic factors in Zimbabwe over the past three decades (Ringson and Chereni, 2020:100). Despite many children in difficult circumstances in Zimbabwe finding refuge in the extended family, this traditional care support system faces challenges that have a direct impact on orphans and vulnerable children, such as the growing needs of orphans and vulnerable children; poverty; modernism; family disunity and divisions; and lack of adequate support from the different stakeholders such as NGOs and government, (Ringson and Chereni, 2020:102). Other social problems identified as affecting these children in rural Zimbabwe include HIV & AIDS, school fess, food and shelter, cultural contestations in child upbringing and maltreatment (Ringson and Chereni, 2020:105). Dziro and Mhlanga (2018:20) also describe these concerns which arise from HIV and AIDS epidemic, persistent droughts, economic hardships and ecological challenges as greatly affecting children in difficult circumstances. They mention child neglect, lack of funds for education and health needs as major issues affecting less privileged children in rural Zimbabwe (Dziro and Mhlanga, 2018:25). Such childhood adversity or vulnerability has far reaching consequences on child development as orphans and vulnerable children may engage in substance misuse and other risk behaviours (Brown and Shillington, 2017:211). Brown and Shillington (2017:211) are of the view that there is a link between childhood adversity which may lead to the development of risk-taking behaviours such as substance use and delinquency as forms of coping behaviours. For instance, the use of substances may be a method by which youth cope or, self-medicate, with stress and trauma (Brown and Shillington, 2017:211).

2.2.2 Position of girl children

Scholars such as Muchacha and Matsika noted that in other remote regions of Zimbabwe, vulnerable children particularly girl children are faced with the problem of child marriage (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6). Same indicated that the predominant and prolonged socio-economic predicament which has been affecting Zimbabwe for

the past three decades is increasing poverty and vulnerability among many children and families (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6). Child marriage in Zimbabwe for instance, remains growing at a time when child marriage rates are plummeting in many sub-Saharan African countries (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6). Therefore, the socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe and resultant poverty-related challenges expose children to social ills such as risk and criminal behaviours, child marriages, scarcity of food, school fees, housing, education, medical care, sanitation facilities early pregnancies and intergenerational sex (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6).

In Zimbabwe and other patriarchal societies, women and girls are subject to deep-rooted cultural norms that position them as second-class citizens compared to men and boys in the household, community and society at large (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5). These standards deprive girls of fair opportunities. In this context, girls and women, especially in rural areas, have limited opportunities to choose and decide who and when to marry (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5). In addition, girls are mostly assigned domestic roles rather than economically productive roles or leaders in their communities (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017: 5). These domestic roles prepare girls at a mature stage for the final set of destiny, which is marriage (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017: 6). This maturity is often measured by their ability to do household chores and the onset of menstruation (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5). These patriarchal norms also dominate religious institutions, such as churches, where men dominate the lives of girls and women. Women and girls in Johanne Marange Apostolic church, do not question certain harmful practices in the church such as the practice of not taking children to health institutions (Sibanda, 2011:5). Some churches have doctrines that require girls to marry men in the church at puberty (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5). Sibanda, (2011:4) points out that Johanne Marange Apostolic church in Zimbabwe is one of the churches promoting child marriage.

Another issue of concern noted by Muchacha and Matsika, (2017:5) is that there are signs of gender discrimination in girls' access to education. Most girls drop out of school due to high education costs and poverty and end up getting married (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5). On the other hand, boys are given special treatment to continue

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their studies, while girls are kept at home waiting for marriage (Sibanda, 2011:5). In many cases, parents insist that the girl should marry and the boy should support his family; therefore, he should be given an education and a career (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5). However, the literature shows that child marriage is the result of many factors, often interrelated, such as lack of legal protection, limited political will and cultural and religious practices, lack of sexual and reproductive services leading to early pregnancy, poverty, gender inequality, and religious and traditional practices (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5).

2.2.3 Children living with disabilities in Zimbabwe

Overall, people with disabilities in Zimbabwe are still being viewed from a medical and welfare framework which views them as ill, different from their non-disabled peers, and in need of care (Mugumbate and Nyoni, 2014:6). In many cases, unemployment among people with disabilities in Zimbabwe is mainly due to lack of qualifications and to discrimination from employers (Mugumbate and Nyoni, 2014:6). According to Mugumbabte and Nyoni (2014:6), children with hearing, visual and intellectual impairments are more likely never to attend school compared to children with physical impairments. Many children living with disabilities in Zimbabwe experience severe discrimination, sexual abuse, illiteracy, serious economic challenges, and ablution facilities in rural areas are not accessible to the handicapped (Mugumbate and Nyoni, 2014:6). Children with disabilities in the Zimbabwean society face insurmountable challenges that hinder their human and social capital development (Mtetwa and Nyikahadzoi, 2013:31).

Children living with disabilities especially those that are based in rural areas, faced enormous challenges which made it difficult for them to attend school, which development in turn deterred their potential to become assets in the household economy (Mtetwa and Nyikahadzoi, 2013:31). Thus, their failure to attain an education had implications for human capital development particularly at the household level (Mtetwa and Nyikahadzoi, 2013:31). This fuel negative societal attitudes towards these children, including rejection even by some key family members (Mtetwa and

Nyikahadzoi, 2013:31). Ultimately, this scenario compromised the development, among these children, of social capital necessary for improved quality of life (Mtetwa and Nyikahadzoi, 2013:31). On the other hand, Nhapi (2020:124) is of the view that impoverishment and social exclusion of children with disabilities is pervasive in Zimbabwe. What is further disconcerting to the plight of children with disabilities is a fragile economic environment where not enough material resources can be channelled towards guaranteeing their enhanced social functioning (Nhapi, 2020:124). Most state run schools and hospitals in Zimbabwe especially in rural areas have very few officials trained to handle people with both physical and intellectual disabilities (Nhapi, 2020:126). Many Zimbabwe state run inclusive schools are inaccessible to people with disabilities without no guiding rails, in urban schools the elevators (if there are working at all) without recorded voices for persons with both intellectual disabilities and visual impairments (Nhapi, 2020:126). The rails are too narrow to accommodate wheel chairs and the toilets cubicles are too high for people with physical disabilities (Nhapi, 2020:126).

2.3 Legislative and policy framework for children's rights in Zimbabwe

It is vital to note that Zimbabwe introduced a national orphan care policy at the turn of the millennium due to a sharp increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa: 2020:89). This appealed to the traditional social safety nets that were part of traditional African society. Traditional African cultural values centred on the concept of Ubuntu (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa: 2020:89). The government introduced traditional child protection practices, but did not bring equipment and resources from the traditional practices to successfully provide protection services to vulnerable children (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa: 2020:89). According to the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, socio-economic rights are fundamental human rights that every person has and cannot live without (Lombard and Twikirize, 2014:314). These rights support the notion that every person should be treated with dignity and protection. Access rights such as social and economic rights require the state to take proactive measures to ensure that resources are available. (Lombard and Twikirize, 2014:314).

2.3.1 Nature of social welfare provision in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a low income country whose development has been mired by multiple social and economic problems spawned by endemic government failures, leadership crisis, corruption, political strive, poor investment, natural disasters, targeted sanctions, isolation from international community, and lack of donor funding for social development (Mutambanengwe, 2022:5). This situation has diminished the state's technical, fiscal, and management capacity to manage social programmes and effectively respond to the needs of its citizens (Mutambanengwe, 2022:5). To date, welfare service provision in Zimbabwe is residual and has minimal yet heavily means-tested public assistance and education, health and food aid by the state (Mutambanengwe, 2022:2). Although the current statistics of social workers in Zimbabwe seems to be not readily available, a 2010 assessment report found deep-seated capacity weaknesses throughout the Department of Social Services in Zimbabwe (Wyatt et.al. 2010: iii). It was noted that it was extremely under-resourced to meet the challenges it faces, in terms of the number of vacancies among professional front-line staff, the professional qualifications and experience of many of the staff who are in post, and the physical facilities and resources at their disposal (Wyatt et.al. 2010: iii). Salary levels do not permit sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff to be recruited and retained to discharge effectively its core functions, and its dependence on facilities provided by NGOs and other public agencies undermines its ability to exercise its monitoring and supervisory responsibilities with authority (Wyatt et.al. 2010: iii). Zimbabwe is in fact in a crisis situation where the ratio of social workers to the population of children in need is concerned (Wyatt et.al. 2010: iii).

Although the data available do not permit comparisons to be made with precision, it appears that in Zimbabwe the ratio of children to social workers is of the order of 49,587:1, compared with 1,867:1 in Botswana and 4,300:1 in Namibia. This is an astonishing finding for a country reputed to have had the best social protection system in Africa (Wyatt et.al. 2010: iii). Furthermore, the Department of Social Services' lack of critical resources – including in particular vehicles - places unnecessary obstacles in the path of other agencies implementing projects and programmes for orphans and

vulnerable children, making it difficult for officers to fulfil their legal duties (for example in relation to the reunification of children with families) which only they are empowered to carry out (Wyatt et.al. 2010: iii).

2.3.2 Development of social services provision in pre- and post-colonial Zimbabwe

From time immemorial, social problems for Africans were handled using local indigenous methods (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:2). Like many other Africans, Madzimbabwe (people of Zimbabwe) have several ways of preventing social ills and ensuring the social functionality of their families, villages and societies at large (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:2). Before colonisation, systems that grew naturally were in place to provide welfare to the vulnerable populations (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:2). In a traditional Zimbabwean society, families and relatives were closely knit together and phrases like "it takes a village to raise a child" emerged from traditional African society (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90). In the event that the immediate family was no longer there, the child had readily available safety nets. These nets related to the nuclear family and the community (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020:90).

In the 1940s, black Zimbabweans expanded western methods of social services in urban areas (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3). Others like Chibhaga Ayema Musodzi introduced community organisation, which was popular globally at that time while Jairos Jiri established institutions for people with disabilities, another western concept that was famous at the time (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3). These two, and many others were charity givers. They provided their services for free, motivated by the plight of black people as well as their backgrounds (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3). There was no definition of the kind of social services provided this time, but there is no doubt that they contributed significantly to modern Zimbabwean social work (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:4).

While the professional council in Zimbabwe has tried to regulate the profession, social work practice remains embedded in obscurity as many social workers continue to work without practicing certificates (Bohwasi and Chidyausiku, 2021:230). In Zimbabwe, the challenge of low turnout among social workers to initially register and renew their practicing certificates remains a baffling issue for the country (Bohwasi and Chidyausiku, 2021:230). Since its establishment in 2001, the CSWZ has only managed to register about one thousand three hundred social workers with less than one hundred and fifty social workers managing to renew their practicing certificates as of December 2017 (Bohwasi and Chidyausiku, 2021:230) Consequently, vulnerable children in marginalised communities in Zimbabwe are being left out in as far as the fulfilment of the UNCRC development targets on children is concerned.

In terms of how services are rendered in Zimbabwe, the Department of Social Development use the Child Protection Committees (CPCs). However, the CPCs do not have the legal power to influence scope of practice within the central government which holds the statutory social work role for children (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:53). An observation by same has been that these CPCs are largely sponsored by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) which means in the absence of funding, they would not meet as regularly as they should (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:53).

The health and education professionals are critical in creating a strong safeguarding system for children but there isn't a clearly laid down procedure in Zimbabwe that these professionals should follow should they have concerns about a child (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:53). One prime example of how we could maximise use of the little resources is boosting the human capital that could practice statutory social work for children through the granting of statutory powers to the local authorities social services departments social workers (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:54). For example, when looking at Harare province, the central government has offices in Highfield, Chitungwiza and Harare Central districts which are meant to cover the whole of Harare, on estimate these three offices have an average of 10-15 probation officers in total, this in itself means a greater number of children in need of care fall through the gaps as there are on average 15 statutory social workers at most covering the

whole province (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:54). In terms of case recording, Shangwa and Mathende (2019:54) noted that countries such as the United Kingdom make use of digitalized case recording systems, which allows for easier tracking of a case's progression. However, in the Zimbabwe context; there is still a manual recording system which is not effective in the sense that there is a drift in cases with the possibility of case holders easily losing track of the children whose care plans they should supposedly manage (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:54).

2.3.3 Social work practice and its relevance in Africa and Zimbabwe

Generally, in Africa, social work is considered a young profession, as it was imported from the West especially from Europe at the beginning of the last century (Mupedziswa, 2014: 141). According to Mupedziswa (2014: 141), there has been contestation around issues of relevance and appropriateness of social work in Africa. Critics have expressed concern about African social work education, because of its Western roots, lack of appropriateness and relevance to African problems (Mupedziswa, 2014: 141). Many institutions in southern and east Africa have heeded the call to strive for relevance. Studies, however, reveal that enormous challenges have been encountered in attempts to realize relevance, while at the same time ensuring adherence to IASSW Global Standards (Mupedziswa, 2014: 141). The impediments have included problems in generating indigenous teaching materials, lack of resources, lack of appropriate field placements, (Mupedziswa 2014:141).

In Zimbabwe, social work practice continues to be dominated by curative social work interventions almost four decades after independence (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:3). These more Western approaches lack the capacity to address the structural causes of social problems affecting children in difficult circumstances such as child marriage, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, criminal and other risk behaviours among vulnerable children. Some local social work scholars have criticized case management, which is the main mode of social work intervention in Zimbabwe, as lacking the capacity to address Zimbabwe's socio-economic problems (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017: 6). For example, the biggest social problems in Zimbabwe and other

African countries are poverty, unemployment, food security, limited access to water and sanitation, limited access to social services and civic problems such as corruption (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6). Due to the structural nature of these challenges, they cannot be solved through case work, as it is mostly aimed at improving the psychosocial functioning of service users, rather than the structural and macro problems they face (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6). As such, the social work practice of the social department is not adequately positioned to address the social problems of vulnerable children, because this problem is deeply rooted in complex cultural, economic, political and social factors that require structural solutions (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6).

As a result, efforts have been made to change the services of the social development so that they can solve the structural social problems faced by many vulnerable groups (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:7). However, this change has been very slow, which can reflect and show the complexity of changing organizational culture and values (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017: 7). However, there has been a slow transformation or shift in welfare approach to give greater emphasis to macro practice than to remedial or therapeutic approaches, social case work continues to be a predominant mode of social service delivery in South Africa and many African countries (Van Breda, 2018:66). This may reflect reluctance on the part of social workers to adopt a developmental approach to social work, or a high need among Africans for case work services, or inadequate education of social workers for a more balanced and integrated social work practice (Van Breda, 2018:66-67). In South Africa for example, under the apartheid system, social welfare for White people was significantly better developed and financed than for black people (Van Breda, 2018:67). Patel (2005:78) concludes that, the social welfare system was based on a First World model: it was curative, located largely in urban areas; specialized and required highly trained professionals to deliver remedial and statutory services. The services were incapable of meeting the needs of the majority.

Midgley (2014:13) defined social development as a "process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the context of

a dynamic multifaceted development process". In a bid to achieve social and economic transformation, the Zimbabwean government adopted the socialist ideology with a view of creating a more egalitarian society upon gaining independence in 1980 (Kaseke, 2002:9). The government sought to create equal opportunities for everyone and enhance their full participation in the development of the country. This participation in the development of the country was to be propelled by the combined efforts from the state, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (CSWZ, 2016:8).

According to CSWZ (2016:9), Zimbabwe has witnessed an influx on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) since independence. These NGOs were responding to the re-construction agenda of a country emerging from war and later extended their work to development work. The government of Zimbabwe acknowledged the crucial role that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play in facilitating development, particularly in the rural areas (CSWZ, 2016:9). This formed the basis for government partnership with non-governmental organisations. In recognition of the important work of NGOs, the government used to provide grants to local NGOs in appreciation of their contribution to development and to enhance their capacity to deliver social services (CSWZ, 2016:9). The NGOs in Zimbabwe have been credited for promoting and implementing participatory approaches to development (CSWZ, 2016:9). However, this has since stopped because of the economic crisis in the country which has seriously battered the capacity of government to pay the grants to NGOs (CSWZ, 2016:9).

After much debate in 1990, the Zimbabwean government embraced and adopted the neo-liberal International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank inspired Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs) in 1991 (CSWZ, 2016:32). CSWZ (2016:32), further states that before the implementation, the government had assured its population that after the execution of ESAPs, there was going to be reduced poverty, unemployment, less bureaucratic red tape, higher productivity and rapid wealth creation (CSWZ, 2016:32). CSWZ (2016:32), states that ESAP's failure to realise its goals frustrated many as it brought untold suffering, human misery and little economic recovery in Zimbabwe throughout its era in the1990s. Accordingly, the vision

of an egalitarian Zimbabwean society by the year 2000, envisioned after independence in 1980; was blurred by the failure of ESAP packages to alleviate poverty and reduce inequalities, in the country (Kaseke, 2002:10).

According to CSWZ (2016:33), extreme poverty increased significantly between 1990 and 1995 and the implementation of ESAPs impacted negatively on social policy. It resulted in the government retreat of the state in social welfare provision. There were serious cut backs on social expenditure, especially in health and education (CSWZ, 2016:33). However, after the year 2000, Zimbabwe was again trapped in a more serious economic crisis triggered by the chaotic fast track land reform programme (CSWZ, 2016:33). The international community particularly western countries in Europe and America responded by imposing punitive economic sanctions on Zimbabwe (CSWZ, 2016:33). The capacity of the government to deliver social services to the vulnerable groups was severely affected and thereby forcing the government to rely almost exclusively on United Nations Agencies, International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other international development agencies. (CSWZ, 2016:9).

However, despite their contribution to social development, NGOs in Zimbabwe had been experiencing various challenges such dependency on external funding (CSWZ, 2016:9). Therefore, such funding is unpredictable and unsustainable and in several cases some NGOs had been forced to scale down because of reduced donor funding or where donors pull out completely (CSWZ, 2016:9). In some instances, NGOs are unable to attract skilled and experienced personnel and poorly funded NGOs are forced to rely on volunteers (CSWZ, 2016:9). Zimbabwe has witnessed the loss of professional social workers and other experienced professionals regionally and internationally is search of greener pastures (CWSZ, 2016:9).

2.4. Coloniality of social work practice in Zimbabwe

Colonisation in the 1890s brought with it numerous upheavals, including colonial wars against imperialists (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:1). Other challenges created include dispossession and the emergency of urban centres with problems such as unemployment, prostitution, homelessness and overcrowding for black people (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:1). For the white population, problems of vagrancy, delinquency and destitution started amongst their children and youths. In response, the white settlers introduced a model of social welfare based on western values (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:1). The colonial government in Zimbabwe later imported social work in the 1930s when it hired probation officers from Britain (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3). The probation officers dealt with issues of vagrancy, delinquency and destitution among white children and youths (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3). With more training of black social welfare workers, the services were extended to black urban communities to deal with issues of homelessness and unemployment (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3).

There was no proper definition of social work at this time because it was not officially recognised as a profession in Zimbabwe. However, social welfare officers of this time provided a foundation for social work profession in contemporary Zimbabwe (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3). At this point, indigenous social services were neglected but, in the background, they remained as pillars in promoting social functioning among most Zimbabweans (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3). Therefore, the development of social work in Zimbabwe has taken different phases which includes the customary indigenous phase, missionary phase, colonial-missionary phase, African philanthropists' phase, independence phase and indigenised-modern phase (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:3).

It is important to note that social work practice in Zimbabwe is a wholesale import from the colonial government (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017: 6). The colonial child protection system was primarily a mechanism of social control, where it responded to challenges that the administration saw as a threat to order and stability, such as juvenile delinquency (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6). For example, the colonial

administration established courts throughout the country for children in legal difficulties. Currently, these shelters or institutions continue to operate, and probation and social supervision are the main tasks of social workers (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017: 6). Similar to the British colonial child welfare system, most of the measures implemented by the department of social welfare deal with the symptoms of the problem rather than the structural causes (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6). This is because the social department constructs social problems mainly from the pathology of the individual, not from his environment, as a perspective inherited from the colonial government (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6).

Other important tasks of social workers in this department include placing children in foster care, such as nursing homes (without the intention of reuniting the child with his family) and registering and monitoring children and the elderly (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017: 6). Thus, the practice and approach of social work in Zimbabwe lag behind Western models of practice. This therefore weakened the ability of social work to respond effectively to local needs (CSWZ, 2016: 12).

2.5. Depletion of social service professionals in Zimbabwe

In the case of Zimbabwe, the economic crisis of the past three decades, has resulted in reduced expenditure on social services by the government (CWSZ, 2016:9). The country has continuously witnessed considerable migration of locally trained and experienced social workers to other countries, notably South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, America, Canada, Australia and United Kingdom in search of greener pastures (Bohwasi and Chidyausiku, 2021:230). In Zimbabwe, the Department of Social Development (DSD), starved of resources for over 30 years and recently suffering a catastrophic loss of professional staff, particularly social workers fleeing the economic crisis currently besetting Zimbabwe, the country is no longer able to carry out its obligations effectively (UNICEF, 2018:1). This has had a particularly adverse effect on children in difficult circumstances (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:7). The profession of social work in Zimbabwe is suffering a serious institutional incapacity due to the massive exodus following political and economic instability in the country

for greener pastures (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:41). Currently, the profession is witnessing an exodus and relocation of most experienced senior social workers from both the public and private sectors (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:41).

Furthermore, Bohwasi and Chidyausiku (2021:230), observed that since its establishment in 2001, the Council of Social Workers Zimbabwe, have managed to register only about one thousand three hundred social workers. In the same vein, less than one hundred and fifty social workers only renewed their practicing certificates as of December 2017, an indication of a serious staff emigration in search of greener fortunes overseas (Bohwasi and Chidyausiku, 2021:230) Consequently, vulnerable children in marginalised communities in Zimbabwe are being left out in provision of social services and in fulfilling the UNCRC development targets on children

2.6. International and regional child welfare policies

Aspirations to promote the welfare of children in difficult circumstances living in marginalized communities in Zimbabwe as exemplified by the establishment of comprehensive policy and legislative framework in compliance with the UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) illustrates a systemic intent (World Vision, 2018:6). Child rights are also enshrined in other polices and legislation such as in areas of HIV and AIDS; Health; Child labour, Education among other pieces of legislation and sectorial strategies (Department of Social Welfare, 2000:1). The Department of Social Welfare employs professional social workers who have the mandate to promote the welfare of children in accordance with the Children's Act, Chapter 5:06 (2001), which offers all children in Zimbabwe with care and protection, as well as creating a children's court and registering an institution to receive and care for children (Department of Social Welfare, 2000:1). Social workers are the main child welfare officers appointed to deal with children's issues, including legal protection (Department of Social Welfare, 2000:1). The Department of Social Welfare is also responsible for various functions such as facilitating of adoption and foster care, promotion of children's rights, investigating cases of child abuse and enabling access to social safety nets for vulnerable families (Department of Social

Welfare, 2000:1). As such, it has a duty under Chapter 5:06 of the Children's Act (2001) to protect children from all forms of child abuse (Department of Social Welfare, 2000:1).

In the implementation of the Child Care and Protection Programme the department of Social Welfare adheres to international, regional and national policies as Zimbabwe is part of the global village (Department of Social Welfare 2000:1). Consequently, in line with global trends such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC , 1989) which is an international human rights treaty to which Zimbabwe is a signatory to and which grants all children and young people and under a comprehensive set of rights. These include the right to:

•   Life, survival and development

•   Protection from violence, abuse or neglect

•   An education that enables children to fulfil their potential

•   Be raised by, or have a relationship with, their parents

•   Express their opinions and be listened to (UNCRC, 2018:1).

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) on the other hand, is an important tool for advancing children's rights in Africa (ACRWC, 2015:2). While building on the same basic principles as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Children's Charter highlights issues of special importance in the African context (ACRWC, 2015:2). Therefore, the African Union, in acknowledging the commitments already made towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as guided by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which indicates that a significant proportion of African children grow up in socio-economic and political conditions where opportunities for a decent life are negligible (ACRWC, 2015:2). Therefore, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) recognizes the need to take appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children in Africa against all harms such as abuse, neglect and exploitation, hunger, child labour, discrimination, and use of children in armed conflicts (ACRWC, 2015:5). Therefore, it is imperative that children grow up in

a family environment full of happiness, love, protection, care and understanding. (ACRWC, 2015:2).

2.7 Child welfare services in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, Child protection is one of the key responsibilities by the government. Driven by the "children are the future" mantra, the Department of Social Development (DSD) administers a number of legislative provisions in a bid to protect and provide services to children including street children and children with disabilities (Mwapaura et al., 2022:2). The government generally aspires to reduce risk or threat to children's development and increase positive adaptation through resilience-building interventions which include mentoring talents and skills, child care; access to systems of care and child protection. However, evidence shows that programme is bewildered by a number of setbacks that limit the delivery of child protection services (Mwapaura et al., 2022:2).

Child welfare policies and initiatives target the care, health and wellbeing of children with the goal of improving child health with the public sector (Mwapaura et al., 2022:2). The purpose of child welfare services is to ensure all children have access to health, education, shelter, participation, psycho-social support among several other needs. In Zimbabwe, child protection systems strive to adhere to the minimum standards set by international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), among others and regional instruments such as African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Mwapaura et al., 2022:2). The development the child protection system in Zimbabwe was not immune to social, economic, political and environmental problems. The main types of child maltreatment in Zimbabwe include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect (Department of Social Welfare, Government of Zimbabwe, 2001). The major document underpinning child protection in Zimbabwe is the Children's Act Chapter 5:06 (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:51). This legislation informs statutory social work and defines a child as well as the scope of orphans and vulnerable. In essence it thus defines the threshold determining whether a child needs statutory social work

intervention or not. The act also defines the functions of a probation officer (statutory social worker) (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:51).

Child protection services that are offered by the department of social development include advocating for children's rights, dealing with juveniles, linking orphans with resources, protecting all children from harm, ensuring the safety of children and many others (National Case Management System for the Welfare and Protection of Children in Zimbabwe (Mwapaura et al., 2022:3). However, the political and socio-economic challenges facing Zimbabwe have clogged the country's child welfare standards (Mwapaura et al., 2022:3). These challenges include inflation, low staff capacity, policy inconsistencies, insufficient funding, corruption, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, child poverty among other challenges (Mwapaura et al., 2022:3).

In summary, it can be clearly seen that Zimbabwe is committed to upholding the rights of children as evidenced by being signatory to the UNCRC which Zimbabwe ratified in 1989, pledging to promote and protect the rights of children. However, it has to be noted that the UNCRC stresses not so much on the responsibilities of children as such, Zimbabwe is also a signatory to the ACRWC which not only recognises that children have rights but also responsibilities and this is espoused in article 31 of the ACRWC (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:54). Zimbabwe's subscription to the ACRWC is in line with the need to cultivate responsible citizenry from a young age according to societal norms and values (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:54). However, despite Zimbabwe signing the ACRWC, the challenge lies in translating the intentions of the ACRWC into actual deliverables within the family, schools, communities and all institutions for children (Mutambanengwe, 2022:28). Violence against children continues to persist and harmful socio-cultural and religious practices have not been fully addressed thus consisting a harsh reality for millions of children (UNICEF, 2021:2).

2.8. Theoretical framework

This study was directed by the developmental social work and human rights based theories to interpret the phenomenon of child vulnerability in remote parts of Zimbabwe (Patel, 2005: 206; Mwapaura et al., 2022:3).

2.8.1. Developmental Social Work Theory

The researcher adopted the developmental social work theory for this study due to its ability to address structural problems, address social justice, promote active participation and strengthen prevailing coping mechanisms and poverty alleviation strategies (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:3). The development of social work is one of the results that gave rise to systems of social work. Thus, Midgley and Conley (2010), defined developmental social work as the application of social development theory, principles and values in social work and represents a method to do it based on social development (Mabvurira et.al. 2021: 166). All this aims to improve the well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities in their social context (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:166). Most importantly, developmental social work recognizes and responds to the connections between social, economic and environmental development in order to expand people's freedoms and capabilities. (Lombard and Twikirize, 2014:318).

Therefore, a developmental approach was used in the research, because social development includes improving people's quality of life; fair distribution of resources; broad participation in decision-making and special measures to enable marginalized groups and communities to move into the mainstream (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:164). As (Midgley 2014) looked at from a practical and theoretical perspective, the goals of social development have been identified as eliminating poverty and hunger, improving education and literacy, reducing infant and maternal mortality, and ending gender-based discrimination and oppression, increased participation in the political process, improved sanitation and more (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:165). This study acknowledges that despite major social problems in Zimbabwe such as child hunger, housing, poverty and school dropout, which are also child rights concerns for children in difficult

circumstances, professional efforts and social work interventions to address such problems are limited in remote areas. There is therefore a need for a paradigm shift in the curative social work interventions that generally dominate social work in Zimbabwe. These traditional approaches lack the capacity to address the structural causes of social problems such as child marriages, poverty, abuse oppression and exploitation (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:3).

Above all, developmental social work is seen as the most appropriate method for Zimbabwe's situation because it builds individual income through improving skills, production, infrastructure, markets, savings, insurance and ecology (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:11). This is because imported social work failed to expand to all communities due to factors including western values and a lack of fiscal resources (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:11). The problems that colonial social work had come to address had multiplied several times, and populations in need of social work services expanded rapidly especially soon after independence (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:11). Poverty became clearer in both rural and urban areas, with more people moving to urban areas to escape rural poverty (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:11). Social workers then proposed developmental social work that seeks to build individual income through improving skills, production, infrastructure, markets, savings, insurance and ecology (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:11).

Developmental social work expands the profession and its commitment to the preservation of social justice and human rights to include economic and environmental justice in the broader conceptual framework of three generations of human rights. (Lombard & Twikirize, 2014:318). Thus, it places social work at the centre of efforts to end poverty and advance social and economic equality in a way that is sustainable (Lombard and Twikirize, 2014:318). By shifting and not excluding the remedial and maintenance functions of social work, the function of social change, developmental social work combines micro and macro practice. It challenges the sources of injustice that lead to exclusion, social exclusion and oppression of individuals, groups and communities and uses non-discriminatory, empowering, strength-based, advocacy and social investment strategies to promote social and economic inclusion. Therefore,

according to Mabvurira et.al. (2021:167) the following principles are relevant to the African context and the roots of such principles are embedded in the spirit of collectivism, conservatism, humaneness and non-paternalism. These includes: respect for ubuntu, empowerment, equity, universal access, climate change awareness, sustainability, participation, dependency free among others. It is also imperative to point out that in this study, developmental social work can be applied in all three traditional social work methods which are: casework, group work and community work to empower vulnerable children from individual to community level (Patel and Hochfeld, 2013:698).

Thus, partnerships, self-determination, and participation are the cornerstones of the application of developmental social work with orphans and vulnerable children residing in remote areas (Lombard and Twikirize, 2014:318). Developmental social work is described by Lombard and Twikirize (2014:318) as an integrated, holistic approach to social work that uses non-discriminatory, strength-based models, approaches, and interventions, as well as partnerships, to support social and economic inclusion and well-being. It also recognizes and addresses the connections that exist between an individual and their environment. Promoting social and economic equality among the marginalized and excluded from social and economic processes is one way social workers demonstrate their commitment to social justice and human rights (Lombard and Twikirize, 2014: 314). Social work has been a human rights discipline since the beginning (Lombard and Twikirize, 2014:314).

It was therefore in the best interest of this study to highlight that developmental social work was the most viable paradigm to advocate for the empowerment, inclusion and capacitation of children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Mutare district. In line with some of the findings of this study, the developmental social work is more appropriate in dealing with some social, cultural, political and economic barriers in enhancing the well-being of children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe.

2.8.1.1 Critique of the Developmental Social Work Theory

The social development approach is lauded as explicitly redistributive, inclusive and it is also concerned with the promotion of active citizenship, participation in development, and individual and collective empowerment (Patel and Hochfeld, 2013:691). Most importantly, the differences between developmental social work and other forms of social work are particularly marked when developmental social work and psycho-therapeutic counselling are compared (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 17). Although developmental concepts such as growth, strengths, and empowerment are also used in psychotherapy, clinical social work is permeated with notions of pathology and medicalized treatment (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 17).

Despite the strengths of developmental social work theory, the theory has its own limitations. Developmental social work involves what was described as a "paradigm shift," which requires that social work's institutionalized ways of operating be modified (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 193). However, unless the nature of this shift is clearly articulated, there will be uncertainty and confusion among those who are supportive of the developmental approach (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 193). Developmental social work has been infused with rhetorical and hortatory notions that provide few concrete examples of how practitioners can implement a developmental approach (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 194). Consequently, debates about the practical relevance of developmental social work have often been vague and ambiguous (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 194).

Developmental social work appeared to be riddled with problems, especially regarding the coordination of the various actors involved in its implementation (Holscher, 2008: 118). Most of all, communication appears to be difficult, perhaps due to the apparent mismatch between the authority for strategic decision-making and the responsibility for implementation on the ground. There was a growing tension between time and how long it would take to actually execute. Many developmental social work projects are not cost-effective in terms of expected outcomes (Holscher, 2008: 118).

Another concern with this theory concerns its use as a paradigm to address the pressing problem of child neglect and abuse (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 194). Loffell (2008:85) stated that the promotion of developmental approaches has created "ambiguity and uncertainty" among child protection social workers, who abandon traditional interventions in favour of developmental approaches based on the right to ambiguous expression. Thus, dismantling a system without clearly defined alternatives can be disastrous (Loffell, 2008: 85).

Another limitation in adopting developmental social work theory is ongoing resource limitations (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 194). This is a major challenge for many countries, including the United States, one of the world's wealthiest countries (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 194). For proponents of developmental social work, it is one thing to promote its benefits, but it is another thing to ensure that sufficient staff, resources, and other investments are available (Midgley and Conley: 2010: 194).

2.8.2. Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)

This research was also influenced by a human rights perspective, which is most pertinent as it views children as rights-holders with legal rights (Sandberg, 2018: 16). In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognized the status of children as subjects of rights who not only need protection, but also have the right to be heard and also participate in matters concerning the fundamental right of children (Mushongera, 2015: 56). Central to the human rights perspective is the recognition that unequal power relations and social exclusion deny people their human rights and expose them to poverty. Therefore, this perspective is considered useful to assess the capacity of children and governments (obligors) and develop appropriate capacity-building strategies to bring children (marginalized groups) to the forefront. It is noteworthy that children are seen as capable subjects with their own status, needs, and rights, rather than as incomplete or flawed versions of the adults they will someday become (Nhapi, 2020: 125).

According to Sandberg, (2018:16), the most important tool to ensure children rights is to ensure their participation in decision making. When vulnerable children in

marginalised communities are left out of receiving social services, the provisions of the UNCRC on the rights of children are not fulfilled. In light of this, the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) is appropriate advocacy vehicle to advance rights of children in remote areas in Zimbabwe. Child protection is an essential international policy and programming priority involving various efforts (Sandberg, 2018:16). The child's right to participation and protection is included in several UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and other international human rights treaties (Sandberg, 2018:16).

Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) sets out the rights that must be realised for children to develop their full potential (Sandberg, 2018:16). Mwapaura et.al, (2022:17) argued that the human rights perspective exuberate the relevance in unpacking the present socio-economic challenges affecting child services in Zimbabwe. In this study, child protection system should be seen as consisting of the human rights perspective and regarding the child as both an individual and as a member of a family or community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age as well as stage of development, sets the focus on the whole child (Mwapaura et.al, 2022:17). This directly links with child protection system as it has certain structures, functions, and capacities, among other components that have been assembled in relation to a set of child protection goals such as human rights (Mwapaura et.al, 2022:17). On the other hand, legislation alone does not reduce issues such as discrimination as there is need to work harder at changing attitudes (Mwapaura et.al, 2022:17).

Table 1: Components of the human rights approach (Sida, 2021).

Participation	Links to Human rights obligations	Non-discrimination and equality	Accountability	Empowerment	Transparency
In and access to decision making process. Is there active and meaningful participation of rights holders?	How are the human rights standards from treaties, laws and recommendations used to define and advance services? What are the human rights obligations for states or duty bearers that ratify these instruments?	Is there equal access to decision making process? Are there guarantees that those in similar circumstances are dealt with equally in law and practice?	Do duty bearers have knowledge, mandate, resources and willingness to achieve their human rights obligations?	Have the rights holders been taken into account and prioritised in service delivery?	Is information about intervention available in an accessible way to all stakeholders?

Sida, (2021:1) argues that children should have active and meaningful involvement in decision-making processes and that international legal instruments should be utilised to advance child protection goals. Duty bearers (such as governments) should have the knowledge, mandate, resources and willingness to achieve their human rights obligations and that children should be taken into account in the design of child protection services in Zimbabwe. Governments should fulfil their obligation and children should be able to claim their human rights. Finally, information about child services provision should be available in an accessible way to all stakeholders.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognizes children as rights holders and provides them with individual rights. However, children cannot be properly protected without being provided with food, housing, care, health services and education or the opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding their own lives and in society (Sandberg, 2018:16). The articles of the Convention oblige States parties to establish some form of child protection system to protect children in the care of their parents or other guardians against physical and emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation to ensure children the protection and

care necessary for their well-being. (Sandberg, 2018:16). In the case of this study, the findings revealed that there is limited to no social work services in remote areas in Zimbabwe, some children who found refuge in the extended family are likely to suffer silently in case of abuses, child marriages, drug misuse, poverty, school drop outs among others. Therefore, the presence of social workers in marginalised communities in Zimbabwe will go a long way in monitoring and enhancing the rights of orphans and vulnerable children living in remote areas.

2.8.2.1   Critique of Human Rights Based Approach

The human rights perspective is applauded for promoting the protection of the rights of vulnerable children as well as ensuring their dignity. However, it is criticised for its universalized responses to problems having locally specific characteristics (Bissell et.al, 2006:2). Although policies oriented by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other human rights standards have indeed resulted in important processes of social change, it is difficult to link those processes to either negative or positive impacts on children in the absence of empirical data (Bissell et.al, 2006:2). First of all, interventions should be empirically based to reflect the realities of the situation (Bissell et.al, 2006:2).   International standards such as the CRC, are by nature highly normative and came into being through political negotiation between governments about the kind of world they wish to create and the obligations they are willing to assume to achieve this end (Bissell et.al, 2006:14). These standards are much more about social values to be pursued than about the processes of child development, the nature and requirements of children or children's lived realities (Bissell et.al, 2006:14). Another concern about human rights is their lack of substance and being promoted only in the ideal rather than the material (Bissel et.al, 2006:14).

2.9.   Conclusion

The Developmental Social Work Theory and a human rights-based approach provides a theoretical framework to explore and analyse teachers' and community members' viewpoints on hardships confronting children in difficult circumstances living in remote

communities in Zimbabwe. Both theories, due to their strengths in addressing structural problems, promoting social justice, human rights, promoting active participation and strengthening the dominant coping mechanisms of marginalized people were chosen as social work models of intervention to address the challenges of disadvantaged children living in marginalized communities in Zimbabwe. However, the magnitude or scale of the hardships facing children in difficult circumstances in remote areas could not be fully expressed due to lack of literature on the role of social workers in remote areas and also absence of views from the department of social development.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore teachers and community members' interpretations and familiarities regarding social work services with vulnerable children in difficult circumstances living in a remote area of Zimbabwe. Specific objectives included: to explore the views of participants about the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by children in difficult circumstances; to explore implications of a lack of social work services for children in difficult circumstances living in a remote area and to explore what support is available for such children in difficult circumstances living in a remote area.

This chapter discusses the nature of the research paradigm and approach, its design and the methodology used, which includes sampling, data collection and data analysis. The chapter describes how the quality and reliability of the information was ensured. Finally, an explanation of the research ethics of the study is also provided.

3.2 Study area

Mutare district is one of Manicaland Province's seven districts. It is bordered by Mutasa and Makoni districts to the north, Mozambique to the east, Buhera district to the west and Chimanimani district to the south. It lies approximately 85 km from Mutare town or city centre. The research focused on a communal area in Mutare district and it has a total of thirty-six (36) wards. While wards vary in size and scope; government authority has established a definitive range based on averages. According to the Prime Minister's Directive of 1984 & 1985, a village has about one hundred households, and a ward has six villages, Government of Zimbabwe, (1984 & 1985). The people in Mutare district depend largely on subsistence farming which include both agricultural and animal husbandry. The district is connected with one main tarred road from Mutare town to Mafararikwa while other roads are dust roads. Electricity supply and

telecommunications are reasonably connected when compared to other districts in Manicaland Province.

This research focused specifically on teachers from two schools, one secondary school and one primary school, and community members from a community of villages close to the western side of well-known tallest Nyarurwe Mountain in Marange area. The study area was preferred by the researcher mainly due to its arid nature, it is a drought prone area and also reasonably marginalised in terms of level of development. The community is mainly accessed through dust roads and accessibility of facilities such as health, information and social services is difficult. Thus, the researcher found the schools and communities in this part of Mutare district as an ideal platform to explore the hardships of children in difficult circumstances living in a remote area. Mutare district is located in an arid region where it receives erratic rainfall patterns annually. The lifestyles are mainly communal and many households depend on subsistence farming. Non- governmental organisations such as World Food Program and Plan International play important roles in donating food aid to many vulnerable households on yearly basis due to persistence droughts (Pesanayi, 2008). Mutare district is also known for its richness in mineral resources such as diamonds in Chiadzwa area. However, the communities in Mutare district under study area do not benefit from this mining activity as there was no specific community participation or profit sharing agreements with the mining companies identified by the researcher hence they solely depend on their subsistence farming (Pesanayi, 2008).

3.3 Research approach

This study used interpretivist epistemology and constructivist ontology, based on the assumption that reality is subjective, diverse, and socially constructed by participants (Kumar, 2019: 170). Ontological questions deal with questions related to the nature of things that exist in society (Al-Saadi, 2014: 1). Ontology is the assumptions we make about the kind and nature of reality and what exists. In short, ontology concerns our beliefs about the nature and essence of reality and the social world (Al-Saadi, 2014: 1). Epistemology, on the other hand, is the assumptions we make about the nature or essence of knowledge or ways of knowing about the world (Al-Saadi, 2014: 2). In other

words, epistemology is a way of seeing the world and understanding it. It contains knowledge and necessarily embodies some understanding of what that knowledge entails (Al-Saadi, 2014: 2). Therefore, the use of statistical interpretation seems to be limited in this study because the researcher's aim was to explore the participants' interpretations in depth. Thus, such human perceptions cannot be easily quantified, especially in social environments where human emotions dominate (Marshall and Rossman, 2016: 1).

Therefore, this study was interpretive in that it addressed the perceptions of teachers and community members who have been involved in understanding and working with vulnerable children. These observations can be better understood if the participants express them subjectively and analyse them with words, rather than being reduced to a numerical value (Creswell, 2014:186). The paradigm of interpretive research sees reality and meaning making as socially constructed and accordingly, people create their understanding of social realities (Kumar, 2019:170). Qualitative research mainly focuses on investigating, discovering and clarifying situations, feelings, views, attitudes and beliefs and a group of people (Kumar, 2019:170).

Key to qualitative research is its emphasis on the dynamics of everyday social interactions, how relationships affect them, and the meaning participants give to these interactions (Marshall and Rossman, 2016:2). Qualitative research exposes the idea that research participants socially construct meaning by interacting with their environment, and in fact there is no unanimous or universal agreement (Merriam and Grenier, 2019:6). In support of this, Kumar (2019:170) points out that qualitative research involves the study of a phenomenon where information is obtained from participants in their natural environment and through an open research framework. Qualitative research is an evolving approach and its design differs from quantitative because it is less structured, more flexible and deductive (Kumar, 2019:170). Qualitative research has a fundamental paradigm of interpreting people's lived experiences (Marshall and Rossman, 2016:2).

The researcher made sure that his thoughts about the research do not interfere with the participants' views and perceptions. This was in line with Marshall and Rossman's (2016:2) suggestions that qualitative researchers should see a person's social environment as whole and complex, systematically reflect on their role in conducting research, and be aware of their perspectives and how they can do to compromise the results of the study. They must research systematically and rely on complex reasoning supported by deductive and inductive comparisons (Marshall and Rossman, 2016:2).

3.4 Research type

This study was an applied research focused on increasing understanding and awareness of the lack of social service provision. An exploratory approach was used to explore participants' views on this phenomenon. Applied research focuses on answering practical and immediate challenges, in this case social work services for orphans and vulnerable children living in remote areas of Zimbabwe (Babbie, 2016: 90). Exploratory research is conducted when researchers want to investigate new interests or new phenomena, and the results provide an understanding of questions that may be asked by the community (Babbie, 2016: 90). Exploratory research is often conducted to satisfy the researcher's curiosity, to find out if further research can be done on a given topic, or to make recommendations that may lead to policy changes (Babbie, 2016: 90).

3.5 Research design

A case study design was used to collect participants' opinions regarding social work services for children in difficult situations living in specific marginalized communities. Case studies provide a detailed view of the processes and interactive dynamics of the population being studied and can therefore provide detailed information that is usually impossible to collect in studies of large samples (Babbie, 2016: 302). According to Creswell (2014: 11), research is a plan or design that guides the researcher and defines the approach to data collection. The case study model was chosen because the focus is on the whole, the system, or group of people, and it allows for in-depth

research and explanation, exploration and explanation of a phenomenon or situation, in this case a specific social problem in Mutare district. Although the results of case studies cannot be generalized, they can provide a basis for formulating new or generalized theories (Babbie, 2016: 303; Creswell, 2014: 14). With case studies, researchers examine real situations by focusing on one or more cases within a company and over time (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 96; Kumar, 2019: 196), which lend themselves to different data collection methods. It often takes place in natural settings, including interviews, observations, and secondary data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018: 17; Babbie, 2016: 302). A case study is an in-depth and comprehensive study of a phenomenon or situation and its purpose can be to describe, investigate or explain the phenomenon (Babbie, 2016: 302). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data where research findings were arranged and analysed in various emerging themes (Creswell, 2014: 196).

The type of case study used in this research study is known as instrumental. An instrumental case study is a case that focuses on a specific case, such as a person, a specific social group (community) or organization, and aims to provide insight into a specific problem or concern (Creswell and Poth, 2018:98).). This type helps evaluate generalizations or build theory and can help demonstrate new understanding (Creswell and Poth, 2018:98). This form was useful because the research focused on identifying problems that can arise from the challenges of disadvantaged children in accessing social services, which has implications for future well-being and society as a whole.

3.6   Research methods

3.6.1 Study population and sampling

The researcher sought to explore the views of teachers and community members on social work services with children in difficult circumstances in remote areas in Mutare district. In this study, a total of fourteen participants were drawn from the target population of teachers and community members, living in a remote area of Mutare

district who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances either directly or indirectly. To achieve this, a non-probability, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were utilised.

Non-probability sampling means that the theory of probability is not applied when choosing participants from the sample population (Kumar, 2019:306). There are several varieties of non-probability sampling, such as convenience, expert, snowball, accidental, quota, judgmental, and purposive sampling (Kumar, 2019:306). Purposive, non-probability sampling was employed in this research. Researchers may more effectively choose participants and make sure that the people in the sample are pertinent to the study topics by using non-probability sampling (Bryman, 2012:418). If the researcher does not know the exact number of participants in the study, non-probability sampling is very important (Kumar, 2019:306). The researcher considered a non-probability sampling technique appropriate for the study because the total number of teachers and community members working with children in difficult situations was unknown to him. Instead, the researcher constructed selection criteria that he believed would help elicit relevant information from experienced participants.

The researcher first got the confirmation letter from the research ethics committee (see Appendix A) and sought permission from the district education departmental office to have permission and accessibility to schools, to recruit teachers to participate in face-to-face interviews using the permission request on University of Pretoria letterhead (see Appendix B).Once permission was granted by the district schools inspector and school heads, (see Appendix C), non-probability, purposive sampling was used to recruit five (5) teachers from two local schools, one primary and one secondary schools. The selection criteria required that the participant teachers, should be employed in local schools in the community. The researcher approached the respective principals or school heads to circulate invitations and participant information sheets to teachers generally. After explaining to participants, they were asked to sign the letter of informed consent (see Appendix F). Participants were therefore recruited through purposeful selection of "information–rich" participants (Kumar, 2019: 290). Social workers were not interviewed for this study as it was unethical to place them in

a difficult position to reflect on negative considerations around lack of service provision in their own department.

However, although five participants were included initially, the researcher decided to ensure data saturation and so intended recruiting more participants if this was seen as necessary. According to Kumar (2019:306), when using non-probability sampling in qualitative research, the researcher does not have to provide a predetermined number of participants or sample size, but the researcher continues to draw a sample from the population under study until it reaches the point of data saturation. Data saturation means that the participants no longer share new ideas or topics about the research questions, no new ideas are generated by the participants, and the answers are fixed and confirmed (Bryman, 2012:421). For this study, the researcher decided after five interviews that saturation was reached because no new ideas and themes emerged, so no new participants were recruited. However, in the case of community members, the researcher felt that nine participants would be enough to create a focus group, and thus the selected members provided the information sought.

The most common qualitative research is purposive or estimation sampling, which is a part of non-probability sampling (Kumar, 2019:306). The researcher uses a strategy called purposeful sampling to choose a sample that is especially appropriate for the study's goal, in this case, provision of social work services to children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas (Babbie, 2016:187). The researcher directly evaluates the research questions while using the sampling approach to choose the study population or units (i.e., departments, organizations, or documents) to be researched (Bryman, 2012:416). According to Kumar (2019:307), purposive sampling is the best method for research where the researcher wants to create a historical reality, explain a phenomenon or offer fresh perspectives on a topic. With this in mind, the researcher used the knowledge of teachers and community members working with disadvantaged children living in remote areas.

In the case of the second group of participants, snowball sampling was used. The participants were community members who interact with vulnerable children in remote

areas. The criteria for inclusion of community members in the focus group, were that they had to be involved either in working directly or indirectly with children or had to be an experienced caregiver of children. They were included in their personal capacity and not as an employee of any organisation or department. In this study, community members were recruited by seeking recommendations from the first participants (teachers) of the study, who knew community members that work, live, or interact with vulnerable children. A snowball technique was used to recruit community members to participate in the focus group. Snowball sampling is a process of selecting a sample using networks (Kumar 2019:308). However, before starting the focus group discussion, the researcher first sought permission from the District Development Coordinator (DDC) (see Appendix D) to access communities in Mutare District for research purposes, which was granted (see Appendix E). The researcher also asked for and received permission from the local village head to conduct research interviews which was granted orally at his homestead and he also participated in the group discussion.

The first two community members recommended by some teachers were approached by the researcher and they in turn recommended others who agreed to take part in the focus group discussion until a desirable number of participants was reached to start a group discussion. However, the inclusion criteria for community members entail that they should be experienced care givers from diverse age groups and occupations in their personal capacity and not as employees of any organisation with in-depth knowledge of orphans and vulnerable children. The exclusion criteria were mainly based on the fact that some of the recommended participants were relatives of the first participants approached by the researcher hence they were excluded while some were expecting rewards from the researcher in order to participate hence, they were excluded. The researcher contacted the identified individuals and asked them to participate in the focus group, providing them with participant information sheets explaining the purpose of the study and the processes for obtaining informed consent (Kumar, 2019:309), (see Appendix G). This sampling technique is useful as the researcher knows little about the group or community that will be studied (Kumar, 2019:309). Nine (9) community members that work or interact with children in difficult circumstances (such as early childhood caregivers, workers at informal day-care or

after-care; community or youth leaders; and any other practitioners or professionals in their personal capacity), were therefore recruited to participate in one focus group discussion.

However, the main disadvantage of this technique is that the recruitment of participants rests upon the knowledge and choice of individuals who may belong to a particular faction or have strong biases, in which case the study may be biased (Kumar, 2019:309). For this study, the researcher noted that the first participants approached by the researcher recommended their close relatives in anticipation that the information which was being sought would eventually be used to received aid or assistance in the future. To avoid this, the researcher incorporated some features of purposive sampling in the final selection of participants and had the final say on who was considered best to provide information for the purpose of the study (Kumar, 2019: 309).

In this regard, the researcher selected participants from those that were suggested by the first participants that interact with children in various ways so that the nine community members participating in the focus group represented diverse knowledges about the children. Firstly, the initial participants, (teachers) informed the researcher that some orphans and vulnerable children's parents and guardians are known by the school authorities as sometimes they were given small casual labour work opportunities to help in paying for school fees for their children. They were recommended as potential participants who interacted with children in difficult circumstances. The researcher therefore approached those recommended participants and selected and included some of them. However, he also realised that some did not entirely meet the criteria of working with or caring for vulnerable children. After deciding on whom would be included, the researcher explained to these potential participants why they were not included in such a way that they did not feel offended and rejected. It is based on the assumption that participants must be seen as the best candidates to provide in-depth information and new insights into the phenomenon being studied (Babbie, 2016:187; Creswell and Poth, 2018:157; Strydom and Delport, 2011: 392).

3.7 Data Collection

3.7.1 Individual face-to-face interviews

The researcher conducted a semi-structured face-to-face interview with each of the five participants (teachers) and a focus group with nine (9) community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances. Face-to-face interviews with teachers were appropriate for this research because teachers needed to maintain professional confidentiality and not be exposed or disclosed information that is then made to a larger group. Above all, the researcher's aim was not to disrupt the normal flow of teaching process at the selected schools hence including teachers in a group discussion was going to leave many classes without teachers while engaging them in the research interview process.

On the other hand, a focus group discussion with community members was more appropriate in the sense that it was suitable to engage the community in a group so that they could have the benefits of what a focus group provides that is more interaction and triggering of ideas from one another. It was also a less time consuming process of engaging people from diverse backgrounds in one setting in this case a focus group discussion. A semi-structured interview schedule in English was used to conduct teacher interviews and they were thirteen questions in all (see Appendix H) while a Shona interview guide was used to interview community members (see Appendix I & J). Individual interviews with teachers took place at the school premises after the permission was granted by the school heads with each interview lasting for approximately twenty-five minutes each.

The study chose to pursue in-depth information in its entire contextual relevance which is inclusive of the emotions, experiences and feelings that go together with it; rather than access to plain straight forward distant factors. According to Babbie (2016:310), gathering information in interviews by asking questions and recording participants' opinions is essential because it helps to understand participants' perceptions and interpretations. This is because interviews can take place spontaneously and the researcher can decide on the wording and delivery of questions depending on the

responses of the participants, which offers greater flexibility (Bryman, 2012:469; Kumar, 2019:220). This is because literature on social work services with children in difficult circumstances living in marginalised areas was limited or unavailable. The second reason was to pursue what Denscombe (2003:52) refers to as "privileged information". This was the usefulness of getting in touch with major players in the field who can provide private, confidential and restricted information. The field research utilised unstructured, non-directive in-depth interviews which are different from formal survey research in various ways. The field interviews comprised of asking questions, listening, expressing interest and noting down and recording what was articulated. This study utilised unstructured interviews in carrying out both focus group and in-depth interviews for the reason that the research was compelled by the need to study deeply into what the respondents (teachers and community members) consider or comprehend to be hardships facing orphans and vulnerable children and lack social service support. This permitted the respondents freedom and preference to convey their thoughts in the manner they feel and desire.

3.7.2 Focus group discussions

Krueger and Casey (2000:305) define a focus group as "...a carefully planned discussion designed to generate insights on a given topic of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment". That is, focus groups are used as a research method that gathers information through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. One focus group discussion was held with community members in a village in Marange area close to Marange high school and a total of nine community members were included in the group. Focus group discussion was conducted in this study to elicit information from all respondents in the research of their views, perceptions, feelings, opinions and thoughts on social work services and orphans and vulnerable children in remote areas in Zimbabwe. This assisted the researcher to identify trends in the perceptions and opinions expressed by the respondents in a group setting. The interviewer acted as a facilitator in introducing the themes, guiding the discussions and encouraging all members to express their perceptions. The group discussion was carried out in a style that accommodated the level of literacy in a rural

environment, with the Shona language being the dominant language utilised throughout the group discussion. The Focus group discussion with community members lasted for close to three hours and was arranged with the community leader who agreed that his homestead be used as a venue for a focus group discussion with community members (see Appendix I & J) for the focus group questions guide.

In the case of this study, there were cases where participants' responses were not aligning well with questions asked hence the researcher sometimes diverted from structure in order to accommodate more insights from participants on the topic under study. Nevertheless, the researcher utilised all research questions and gathered responses from the participants. When some participants could not fully understand the questions, the researcher rephrased the wording to make them more understandable. Bryman (2012:470) is of the view that diverting from the structure is crucial as insights can be gained about what participants regard as important and relevant. To guarantee that questions are not addressed randomly and that ideas flow when participants express their opinions and impressions, the interview guide does, however, offer some structure to the subject areas (Bryman, 2012:473). Every participant was given enough time to share their insights, and throughout the interviews, further probing questions were posed to follow up on any concerns they might have had. Audio recordings was used with the consent of the participants (Babbie, 2016:315) and the researcher took some notes during the discussions where necessary.

3.8 Data Analysis

To analyse the data, the researcher used thematic analysis, a method to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) in the data (Braun and Clarke 2006:79). One of the advantages of thematic analysis is its flexibility (Braun and Clarke 2006:78). The data analysis utilised both deductive and inductive analysis as analysis used pre-existing theory to identify themes on the one hand, while emergent themes from the data were also identified (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2016:169). Initial data analysis commenced during the data collection process as the researcher transcribed the

interviews and the focus group and familiarised himself with the data (Creswell, 2014:195; Neuman, 2014:477). Data analysis followed the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006:87). First, the researcher familiarized himself with the material to realize the breadth and depth of its content. Because the data were collected through interactive means, the researcher approached the analysis with some prior knowledge of the research topic and was aware of the initial analysis interests (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87). Embedding typically involves repeated reading of data and active reading of data; looking for meanings, patterns, etc. (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87). The researcher did the transcription himself, thus immersing himself in the data and as described by Braun and Clarke (2006:88) as an excellent opportunity to learn about the data.

In the second step, initial codes are created that identify a quality of the data (semantic or latent content) of interest to the analyst and refer to a key segment or element of the original data or information that can be meaningfully evaluated as a phenomenon. (Braun and Clarke, 2006:88). In this research, the creation of codes was guided by the research topic and questions, the theoretical frameworks of the developmental social work and human rights-based approach, and the identification through the meanings hidden in the information collected by the participants. The researcher coded the texts by writing notes, highlighting, bolding and underlining key phrases and ideas, and then developed themes from them.

Finding themes is the third step in data analysis. This step, which refocuses the analysis to a broader thematic level, involves sorting the various codes into possible themes and comparing all significant coded data extracts within the identified themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006:89). Some initial codes may form main themes, others sub-themes and still others may be rejected (Braun and Clarke, 2006:90). The data were synthesized into a number of themes and categories, which became evidence-based conclusions (Creswell, 2014: 199).

Researching themes is the fourth step and involves refining those themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006:91). Information within subjects should be essentially consistent, while

there should be clear and identifiable differences between subjects (Braun and Clarke, 2006:91). Once the researcher was satisfied that the themes adequately captured the contours of the coded data, he also considered the sustainability of the themes in relation to the data set and whether they accurately reflect the meanings expressed in the material as a whole (Braun and Clarke, 2006 :91).

Identifying and naming themes is the fifth step and involves defining and refining themes and identifying the nature of each theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006:92). It is important to consider how each theme fits into the larger overall narrative and research questions, and to ensure that there is not too much overlap between themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006:92). The final stage involves the final analysis and writing of the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006:93). This final step provided an understanding of social work services with disadvantaged children living in a remote area and clarified whether the findings were consistent with previous research or different from other studies. The report of this study is presented in the fourth chapter of this study.

3.9 Data quality and trustworthiness

The researcher followed a thematic data analysis process and ensured the quality and reliability of the results through triangulation of data collection methods and thick descriptions of the material. In qualitative research, it is important to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the collected data by checking the accuracy of the results and ensuring the compatibility of the approach used with the work of other researchers (Creswell, 2014:201).

3.9.1 Credibility

It is defined as the trust that can be placed in the truth of research findings (Aney, 2014:276). Credibility determines whether the research findings represent reliable information derived from the participants' initial knowledge and whether it is a correct interpretation of the participants' initial opinions (Aney, 2014: 276).The researcher

made it his aim to audio record all the responses of the research participants as well playing the audios repeatedly during transcribing process. Therefore, the findings presented were solely the views and responses of research participants. The researcher embraced reflexivity and remain conscious on how his own knowledge, actions and pre-conceived ideas might affect the research process (Lietz and Zayas, 2010:192). As a result, the researcher strived for professionalism and adherence to the ethics of social research. The researcher established rigor by first using more than one data collection method, namely triangulation using both interviews and focus groups. In the use of peer review, the researcher participated and sought support from other professionals who provided scientific guidance, such as members of the academic staff, the research supervisor and the graduate study committee of the Department of Social Work and Criminology. Mutual feedback helped the researcher to improve the quality of research results.

Triangulation uses multiple and different methods, researchers, sources and theories to obtain confirmatory evidence (Aney, 2014:277). Triangulation helps the researcher reduce biases and examines the integrity of participants' responses (Aney, 2014:277). The researcher used the process of triangulation to achieve reliability of the data in different ways. Triangulation was achieved through face-to-face interviews with teachers and focus group discussions with community members. In particular, the Research Ethics Committee made some recommendations regarding data collection during the initial stages of the research proposal. The process of triangulation was also used to develop themes and sub-themes through the multi-perspective approach of participants and to consider the viewpoints of different researchers according to the theoretical framework supporting the research and results as discussed in chapter 2. Finally, the research used triangulation through topic discussion between the researcher and his supervisor.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which qualitative research findings can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents, this is the interpretive

equivalent of generalizability (Aney, 2014:278). Transferability refers to the usefulness and applicability of research findings in further research, theory and practice (Creswell, 2014:201). According to Anney (2014:278), the researcher facilitates the transferability assessment of the potential user through thick description and purposeful sampling. For this research, transferability was achieved through use of purposive sampling as described earlier on. Purposive sampling is the technique mainly used in naturalistic inquiry studies, and is defined; as selecting units for example, individuals, groups of individuals, or institutions based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions (Anney,2014:278).

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of findings over time (Anney, 2014:278). Dependability involves the findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study are all supported by the data collected from the participants of the study (Anney, 2014:278). Dependability of findings is achieved by ensuring that records are complete, and they provide guidelines on how the research was conducted and how the researcher ensured that the records are accessible (Bryman, 2012:392). Dependability, for this study was established through keeping a thorough audit trail reported on in the research report, as well as through a coding and recoding strategy to ensure the researcher's accurate identification of meanings in the data. An audit trail involves an examination of the inquiry process and product to validate the data, whereby a researcher accounts for all the research decisions and activities to show how the data were collected, recorded and analysed (Anney, 2014:278). In order for an auditor to conduct a thorough audit trial the following documents should be kept for cross-checking the inquiry process: raw data, interview and observation notes, documents and records collected from the field, test scores and others (Anney, 2014:278).

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Anney, 2014:278). Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but are clearly derived from the data (Anney, 2014:278). Studies suggest that confirmability of qualitative inquiry is achieved through an audit trial, reflexive journal and triangulation (Anney, 2014:279). Confirmability ensures that research findings are fully objective and that the researcher conducted the study in good faith (Bryman, 2012:392). Creswell and Poth (2018:256) state that the findings of the study should reflect the views of participants to the extent that other researchers can confirm similar findings or use the study as the basis for future study. In case of this research, the study triangulated through the use of different sources of research instruments, which are interviews with teachers and a focus group discussion with community members as well as participants observations as indicated above.

3.10 Pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study with one teacher to test the interview questions that formed the interview guide as well as the focus group discussion guide. The responses from the pilot study were taken into account for the final development of the two data collection tools. A pilot study was important in that it assisted the researcher to ascertain whether the relevant data can be collected from the participants or not (Strydom and Delport, 2011:394). According to Babbie (2014:186), a pilot study is undertaken by the researcher with the main purpose of generating tentative exploratory or descriptive information regarding the research study.

3.11 Ethical considerations

The section presents the various ethical procedures that were followed by the researcher in the data collection process. Social research, though undertaken in a

natural setting must ensure quality, integrity, and transparency (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012:7). The researcher applied for and received ethical approval from the study from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A)

3.11.1 No harm or deception

The researcher must safeguard participants, build trust with them, uphold the integrity of the study and be safe from misconduct (Creswell, 2014:92; Strydom, 2011:117). The researcher did not intentionally conceal any information regarding the research. When considering risks of harm, certain categories of participants such as social workers, were excluded due to the risk of consequences arising in relation to employers or managers for exposing lack of provision of social work services to vulnerable children in marginalised communities. Similarly, children who comprised a vulnerable group and more specifically, children living in difficult circumstances, were not included due to the risk of psychological distress. Therefore, other groups were included namely teachers and community members after considering that no risk to their wellbeing can be caused by the research. Given the nature of the study around children in difficult circumstances, it was acknowledged that the content may be difficult to discuss. To avoid a risk of harm with the selected participants, the researcher, as a social worker, was sensitive in formulating the questions. The interviews and focus group discussion were managed in such a way that potential risk of distress was minimised through the way that the conversations were managed. However, in the event of there being any distress, the researcher pre-arranged with a professional social worker practising under the department of social development in Mutare district to provide support, free of charge should there be any emotional distress among participants (see Appendix K).

3.11.2 Voluntary participation

Participation in the study was voluntary and no potential participants were coerced into taking part. They were informed in the circulated letter by the researcher that they are able to refuse or agree to take part at their own will and that no rewards or negative

consequences would follow as a result of participating or not in study (Babbie, 2016:62; Strydom, 2011:116). The participant information sheet outlined the purpose of the study and the possible risks of taking part such as possible distress due to the nature of the content of the interviews or focus group discussion.

3.11.3 Informed consent

Informed consent entails that the participant agrees to participate in the research after receiving enough information on the goal of the research and time frame, the procedures that would be taken in data collection, and the possible advantages and disadvantages of undertaking the study (Babbie 2016:64; Strydom 2011:117). It must be clearly stated that the participants have the freedom to withdraw at any point without any negative consequences (Creswell; 2014:99; Strydom, 2011:117). To this end, each participant was requested to sign written consent forms based on the participant information sheet which gave all the information about the study objectives, research methods, and the possible risks of taking part and that they have the right to withdraw at any point (Babbie 2016:64).

3.11.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

Participants were assured of confidentiality and that they would only be mentioned as teachers and community members. No information that they share would be able to be linked to their own or their clients' identity and no names would be mentioned. Children's identities would also not be recognisable through the reported responses of that participants as such information would be generalised (Babbie, 2016:87). In the case of group discussion, the researcher made sure that all potential participants were well informed about the issues of confidentiality and that they were not permitted to expose the identities of children they work with to the group discussion platform. The researcher however, could not guarantee confidentiality of the focus group discussion if members disclosed the information, although the importance of confidentiality was explained to the group. Participants were also informed that if anyone disclosed harm being done to a child or a child being at risk, the researcher as a social worker, would

have to report this to authorities. Therefore, the researcher, only guaranteed partial confidentiality in this regard. Only the researcher and the research supervisor would have access to the data, which will be stored in a password protected computer. Data will be stored for ten years according to the University of Pretoria policy and the POPI Act.

3.11.5 Publication of findings

Research findings must be published in such a manner that participants are not identified or identifiable (Bryman, 2012:136). The researcher ensured that the identity of participants was kept confidential during the data collection phase and the presentation of findings. A promise was made to the participants that when the research findings are published, the responses of the participants would not be identifiable. Publication of research findings in the form of a book or peer-reviewed journal articles is often a requirement at institutions of higher education (Akaranga & Makau, 2016:5). Research articles need to be original and add significantly to academic knowledge. As a result, the researcher must conduct thorough research and adhere to the necessary research ethics (Akaranga & Makau, 2016:5). The research would be submitted as a dissertation according to the requirements of the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria.

The researcher also intends writing and publishing a journal article regarding the study with his research supervisor as second author. According to Akaranga and Makau (2016:5), research articles can be written by one or two authors who are affiliated to an institution of higher learning and their roles must be articulated. Participants were told that the research would be submitted as a dissertation according to the requirements of the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria and that it is envisaged that the findings are also to be published as an academic article in order to share knowledge (Akaranga and Makau, 2016:5). All data collected would be kept on a flash disk in a cabinet in the safe of the Department of Social Work and Criminology, Humanities Building, Lynwood Rd, Hatfield, Pretoria, for a period of 10 years after completion of the study for purposes of possible later

publication. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data, and the data files would be stored for ten years on a password protected computer.

3.11.6 Ethics of Decoloniality

The decolonisation of research is defined by Chilisa (2012:14) as a process of conducting research in such a way that the world views of those who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalisation are respected because research methodologies are often still steeped in the Euro-North American-centric worldviews (Shokane and Masoga, 2021:23). Building on Smith's (1999) work, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 1) emphasises that decolonising research methodologies must include undoing their "dirty history" and therefore challenges Eurocentric research methods that undermine local knowledge and experiences of marginalised communities in post-colonial contexts (Shokane and Masoga, 2021:25). Shokane and Masoga (2021:24), citing Smith (1999) and Chilisa's (2012) work, argue that such a process involves "researching back" by reordering how various disciplines have theorised through an ideology of "othering". Decolonising methodologies attempt to bring together a number of critical, indigenous, liberation, and feminist methodologies to strengthen decolonisation research (Barnes, 2018:379).

Since the research was conducted in remote or rural marginalised communities, ethics of decoloniality were paramount. One local leader was approached for permission to conduct the focus group discussion, and all potential participants were approached in a respectful manner. This included the African tradition of bowing down to elders and sitting down on the floor or ground when engaging local leaders when seeking permission to conduct research in their areas of jurisdiction. The use of a Shona interview guide ensured that participants felt the Africanness of expressing themselves in their native language. Consequently, some of phrases in Shona were kept and presented in their original form rather than being translated so that they don't lose their original meaning. This was in line with African ethic of Ubuntu/Botho which maintains that actions are right insofar they are a matter of living harmoniously with others or honouring communal relationships (Metz and Gaie, 2010:2). Ubuntu refers to a

collection of values and practices that black people of Africa or of African origin view as making people authentic human beings. While the nuances of these values and practices vary across different ethnic groups, they all point to one thing; an authentic individual human being is part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world (Ringson & Chereni, 2020:99). The combination of exhibiting solidarity with others and of identifying with them is more or less what is meant by a broad sense of friendliness or love, essential to an ideal sort of family (Metz and Gaie, 2010:5). Adopting a de-colonial perspective, it is important to ensure that research with indigenous peoples is ethically as well as methodologically relevant, according to the needs and desires of indigenous peoples themselves (George et.al., 2020:4).

Central to decolonising methodologies is a discontent with knowledge production rooted in the global North (Barnes, 2018:380). The movement attempts to disrupt the universal ideas about the human condition and gives voice to those who have been historically overlooked or deliberately marginalised. It also provides a space and language for researchers from marginalised groups who have often been positioned as outsiders-within the academy (Barnes, 2018:380). It raises questions about who we focus our research on, the types of questions that are asked, the relationship between researchers and participants, the values underpinning research, what can be inferred from the study, and the contributions to equality and justice (Barnes, 2018:380). Decolonising methodologies also focus on the research enterprise itself, its pedagogies, systems, and exclusions and power that privilege certain knowledges over others (Barnes, 2018:380).

The use of the Shona focus group discussion guide to interview community members in order to emphasise the decolonising ethics approach of the study in that it accommodated all community members for them to be able to tell their views and knowledge in a relaxed manner in their native language (George et.al, 2020:20). George et.al. (2020:20) observed that research literature and ill-informed political rhetoric and media content portray local people and their circumstances within a deficit construct. This standpoint of Western superiority feeds into the prevailing and

systematic institutional research methods that ensure that research is undertaken in a way that benefits and protects the academy and prevents the outcomes from benefitting local communities (George et.al. 2020:20).

It is also important that feedback should be provided to research participants and communities. The researcher would provide a summarised version of the findings to be disseminated in the community. In this way, the findings and recommendations of the research may create awareness in the community towards conscientisation and empowerment.

It is crucial for researchers to understand that indigenous communities have experienced the effects of colonisation such as a loss of culture and language (Shokane and Masoga, 2021:25). Shokane and Masoga, (2021:25) maintain that the impact of colonialism has forced generational impositions that separated individuals, families and entire nations from their original knowledge systems and social structures. They elaborate on this by stating that these traumatic events have disintegrated family and community relationships, structures and traditional or indigenous practices (Shokane and Masoga, 2021:25). The effects of colonialism has therefore disrupted even the African traditional welfare systems and consequently, this study aimed to explore and understand the views of teachers and community members on the hardships confronting children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe. The research further taped on the traditional systems which are in place in dealing with children in difficult circumstances and how these are enhancing the current and future well-being of children in difficult circumstances.

3.12 Conclusion

The chapter outlined the research methodology that was used to conduct the study. A discussion of the qualitative approach, case study design the research methods and also ethics of decoloniality were also discussed. Snowball sampling with some traits of purposive sampling was used to select the research participants from the study

population and also how the interviews were conducted was provided. The chapter also presented a discussion on data analysis and the strategies that were employed by the researcher to ensure that the findings and themes in the study are trustworthy. The last section of the chapter discussed the ethical considerations that were adhered to, to ensure that the study met the requirements of social research and the standards of the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1   Introduction

The chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the findings. First, the researcher presents the biographical information of the participants from whom the data was collected and the different settings they live and work in. The major themes and sub-themes that form the basis of the research findings are discussed and analysed using theories of Developmental Social Work and Human Rights. The themes are substantiated with verbatim quotations from the participants and the literature review.

4.2   Discussion of findings

The following discussion will include biographical information and the analysis of the empirical data in various themes. Presentation of findings and recommendations derived from data collection is also discussed and presented as well as the limitations.

4.2.1 Biographical Information of participants

A total of fourteen (14) participants took part in the research study. Five (5) teachers comprising of two secondary and three primary school teachers with ages ranging from late thirties through to early fifties, all had seven or more years of teaching experience and had engaged with vulnerable children in their work context. Amongst the nine (9) community members some were taking care of orphans from their extended families, while others had lived with vulnerable children, or regularly interact with children in difficult circumstances in their communities. Community members who participated ranged in age from late-twenties through to mid-sixties. The table presented below provides a summary of the participants' biographical information.

Table 2: Biographical data of the participants

Information about participants

	Gender	Time working with or caring for OVC in years	Occupation/Designation
A	Female	16	Teacher
B	Female	18	Teacher
C	Female	13	Teacher
D	Male	10	Teacher
E	Male	7	Teacher
F	Female	7	Community Member
G	Female	10	Community Member
H	Female	9	Community Member
I	Female	12	Community Member
J	Female	3	Community Member
K	Female	8	Community Member
L	Male	5	Community Member
M	Male	7	Community Member
N	Male	6	Community Member

4.2.2 Empirical findings

The table below shows the themes and sub-themes identified during the data analysis.

Table 3: Research themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1: Conditions of children living in difficult circumstances in remote areas	**Sub-theme 1.1:** High levels poverty, child headed households, hunger, and severe resource and services deprivation
	Sub-theme 1.2: Vulnerable children are exposed to child sexual exploitation and child marriages
	Sub-theme 1.3: High levels of substance misuse
	Sub-theme 1.4: Dropping out of school
	Sub-theme 1.5: Social work services and children with disabilities

	Sub-theme 1.6: Rejection of or prevention of access to social and health services due to religious beliefs
Theme 2: Social Work Services with children in difficult circumstances	**Sub-theme 2.1:** Limited to lack of social work services for children in difficult conditions in remote areas
	Sub-theme 2.2: Limited to no social work services support for children with disabilities living in remote areas
	Sub-theme 2.3: Provision of social services and children in difficult conditions
	Sub-theme 2.4: Communities and families are incapacitated to respond effectively to needs of children living in difficult circumstances.
Theme 3: Lack of social work services may result in children being trapped in generational social problems	**Sub-theme 3:1:** The future of children living in difficult circumstances is fragile due to lack of adequate support to realise one's future goals
	Sub-theme 3.2: Risk behaviours are more pronounced as a result of lack of rehabilitation support systems.
	Sub-theme 3.3: Corruption in selection of beneficiaries of social assistance is rampant in remote areas leaving the most deserving without any help
Theme 4: Lack of social services support to children's mental, psychological emotional well-being	**Sub-theme 4.1:** Orphans and vulnerable children exhibit a lot of anger and frustration
	Sub-theme 4.2: Vulnerable children experience poor performance at school, they lack motivation and concentration during learning process
	Sub-theme 4.3: Vulnerable children experience feelings of inferiority and rejection
	Sub-theme 4.4: Children living in difficult circumstances struggle to develop self-confidence and positive self-esteem and may experience mental health problems.
	Sub-theme 4.5: Lack of social service support to children living in difficult circumstances creates a gap among children of the same environment and generation
Theme 5: Lack of Social service support can contribute to increased burden on children and families	**Sub-theme 5.1:** Families and child headed families are being overwhelmed by social problems and lack of social support
	Sub-theme 5.2: Girl children without adequate social service support system are likely to suffer sexual exploitation and child marriages

living in difficult circumstances	**Sub-theme 5.3:** Vulnerable children are likely to drop out of school due to lack of financial support
	Sub-theme 5.4: Orphans and vulnerable children may be involved in criminal activities
	Sub-theme 5.5: Lack of social work services support may contribute to development of feelings of hopelessness
	Sub-theme 5.6: Lack of social services may contribute to generational social problems in families
Theme 6: Strategies and recommendations for enhancing social work services to children living in difficult circumstances in remote areas	**Sub-theme 6.1: Policy inconsistence and child protection services** i) Child sexual exploitation and marriages are rampant in remote areas ii) National Constitution (Amendment No 20 Act of 2013) and Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) defines a child differently
	Sub-theme 6.2: Capacitation of the Department of Social Development
	Sub-theme 6.3: Training of community members in child protection procedures
	Sub-theme 6.4: Placement of social workers in schools in remote areas.
	Sub-theme 6.5: Universal access to Social Services by all vulnerable children
	Sub-theme 6.6: Engagement of African churches and traditional leaders

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Conditions of children living in difficult circumstances in remote areas

There are a number of socio-economic factors in Mutare district that vulnerable children living in marginalized communities face on a daily basis and which have been found to affect their well-being. These factors include poverty, orphan hood, financial problems, housing problems, harmful cultural and religious practices and structural problems such as poor service provision, inequality, and patriarchy.

Sub-theme 1.1: High levels of poverty, child headed households, hunger, and severe resource and services deprivation

One of the distinguished problems identified particularly by community members was the high levels of poverty and severe deprivation of basic needs such as food and clothing for children in difficult circumstances.

Several participants mentioned this issue:

"……on clothing, some of them they don't have proper uniforms or even poor background, they are from poor backgrounds, some of them they don't come to school with food, you can find out that when the school is giving food they have to eat here not at home especially in the mornings and some of them are below average when coming to their academic performance and the behaviour, they misbehave" [Participant B].

"Right, eem poverty, I can say we have a lot of vulnerable children here. So you find out most of them when they come to school, they cannot afford. They don't eat anything, they don't bring anything, and they don't bring any food from home. You can see in class that this child did not eat anything……" [Participant C].

"Many orphans in our area are being confronted by many problems. Some have lost all the parents, they lack school fees, food, clothing and access to health care services. Some are going as far as Marange High to pick some food leftovers…." [Participant F].

UNICEF (2019:2) is of the view that although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been almost universally ratified, the rights of millions of children remain unrealised in some parts of the world. In other areas, however, the sense of renewal and hope for children's rights is muted through issues such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, diseases, food insecurity, abuse and exploitation, and the impact of a changing climate continue to deny millions of children their rights every year (UNICEF,

2019:2). Dzirikure and Allen (2014:2) also reported that poor communities in Zimbabwe are trapped into vicious cycles in which poverty and diseases mutually reinforce each other, a situation likely to be transferred between generations. The persistence droughts and recurring hunger in Mutare district has a direct negative effect on child hunger thus it was of the major social problems confronting children in difficult circumstances. As a result, socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe, the challenges of child poverty expose them to social problems such as risky and criminal behaviour, child marriage and food insecurity, school fees, housing, education, medical care, sanitation, early pregnancy and intergenerational sex (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017: 6). Above all, in order to address such social problems identified, Mabvurira et.al. (2021:165) are of the view that the goals of developmental social work have been identified as eliminating poverty and hunger, improving education and literacy, reducing infant and maternal mortality, and ending gender-based discrimination and oppression, increased participation in the political process, improved sanitation and more. Therefore, the level of poverty identified in these communities can be best tackled using a developmental social work theory than curative social work interventions that generally lack the capacity to address the structural causes of social problems such as child marriages, poverty, abuse oppression and exploitation.

"Many children lack resources like school fees, exercise books, uniforms, food, some illness, in our scenario the apostolic sect is has the highest population so some learners won't visit hospitals when infected with malaria or measles which sometimes end up causing some deaths. Other suffer from malnutrition due to lack of proper balanced diet, some are even sick and their parents do not take them to hospitals because of religious beliefs" [Interview notes Participant A].

Participants reported that disadvantaged children in remote areas of their communities were severely deprived of access to basic services such as food, clothing, financial problems, housing problems and health care. These problems affect their social well-being, for example, they can negatively affect their emotional, cognitive and behavioural functioning. Women and girls in the dominant church in the area under study, do not question certain harmful practices in the church such as the practice of

not taking children to health institutions (Sibanda, 2011:5). The socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe was also cited by Muchacha & Matsika as contributing to poverty-related challenges among children which expose them to social ills such as risk and criminal behaviours, child marriages, and lack of food, school fees, housing, education, medical care, sanitation facilities early pregnancies and intergenerational sex (Muchacha & Matsika, 2017:6).

Sub-theme 1.2: Vulnerable children are exposed to child sexual exploitation and child marriages

As a result of severe deprivation and poverty at family level, children especially girl children are being exposed to sexual exploitation, child marriages and teenage pregnancies.

"Some of them are being exposed to sexual exploitation and child marriages. On early child marriages, there is a law but children are being affected because there is no action to effect the law and to prevent child marriages but the practice is widely practised here. We say no marriage to children under 18 years of age but underage girls are being married and nothing is being done to prevent such problems. ....After the lockdowns were lifted and schools opened, many girls did not come back due to teenage pregnancies, some were forced into marriages while some were sexually exploited" [Participant B].

"Many girls from the Johanne Marange church drop out of school, the reason behind this is the apostolic church due to religious affiliation, and gender some do not value education. Some as early as form two and are married off by their parents. It is a widely practiced phenomenon in this church and it is the dominant traditional church" [Participant A].

The above views agreed with the findings of Muchacha and Matsika (2017: 6) that poverty is one of the main causes of child marriage in rural Zimbabwe. Sibanda (2011:8), on the other hand, found that many families living in poverty, especially in

rural Zimbabwe, "marry off" their children to provide financial security for their daughters and to earn income from bride price payments. Sibanda (2011:8) further stated that to this end, child marriage is a strategy for families living in poverty to get rid of the girl child whom they consider a financial burden. Sibanda also revealed that child marriages are prevalent among the Johanne Marange Apostolic church and African traditional practises such as polygamy heavily adhered to (Sibanda, 2011:4).

> *"Especially to girls, they are affected by early marriages, that the great risk affecting girl children, some of them they don't even complete their Ordinary level due to early marriages, they get married at an early age ……and some are married off to elder men by their parents"* [Participant B].

Child marriages in Zimbabwe were mainly cited as a result of religious beliefs and poverty among many families in Mutare district (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6). Such economic problems   expose them to social ills such as risk and criminal behaviours, child marriages, pregnancies and intergenerational sex (Muchacha & Matsika, 2017:6). Sibanda is of the view that the cross-generational nature of marriages in the Johanne Marange church is also problematic because young girls cannot stand up for themselves in the marriage to demand safe sex or take part in decisions that affect their health such as child spacing and accessing health care services (Sibanda, 2011:5). Despite the fact that Zimbabwe has well defined legal framework for children, the rights of many children in difficult circumstance living in remote areas remain unrealised. Mwapaura et.al. (2022:17) were of the view that legislation alone does not reduce issues such as discrimination as there is need to work harder at changing attitudes. Similarly, Muchacha and Matsika (Muchacha and Matsika (2017:5) noted that child marriages are as a result of lack of legal protection, limited political will and cultural and religious practices, lack of sexual and reproductive services leading to early pregnancy, poverty, gender inequality, and religious and traditional practices.

Sub-theme 1.3: High levels of drug abuse

One of the significant issues identified by participants was the high rate of substance abuse among disadvantaged children.

. One participant mentioned this issue:

"On another note substance misuse especially among teenage leaners. There is drugs, alcohol, smoking behaviour and all sorts of behaviour that we struggle to deal with, bad attitudes. I mean, troubles both at school and home, academically we see more children on a lower functioning level" [Participant D].

Participants shared the view that vulnerable children in marginalised communities in communities Mutare district were confronted with high substance usage. They said children are exposed to many addictive drugs like dagga and alcohol, and modern and traditional beer. These substances impact on their social wellbeing. These substances impact on their social wellbeing. They encounter conflict and breakdown in relationships with peers; parents and other caregiving and authority figures; and perform poorly at school. On the link between childhood adversity or vulnerability and substance misuse, Brown and Shillington (2017:2011) are of the view that childhood adversity may lead to the development of risk-taking behaviours such as substance use and delinquency as forms of coping behaviours. For instance, the use of substances may be a method by which youth cope or, self-medicate, with stress and trauma (Brown and Shillington, 2017:211).

Sub-theme 1.4: Dropping out of school

A worrying trend noted by school teachers was that of school dropout especially children in difficult circumstances or orphaned children. They commented on the fact that some of these children are intelligent but lack the financial support to pursue their academic dreams.

"There are a lot of problems, financially, most of children are facing financial problems let's take for example at our school, we having a lot of drop outs. From my opinion I think, these problems emanate from financial crisis, we are having problems such school drop outs, early pregnancies" [Participant D].

"Many orphans in our area are being confronted by many problems. Some have lost all the parents, they lack school fees, food, clothing and access to health care services. Some are going as far as Marange High to pick some left overs due to hunger since they are starving at home" [Participant F].

The above responses confirm the earlier findings that underfunding by the State Department for Social Protection and Social Development means that the state only responds to the neediest households and respond to the extreme cases of child abuse and neglect using highly individualistic, costly and procedural actions which as typical of Western child protection orientations (Mushunje, 2017:11).

Mushunje (2017:13) notes that there is a mismatch between the increased number of vulnerable children requiring social work services and the number of social workers and available resources. Despite many children in difficult circumstances in Zimbabwe finding refuge in the extended family, this traditional care support system faces challenges that has a direct impact on orphans and vulnerable children and these Increasing demand for OVC needs; poverty caused by the socio-economic challenges of the country; modernity; separation and separation from the family; and lack of adequate support from various stakeholders such as NGOs and government, (Ringson & Chereni, 2020:102). Other social problems identified as affecting children in difficult circumstances in rural Zimbabwe include poverty, HIV & AIDS, school fess, food and shelter, cultural contestations in child upbringing, and maltreatment (Ringson & Chereni, 2020:105).

Sub-theme 1.5: Social work services and children with disabilities

Children with disabilities living remote areas are on the receiving end of injustice as they suffer emotional abuse, discrimination, stigmatisation, bullying and lack of adequate support.

"Mainly the issues that are affecting them is that they are not at the right place, if they happens to be at the right place with the right equipment I think the better…..In fact they usually don't fit in the normal children because they lack ability in most of the things, which they wish to do also but cannot due to their disabilities, they feel inferior, for example if he is dumb and seeing people singing but he cannot sing…….. Many children especially the deaf and dumb and crippled do not have material resources to assist them……they are mixed with normal kids hence that's how suffer stigmatisation and discrimination, emotional abuse and bullying" [Participant E].

The participants shared that children living with disabilities in remote areas lack support and resources to aid them in their unfortunate situations. Both at school and home there are no trained sign language professionals for example to effectively communicate with them and assist them with relevant life skills hence their future is very uncertain. Nhapi (2020:124) is of the view that impoverishment and social exclusion of children with disabilities is pervasive in Zimbabwe. What is further disconcerting to the plight of children with disabilities is a fragile economic environment where not enough material resources can be channelled towards guaranteeing their enhanced social functioning (Nhapi, 2020:124). Same mentioned that most state run schools and hospitals in Zimbabwe have very few officials trained to handle people with intellectual disabilities and with hearing speech functional disabilities (Nhapi, 2020:126).

On the other hand, people with disabilities in Zimbabwe are still being viewed from a medical and welfare framework which views them as ill, different from their non-disabled peers, and in need of care (Mugumbate and Nyoni, 2014:6). In many cases, unemployment among people with disabilities in Zimbabwe is mainly due to lack of

qualifications and to discrimination from employers (Mugumbate and Nyoni, 2014:6). According to Mugumbabte and Nyoni (2014:6), children with hearing, visual and intellectual impairments are more likely never to attend school compared to children with physical impairments. Many children living with disabilities in Zimbabwe experience severe discrimination, sexual abuse, illiteracy, serious economic challenges, and ablution facilities in rural areas are not accessible to the handicapped (Mugumbate and Nyoni, 2014:6). Children with disabilities in the Zimbabwean society face insurmountable challenges that hinder their human and social capital development (Mtetwa and Nyikahadzoi, 2013:31). Children living with disabilities especially those that are based in rural areas, faced enormous challenges which made it difficult for them to attend school, which development in turn deterred their potential to become assets in the household economy (Mtetwa and Nyikahadzoi, 2013:31).

Sub-theme 1.6: Rejection of or prevention of access to social and health services due to religious beliefs

Another significant challenge aired by participants was rejection of social and health services due to religious beliefs. Despite the fact that in some cases assistance come through some international organisations and the government, some parents reject such help on grounds of their religious beliefs. The potential outcome of such a scenario is that some groups are being left out of both international and government social services programmes and thus rendering achievement of both national and international developmental goals futile.

> *"There are a lot of people in our area who refuse social and health services when they are provided due to traditional and religious beliefs. Some of the orphans in our community come from the dominant apostolic church families, when the get sick, they don't take them to hospitals or clinics. Some are even experiencing some mental illnesses but they are not taken to hospitals to seek health services due to religious beliefs....."* [Participant G].

> *"In families where they opened up that their children are living with HIV, they are getting assistance from Family AIDS Caring Trust, Zimbabwe (FACT)*

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although such interventions are very limited to very few children. However, many children living with HIV are going undetected because their parents do not believe in the mainstream provision of social services and health care. In fact when one of their members get sick, they don't take them to clinics or hospitals but to their church prophets and traditional healers" [Participant B].

"Tinoone dzimwe nherera dzirimukati mwemisha dziri dzechipositori, dzikarwara hadzina kwadzinorapiswa, amwe acho anotonga pfungwa dzisingatori zvakanaka asi hakuna kwaanoendeswaba kunyazi endai kuhosipitari, hakuna kwavanoendaba, tinoona riri dambudziko mukati menharaunda. Maorganisations anouya muno anowanzoshanda nemasangano akaita se Roman Catholic, United Methodist, Anglican, Seventh Day Adventist Church ne Apostolic Faith Mission vachisiye vechipositori nekuti havatenderi zvinhu izvozvo musangano mawo" [Participant G].

"Translation: Some of the orphans in our community come from the apostolic sect families, when the get sick, they don't take them to hospitals or clinics. Some are even having some mental illnesses but they are not taken to hospitals to seek health services due to religious beliefs. It is one of the major problem affecting vulnerable children in our area. The other issue is that some children born in polygamous families particularly from the members of the Johane Marange religious sect lack adequate food security at family level since their parents are also poor to support large families hence, poverty is very pronounced in our communities. They also think western education will defile the moral campus of their children. Therefore many social services on health in this area have targeted members of the orthodox churches such Roman Catholic, United Methodist, Anglican Church, Seventh Adventist, Salvation Army and Apostolic Faith Mission who seem to embrace them leaving behind members of the Johanne Marange sect." [Participant G]

The fact that members of the members of the dominant faith based church in the area and others who believe in traditional healers object to the administering of medications

does not necessarily mean they are not being confronted by social problems such as HIV/AIDS. Therefore, UNICEF (2019:2) noted that although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been almost universally ratified, the rights of millions of children remain unrealised in some parts of the world. In many regions however, the sense of renewal and hope for children's rights is muted by the impact of problems such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, diseases, food insecurity, abuse, and exploitation, as well as the impact of a changing climate continue to deny millions of children their rights every year (UNICEF, 2019:2). As a result, many orphans and children in difficult circumstances are faced with challenges of child neglect, lack of funds for education and health needs (Dziro & Mhlanga, 2018:25).

4.2.2.2　　Theme 2: Social work services with children in difficult circumstances

Sub-theme 2.1 Limited to lack of social work services for children in difficult conditions in remote areas

Most of the participants were of the view that there is limited to no social work services in remote areas to assist children in difficult circumstances and social workers are not visible and not known by both teachers and community members. The following responses were some of the evidence identified by the researcher that social workers are not known in remote areas.

"We don't usually see them, when they come they go maybe to the next school. Here we haven't see them" [Participant B].

"The social workers? You mean the organisations? Yeah, social workers like the Simukai? (a non-governmental organisation) We have got BEAM, they help the vulnerable" [Participant C].

"A social worker? Not here as necessary but we have a social worker from the Ministry of Education….. There are other social workers who come from various organisations such as FACT, SIMUKAI" [Participant D].

"Social workers? Right now no. Like last year I had a child who is deaf and dumb but I never find any assistance or saw any social worker" [Participant E].

"Nyaya inonetsa ndeyekuti hakuna vanhu vacho vetinomboona kuti tingavaona kupi asi kuti tinenge takatomira nemadzishe kuti ndivo vangatotipira then tokwanisa kuti tingazoonana nevanhu ivavo tichitaura nawo. Hapana kana means dzendingamboona dzingaite kuti vanhu ivavo titaure navo. Asi kuti madzishe ndivo vanofanire kunga varikushanda nevanhu ivavo vachiti huyai muzwe zvichemo zvine vanhu" [Participant N].

Translation: *"The main problem is that there are no such people whom you are referring as social workers we have seen or heard of in our area. If it was possible such people were supposed to work hand in glove with our local leaders and in turn our chiefs updating us on such engagements and such people should have time to come and hear the problems affecting children in remote areas"* [Participant N].

Participants felt that the presence of trained and qualified professionals such as social workers in their communities to provide timely intervention for the children in challenging conditions would be the best way possible to enhance the children's well-being. The political and socio-economic challenges facing Zimbabwe have obstructed the country's child welfare standards (Mwapaura et al., 2022:3). These challenges include inflation, low staff capacity, policy inconsistencies, insufficient funding, corruption, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, child poverty among other challenges (Mwapaura et al., 2022). The absence of social services for children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas is a serious human right issue for vulnerable children because child protection is an essential international policy and programming priority (Sandberg, 2018:16). Therefore, child's right to participation and protection is included in several UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and other international human rights treaties (Sandberg, 2018:16).

Sub-theme 2.2: Limited to no social work services support for children with disabilities living in remote areas

The participants thought that disabled children living in peripheral areas are leaving a terrible life as there are no facilities to cater for their needs. They lack also trained professionals who can assist them with various life skills such as sign language in case of deaf and dumb children.

> *"For the past seven years I have been interacting with children living with disabilities……..Some are deaf, blind, some may have that down syndrome, you find out that it's not only the child who was like that, that's what I mean by heredity, it's within the family. Many of them lack facilities such as wheel chairs. There are no professionals to aid them with effective communication skills. For instance, at this school, we use pit latrine toilets which are not user friendly for a child living with disabilities. Mainly the issues that are affecting them is that they are not at the right place, if they happens to be at the right place with the right equipment I think the better"* [Participant E].

Children with disabilities were said to be living a horrendous lifestyle due to the absence of necessary support to aid on their conditions. The future well-being for such children is viewed to be in peril with no or little success stories being witnessed on their daily well-being. Similar observations were made by Nhapi (2020:124), that impoverishment and social exclusion of children with disabilities is pervasive in Zimbabwe. What is further disconcerting to the plight of children with disabilities is a fragile economic environment where not enough material resources can be channelled towards guaranteeing their enhanced social functioning (Nhapi, 2020:124). The plight of children with disabilities in remote areas in Zimbabwe reflect severe deprivation for such children and there is need to promote a developmental social work as noted by Lombard and Twikirize (2014: 314), that promoting social and economic equality among the marginalized and excluded from social and economic processes is one way social workers demonstrate their commitment to social justice and human rights.

Sub-theme 2.3: Provision of social services and children in difficult conditions

Some research participants shared the view that the provision of social services improves the well-being of children living in difficult circumstances. However, they also argue that lack of services impact negatively on the well-being of children. In the case of Mutare district, there is very limited to no services therefore the lives of many children is being plunged into the future of uncertainties. If the situation left unattended, it will work seriously against fulfilling the dictates of the United Nations on the Rights of Children (UNRC).

"......just a few children receiving assistance through BEAM, some by local villager wishers catering for less than ten, and then we have FACT, it caters for those children who are HIV positive and then rest they don't have any organisation which is helping them and also by a group of teachers who are also helping them" [Participant B].

"....they pay their school fees, we have also some individuals, maybe from the village you can find someone or some donors who help our children, they just come to school and request for those who are vulnerable, they pay school fees, some they buy uniforms or some books or even the church helps" [Participant C].

"Those who are receiving support, some of them they participate well, and some of them are now doing well. Those that are not getting support you find that we are facing school drop outs, they will not come to school or maybe if they can come to school they don't perform well because they can come without pens or without some materials, some exercise book......" [Participant C].

"Shortage of resources, that's one, then two, some learners do not meet the criteria which is used when selecting the learners, maybe they would say the learners at least should have passed 3 to 4 subjects mid-year exams but we have non-readers and definitely they will not be selected" [Interview notes with Participant A].

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The pertinent issue raised by research participants was of lack of resources to cater for all children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas. Some scholars identified some problems in line with the above statements as follows; other social problems identified as affecting children in difficult circumstances in rural Zimbabwe includes; poverty, HIV & AIDS, school fess, food and shelter, cultural contestations in child upbringing and maltreatment (Ringson and Chereni, 2020:105). According to Dziro and Mhlanga (2018:20) many orphans and vulnerable children have suffered in many ways from the HIV and AIDS pandemic, insistent drought, economic hardship and environmental challenges. For a vulnerability child to be included in the social services programs such as BEAM the selection criteria is biased toward achieving desired academic results thus very strict and has the potential leaving many deserving vulnerable children out of receiving social assistance. One has to bear in mind that that social problems at home and the lives of vulnerable children has a negative impact on their academic achievement as noted from interview notes with teachers hence, the selection criteria of academic based result work against children in difficult circumstances.

Sub-theme 2.4: Communities and families are incapacitated to respond effectively to needs of children living in difficult circumstances

Community members were of the view that they lack the know-how on child protection procedures in their communities as there are no professionals who engaged on the need to protect vulnerable from harm and render psycho-social support when required.

"In my view, I think as community members we should be empowered with knowledge and skills on how to identify vulnerable children and also to identify signs of abuse of children in our community, many cases could be going on unreported in our communities. Sometimes we only hear of teenage pregnancies that's when we know and realise that a child was being abused" [Participant I].

*"....the community, yeah maybe some individuals from the community they help or even the church, yes they played a crucial role in providing counselling services to children" [*Participant C].

"I think what we can do as a community is mobilise each other and organise the best way of mobilising resources to help vulnerable children in our community. For example we can mobilise each other to contribute let's say maize, maize meal, clothing and money and selected the trusted committee to distribute to the most vulnerable members of the community…....." [Participant K].

"I would like to reiterate the need to select a community committee which is perfect and not corrupt because if we leave it to our leaders (chiefs) especially the younger ones, they are corrupt since we lack training and knowhow on how to handle vulnerable children" [Participant M]

Most community members were of the view that they are incapacitated in many ways to assist children in need of care from material resources to lack of skills and training therefore child protection issues are an overwhelming task for them especially in providing early help before problems escalate to alarming levels. Kurevakwesu and Chizasa (2020:89), are of the view that Zimbabwe adopted the National Orphan Care Policy at the turn of the millennium when the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) rose sharply due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They further argued that the government adopted traditional social protection networks that were part of traditional African society, but this did not provide resources needed for (Ubuntu) that made traditional practices successful in traditional society (Kurevakwesu & Chizasa: 2020:89). In line with Patel and Hochfeld, (2013:698) developmental social work can act as a vehicle to enhance community capacities through respect for ubuntu, empowerment, equity, universal access, climate change awareness, sustainability, participation, dependency free among others.

4.2.2.3   Theme 3: Absence of social work services may result in children being trapped in generational cycles of social problems

Sub-theme 3.1: The future of children living in difficult circumstances is fragile due to lack of adequate support to realise one's future goals

The future of children in difficult circumstances who are not receiving any support is uncertain. Being a child in Africa is walking a fragile path to adulthood according to Unite Nations (2019). It is difficult if not impossible to realise one's future goals.

"In fact they usually don't fit in the normal children because they lack ability in most of the things, which they wish to do also but cannot due to their disabilities, they feel inferior, for example if he is dumb and seeing people singing but he cannot sing. When he or she is deaf he can see people laughing and enjoying but cannot understand what is taking place and cannot laugh like others" [Participant E].

"I can say we have the challenge of a boy who does not hear and cannot talk, he only comes to school but he is coming but school doing nothing just coming just school to interact with others but he is not learning anything at this school" [Participant C].

Some participants thought that these children were neglected by the community and also the government hence the chance to realise meaningful future dreams is being negligible and they are likely to be trapped in the same predicaments even with their future offspring. In light of the above, UNICEF (2019:2) indicated that in many regions globally, the sense of renewal and hope for children's rights is muted by the impact of problems such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, diseases, food insecurity, abuse, and exploitation, as well as the impact of a changing climate. Poor communities in Zimbabwe are trapped into vicious cycles in which poverty and diseases mutually reinforce each other, a situation likely to be transferred between generations (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:2).

Sub-theme 3.2: Risk behaviours are more pronounced as a result of lack of rehabilitation support systems.

Children, particularly teenagers, engage in risk behaviours such as stealing, alcohol and drug misuse and other delinquent behaviours which can lead them into the conflict with law.

"From my opinion I think, these problems emanate from financial crisis, we are having problems such school drop outs, early pregnancies. On another note drug misuse especially among teenage leaners. There is drugs, alcohol, smoking behaviour and all sorts of behaviour that we struggle to deal with, bad attitudes. I mean, troubles both at school and home, academically we see more children on a lower functioning level. Some juveniles are even in conflict with the law" [Participant D].

"Some have lost all the parents, they lack school fees, food, clothing and access to health care services. Some are going as far as Marange High to pick some left overs due to hunger and starvation at home. Some take the left overs to feed other siblings at home. In such situation a child can even steal in order to make ends meet because of desperate situations" [Participant F].

Conditions at home usually are the ones which are pushing children into risk behaviours. The sad part is that there are no social work services in the remote areas to aid with rehabilitation programmes for children difficult circumstances. Consequently, many children in rural areas are being left out from getting assistance from the government to help them in their predicaments. Similar conditions were observed by Louw and Louw (2014:6) in South Africa, that the circumstances in which children have to grow up include exposure to crime, violence, abuse, HIV/AIDS, lack of social assistance, poor education are heard on a daily basis. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, World Vision (2018:7) observed similar conditions that at least 4.5 million children live in rural areas where they have limited access to social services and information.

Sub-theme 3.3: Corruption in selection of beneficiaries for social assistance

Corruption was reportedly to be rampant in remote areas especially by the chiefs, headmen and kraal heads in the selection of beneficiaries of food aid leaving the most deserving orphans and vulnerable children without any help.

"Ndiri kuda kuedza kutaura kuti zviri kutaura Ishe tiri kuzvinzwa kuti tounganidza zvinhu toda kubatsire nherera, zvingaita asi mazuwa atiri kurarama ano huori hwawanda, hapachina munhu ari trusted. Munofunga kuti watsarwa wacho ndiye chaiye chaiye uri faithful asi anokuitirai humwe huori hwepasi wemusingazivi kuti zvafamba sei, nherera dziya hadzichatodyi, wakutoende kuope munhu une zvese mumba make, nherera dziya dzakutoshaya, hazvina zvazvinobatsira. Saka zvinotode kutsvage vanhu vanenge hameno kuti tingataura tichiti chii, asi zvirikutaure Ishe kuti zvinhu zvingaunidzwa asi huori ndihwo huzhinji munyika" [Participant J].

Translation: *I'm try to say we can hear what the chief is saying that we can mobilise resources for the under privileged. However, corruption is rampant and no one can be truly trusted these days. You may think that the person selected and given the responsibility of distributing the aid to the most vulnerable but you will be surprised by the level of corruption when the same elected people will be giving the aid to the less deserving children, leaving the most vulnerable children from benefiting. Therefore, we understand what the chief is saying but we should not forget that corruption is rampant.*

"In our community, there are some who will be jealousy if you happen to side line them from being part of important community participation and decision making. For example, if we happen to side line the chiefs on the grounds that there are corrupt and not distributing resources to the most vulnerable and deserving children, they can influence the people in their jurisdiction not to support the elected community committees which make mobilisation of community resources impossible" [Participant K].

"If the idea of including the community to help and safeguard vulnerable children comes from community committee members, I think it will be better because our chiefs or community leaders are corrupt" [Participant H].

According to Mwapaura et al. (2022:3), the political and socio-economic challenges facing Zimbabwe have obstructed the country's child welfare standards. These challenges include inflation, low staff capacity, policy inconsistencies, insufficient funding, corruption, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, child poverty among other challenges (Mwapaura et al., 2022:3). Community members were of the view that traditional leaders wield too much unquestionable power and they make decisions which if anyone go against them, they will face various repercussions such paying money, chickens and even goats for challenging their decisions as it will be viewed as defying their authority. Traditional leadership, if it is not sensitive to plight of children in difficult circumstances by perpetuating corrupt practises which end up affecting the well-being of children will be a setback in protecting and enhancing child's rights. There is likelihood of generational cycle of severe deprivation if the current children in difficult circumstances do not receive adequate support since they are likely to give their offspring and raise them in difficult conditions. Children are likely to concentrate on fulfilling of basic needs such as food at the expense of other core issues such as education thus difficult conditions present children life threatening effects which affect their well-being and rights.

4.2.2.4   Theme 4: Lack of social services support to children's mental, psychological emotional well-being

 The participants' responses appeared to be consistent with other research findings that children in difficult circumstances lacks attachment and emotional attachment or self-regulation from care givers and thus they appear to display mental, emotional and psychological disorders.

Sub-theme 4.1: Orphans and vulnerable children exhibits lot of anger and frustration

Participants responded that children in difficult circumstances tend to experience anger and frustration, and for some the anger manifests itself in aggressive behaviour.

"They won't participate in class, they do not write given work in different subjects. They do not have self-esteem, sometimes they are reserved, and some of them are violent or bullies, they bully other learners" [Participant A].

"…most them since there orphans, I can say 90% of the children are orphans and they are affected psychologically and physically and some them they have disabilities" [Participant B].

"…… some of them they face abuses both from at home and school some of them are being abused. Bullying is also another problem and an indicator that a children has underlying issues within himself or herself. Sometimes they misbehave just to draw the teacher's attention. You can see in class that this child did not eat anything and is very hungry and some of the children harass them, the vulnerable ones, some laugh at them" [Participant C].

Participants were of the view that limited to no social services support to children in difficult circumstances triggers is in itself leaving them with scars of emotional, social, psychological and mental trauma. Therefore, lack of social work services to meet the children at their time of need is not helping the situation either.

Sub-theme 4.2: Vulnerable children experience poor performance at school, they lack motivation and concentration during learning process

Research interviews revealed that when the children are exposed to problematic conditions without receiving any support, they experience poor performance at school, they lack motivation and their concentration level at school is very poor.

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"They won't participate in class, they do not write given work in different subjects. They do not have self-esteem, sometimes they are reserved, and some of them are violent or bullies, they bully other learners" [Participant A].

"….you can find out that when the school is giving food they have to eat here not at home especially in the mornings and some of them are below average when coming to their academic performance and the behaviour, they misbehave" [Participant B].

"The performance, I will comment on the performance, the performance is very low, you will find out that even in a grade seven class, we have children who can copy from the board, they cannot even write their name and they cannot even say their date of birth and it takes them too long to capture our concepts" [Participant B].

"They affect their performance, they are also isolated, some can't find friends and even at sports, they can be alone always without friends" [Participant C].

Participants believed that children from disadvantaged families and communities find it difficult to keep up the desired academic performance and they always produce very low results in all aspects of the academic arena. As a result, Dziro and Mhlanga (2018:25) indicated that many orphans and children in difficult circumstances are faced with challenges of child neglect, lack of funds for education and health needs.

Sub-theme 4.3: Vulnerable children experience feelings of inferiority and rejection

Participants believed that some children who grow up in difficult circumstances can feel abandoned and grow up with great pain, which can affect their adult life:

"In fact they usually don't fit in the normal children because they lack ability in most of the things, which they wish to do also but cannot due to their disabilities, they feel inferior" [Participant E].

"Mainly the issues that are affecting them is that they are not at the right place, if they happens to be at the right place with the right equipment I think the better" [Participant E].

"...... in most circumstances, the child becomes a street kid. Can even be a worker who is premature, like a herd boy looking for cattle for someone at tender age trying to make ends meet. And again on assistance, if they lack that assistance or the dangers they might face without the real equipment for example we have those earphones for the deaf, there might be fire somewhere and the warning is given but cannot hear anything then disaster may struck" [Participant E].

Mtetwa and Nyikahadzoi, (2013:31) noted that some negative societal attitudes towards orphans and vulnerable children fuel rejection even by some key family members which in turn also affect these children.. Ultimately, this scenario compromised the development, among these children, of social capital necessary for improved quality of life (Mtetwa & Nyikahadzoi, 2013:31).

Sub-theme 4.4: Children living in difficult circumstances struggle to develop self-confidence and positive self-esteem and may experience mental health problems

Children's self-esteem is also affected by the fact that unresolved social problems go on for too long without help. According to the participants, the children did not consider themselves good enough because when it seems that those around them cannot show that they can help them, they interpret their experiences as unworthy of love. According to the participants, low self-esteem and self-worth affect children's choice of friendships and they tend to associate themselves with the wrong friends.

"Some of the orphans in our community come from the apostolic sect families, when the get sick, they don't take them to hospitals or clinics. Some are even having some mental illnesses but they are not taken to hospitals to seek health services due to religious beliefs" [Participant G].

"Participants also thought that children from marginalized communities who do not receive any social support suffer psychologically. Participants reported that children self-harm in painful circumstances and this may be associated with rejection and painful life experiences" [Participant D].

".....some of them are being married at a tender age and also being psychologically affected" [Interview Notes – Participant D].

Sub-theme 4.5: Lack of social service support to children living in difficult circumstances creates a gap among children of the same environment and generation

Participants shared that there is gap between children of the same locality or environment since some have the resources to make it in life while others lack. Such a scenario creates a gap among children of the same environment generation.

"I think what we should do is to empower these children. When I say empowering these children I mean empowering them psychologically and also financially we should empower them because from my own observation most of them are not aware of their rights so they need to be empowered. That is the reason why we are having a lot of cases of child marriages, child" [Participant D].

"From my own point of view, I think is because of maybe the government policy. It seems as if many policies are favour of the girl child leaving the boy child

behind. And also societal beliefs, those are some of the factors that are hindering adequate interventions" [Participant D].

"I think and I wish if the government or the social welfare can assist those people and even having their own school and even providing them with basic items like clothes, food and even their school fees. Because you find someone is disabled and you follow his tracks in the family, you find out that maybe his father is like the same thing and that he cannot raise his school fees, he may also in need of assistance" [Participant E].

The participants agreed that the disparity being created in remote areas as a result of children in difficult circumstances without receiving any social assistance has serious ramifications in the lives and well-being of such children. Vulnerable children in remote areas are not exposed to same resources and social assistance with their peers in the urban areas hence, there is potential of creating a generational gap in which cycles of poverty is reinforced from one generation to another. Same observations were also noted by Dzirikure & Allen (2014:2) that, poor communities in Zimbabwe are trapped into vicious cycles in which poverty and diseases mutually reinforce each other, a situation likely to be transferred between generations. Therefore there is need to prioritise the well-being of children living in difficult conditions by ensuring that their rights are upheld.

4.2.2.5   Theme 5: Lack of social service support can contribute to increased burden on children and families living in difficult circumstances

Participants shared that when there is no social assistance coming for children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas, the burden at family is overwhelming.

Sub-theme 5.1: Families and child headed families are being overwhelmed by social problems and lack of social support

Participants were of the view that many families especially child headed families are being weighed down by the burden of the social problems such as food, clothing,

school fees and other basic needs. Without social work services support to refer such children to appropriate social service providers the situation is very critical. The participants pointed out that lack of social work service support will not doing any justice to children in difficult circumstances in remote areas.

"Despite the fact the donors are trying to assist but their effort are limited as some can only assist 5, another can assist 6, while another can assist 3 only at a time and rest are being left out" [Participant H].

"We also look forward from the government and other development partners to come on board to provide necessary help to our children because some of them there are out school doing menial jobs for a living. No any individual can be able to solve these problems on his or her own" [Participant M].

"There is need to provide things like blankets, clothing and also if possible school fee. We have been observing situations where a child is repeatedly chased out of school due to fees arrears. The rest of the vulnerable children are suffering beyond measure" [Participant H].

"We have orphans who has the potential and promising academically but they don't have anyone to pay for their fees. Although we are paying fees for some, others are leaving school before even writing their form four levels due to lack of financial support" [Participant L].

Ringson & Chereni, (2020:105) observed that many families and children in rural Zimbabwe are being overwhelmed by social problems such as; HIV & AIDS, school fess, food and shelter, cultural contestations in child upbringing and maltreatment. Similarly, Dziro & Mhlanga (2018:20) also describe these concerns which arise from HIV and AIDS pandemic, persistent droughts, economic hardships and environmental challenges as being prevalent in many families in Zimbabwe. In order to tackle such problems, Lombard and Twikirize (2014:318), argued that developmental social work

recognizes and responds to the connections between social, economic and environmental development in order to expand people's freedoms and capabilities. Mabvurira et.al. (2021:164) in the same vein stated that social development includes improving people's quality of life; fair distribution of resources; broad participation in decision-making and special measures to enable marginalized groups and communities to move into the mainstream.

Sub-theme 5.2: Girl children without adequate social service support system are likely to suffer sexual exploitation and child marriages

Girl children are vulnerable for abuse, sexual exploitation and child marriages as a result of lack social service support. Participants were of the view that children without adequate care can be easily manipulated by some unscrupulous community members who can take advantage of them. When it comes to girls' sexual and romantic relationships, some vulnerable children view such relationship even with elder men as ideal for them despite their underage status.

> *"They are exposed to drug abuse, promiscuity, and early marriages, maybe some are also forced into illegal gold mining/diamond mining and child labour"* [Participant D].

> *"They suffer abuse and early marriages. There is no promise, early marriages! Especially, I can say both the girls getting married at an early stage also the boys can marry early….."* [Participant C].

> *"I can say according to the situation that is here in Marange, sometimes parents they don't like what we do, especially if we try to sue them, so it will make us ignore some the cases just being afraid of what the parents will do especially on early child marriages, when their child get married some of the children can tell you that a child had been married but if you call the parents they deny it"* [Participant B].

Participants pointed out that there is a high probability that many girls in difficult situations are sexually exploited, even if the incidents are not known to the community and the law enforcement. Such relationships put girls at risk of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Participants felt that the age difference between young girls and older men put them at a disadvantage when negotiating protection, such as condom use, and the entire decision seemed to depend on the older partner. The participants also believed that the lack of support from social services puts young girls at risk of HIV infection. They also felt that some men exploit vulnerable girls and use them for sexual abuse.

These observations are in line with findings of Dzirikure and Allen (2014:2) that poor communities in Zimbabwe are trapped into vicious cycles in which poverty and diseases mutually reinforce each other, a situation likely to be transferred between generations. Other scholars such as Muchacha & Matsika (2017:6) noted that in other remote regions of Zimbabwe, vulnerable children particularly girl children are faced with the problem of child marriage. Another observation by Muchacha and Matsika, (2017:6) on the increase in child marriage in Zimbabwe reflects the prevailing and long-term socio-economic crisis, which increases the poverty and vulnerability of many families. Zimbabwe's socio-economic crisis is therefore exacerbating poverty among children, leaving them exposed to social problems such as risk-taking and criminal behaviour, child marriage and food insecurity, school fees, housing, education, medical care and sanitation services, early pregnancy and intergenerational sex (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:6).

Sub-theme 5.3: Children in difficult conditions are likely to drop out of school due to lack of financial support

The data collected from the participants shows that children in difficult circumstances are likely to drop out of school due to overwhelming socio-economic problems and lack of social service financial support. Many families are finding it difficult to keep up with inflationary economic environment in Zimbabwe therefore, many children are dropping out of school due to economic hardships.

"We have also BEAM, FACT, and also PLAN International which assist with books but it does not pay school fees for vulnerable children. Although some children in difficult circumstances receive financial support for their education through Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), the programme is not able to include every child who is vulnerable hence some are dropping out of school" [Participant H].

Participants found that after leaving school, they were at greater risk of engaging in antisocial and criminal activities due to idleness and boredom.

".....so most of them are being married at a tender age and also being psychologically affected. Most them are also failing to come to school" [Participant D].

"....BEAM they give the school an amount and they divided it with total number of vulnerable children, so the small amount cannot cater for all vulnerable children" [Participant B].

"Many girls from the Johanne Marange church drop out of school, the reason behind this is the apostolic church due to religious affiliation, and gender some do not value education" [Participant A].

In support of the above statements, Dziro & Mhlanga (2018:20) are of the view that many orphans and vulnerable children have suffered in a number of ways as a result of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, persistent droughts, economic hardships and environmental challenges. As a result, many orphans and children in difficult circumstances are faced with challenges of child neglect, lack of funds for education and health needs.

Sub-theme 5.4: Orphans and vulnerable children may be involved in criminal activities

The participants believed that children in difficult circumstances do criminal activities to support themselves. The nature of the delinquent behaviour varied depending on the children's particular circumstances, including theft and drug addiction. Some behaviours such as stealing and robbery have been found to be strongly associated with substance abuse and growing up in poverty.

> *"Some are going as far as Marange High to pick some left overs due to hunger since they are starving at home. It's really a painful and pathetic situation. Some children move around the communities begging for food and some stealing"* [Participant F].

The participants shared that children in difficult circumstances would engage in stealing to feed themselves due to hunger at home while others may engage in similar activities to help their other siblings in child headed families.

> *"……...children from child headed households are engaging in criminal activities to make ends meet and it is as a result of lack of parental supervision"* [Participant K].

According to the participants, another crime category that is likely to occur is sexual crimes. Participants believed that some young people commit sexual offenses because they lacked adequate parental supervision and morals about acceptable sexual behaviour. Some boys have been reported to engage in gang activity to insult and attack girls who refuse their aggressive sexual advances. Children in difficult situations are at greater risk of committing sexual crimes such as sexual harassment, assault and even rape.

> *"Children growing in difficult circumstances especially in child headed families lack appropriate grounding when coming to proper norms and values on how one ought to behave"* [Participant K].

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The assertions are in line with findings of Louw and Louw (2014:6) that children living in difficult conditions are exposed to crime, violence, exploitation and HIV/AIDS.

Sub-theme 5.5: Lack of social work services support may contribute to development of feelings of hopelessness

The participants thought that the lack of social services for orphans and vulnerable children may contribute to development of feelings of hopelessness and despair.

"…….they usually don't fit in the normal children because they lack ability in most of the things, which they wish to do also but cannot due to their disabilities, they feel inferior, for example if he is dumb and seeing people singing but he cannot sing. When he or she is deaf he can see people laughing and enjoying but cannot understand what is taking place and cannot laugh like others" [Participant E].

"They won't participate in class, they do not write given work in different subjects. They do not have self-esteem, sometimes they are reserved, and some of them are violent or bullies, they bully other learners" [Participant A].

"I will comment on the performance, the performance is very low, you will find out that even in a grade seven class, we have children who can copy from the board, they cannot even write their name and they cannot even say their date of birth and takes them too long to capture our concepts" [Participant B].

"Those who are receiving support, some of them they participate well, and some of them are now doing well. Those that are not getting support you find that we are facing school drop outs, they will not come to school or maybe if they can come to school they don't perform well because they can come without pens or without some materials, some exercise book. Most of them that don't get support……." [Participant C].

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As noted by UNICEF (2019:1), the state of African children has become an issue of international concern and it is understandable when it stated that to be a child in Africa is to walk a fragile path to adulthood. Orphan hood and child vulnerability in Zimbabwe have been exacerbated by a collapse in social, political and economic support systems adding to chronic poverty, HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:2). Poor communities in Zimbabwe are trapped into vicious cycles in which poverty and diseases mutually reinforce each other, a situation likely to be transferred between generations (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:2).

Sub-theme 5.6: Lack of social services may contribute to generational social problems in families

Research participants were of the view that due to the economic hardships being experienced in Zimbabwe, and the incapacitation of the Department of Social Development to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children, many families are likely to experience social problems for generations to come since there are no meaningful social and economic interventions to help children in need of care.

> *"I think and I wish if the government or the social welfare can assist those people and even having their own school and even providing them with basic items like clothes, food and even their school fees. Because you find someone is disabled and you follow his tracks in the family, you find out that maybe his father is like the same thing and that he cannot raise his school fees, he may also in need of assistance"* [Participant E].

> *"From my point of view, their future is promising especially those who are receiving support but those who are not, eventually their future will be in tatters"* [Participant D].

> *"We have orphans who has the potential and promising academically but they don't have anyone to pay for their fees. Although we are paying fees for some,*

others are leaving school before even writing their form four levels due to lack of financial support" [Participant L].

Dzirikure and Allen (2014:2) were of the view that orphan hood and child vulnerability in Zimbabwe have been exacerbated by a collapse in social, political and economic support systems adding to chronic poverty, HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. They further stated that poor communities in Zimbabwe are trapped into vicious cycles in which poverty and diseases mutually reinforce each other, a situation likely to be transferred between generations (Dzirikure and Allen, 2014:2).

4.2.2.6 Theme 6: Strategies and recommendations to address the issue of social work services with children in difficult circumstances

The participants shared several strategies and recommendations that can be of help to address the issue of social work services with children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe. The various recommendations are presented and discussed under this theme.

Sub-theme 6.1: Policy inconsistence and child protection services

i)   Child sexual exploitation and marriages are rampant in remote areas

Participants were of the view that the law is not acting as desired deterrent especially on child sexual exploitation and child marriages in remote areas in Mutare district. For example members of the dominant faith based apostolic church are engaged heavily by the government especially on political voter mobilisation hence any law enforcement agents who attempts to engage them against their will be repelled politically. It was therefore recommended that the same way the government engage with the members of this church politically, they should do the same to enhance child protection services and to prevent child sexual exploitation and child marriages in this church.

> *"….on other comments, especially on early child marriages, there is a law but children are being affected because there is no action to effect the law and to prevent child marriages but the practice is widely practised here. We say no*

marriage to children under 18 years of age but underage girls are being married and nothing is being done to prevent such problems. Despite the fact that the Constitution prohibits such practices, there are rampant in rural communities reaching alarming levels during COVID-19 induced lockdowns. After the lockdowns were lifted and schools opened, many girls did not come back due to teenage pregnancies, some were forced into marriages while some were sexually exploited" [Participant B].

"I can say according to the situation that is here in Marange area, sometimes parents they don't like what we do, especially if we try to sue them (on child marriages), so it will make us ignore some the cases just being afraid of what the parents will do especially on early child marriages, when their child get married some of the children can tell you that a child had been married but if you call the parents they deny it" [Participant B].

The above assertion concurred with the findings of Sibanda (2011:5) that the general belief which prevails in the Johanne Marange church is that whatever leader is in power has been ordained by God, and therefore they may be subject to political manipulation where they have de facto protection. Additionally, Muchacha and Matsika, (2017:5), pointed to lack of enforcement of laws, limited political will, cultural and religious practices, as leading practices that impacting negatively on child protection services in remote areas in Zimbabwe. Another concern noted by the researcher in the area of study was that many vulnerable children are not listened to, the adults decide for them and they do not have a say in decisions that affect them. This is in contrast to Sandberg, (2018:16), who stated that the most important tool to ensure children rights is to ensure their participation in decision making and children cannot be properly protected without being provided with food, housing, care, health services and education or the opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding their own lives and in society.

ii)   On the other hand, child protection in remote areas is facing some challenges because the National Constitution (Amendment No 20 Act of 2013) and Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) defines a child differently.

"……especially on early child marriages, there is a law but children are being affected because there is no action to effect the law and to prevent child marriages but the practice is widely practised here. We say no marriage to children under 18 years of age but underage girls are being married and nothing is being done to prevent such problems. Despite the fact that the Constitution prohibits such practices, there are rampant in rural communities reaching alarming levels during COVID-19 induced lockdowns" [Participant B].

The study findings show that child protection service delivery remain constricted and one of the major factors has been the policy and legislative inconsistencies (Mwapaura et al., 2022:17). The review of child protection literature points to Shangwa and Mathende (2019:52) who postulate that child protection in Zimbabwe is governed by a number of national, regional and international statutory and policy framework documents which create a state of inconsistence and disorientation. The observation of Mwapaura et al. (2022:17) refers to the example of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment Act No. 20 of 2013) where a child is defined as a boy or girl under the age of 18, while the Children Act (Act) Chapter 5:06) defines a child as under 16 years of age and includes an infant. This therefore poses as a challenge to the delivery of child protection services as it makes it difficult to understand who exactly is liable to receive child protection services. According to Mwapaura et al., (2022:17), analysis of government documents from Department of Social Development showed inconsistent monetary policies which do not give a solid direction in terms of channelling resources to this social protection programming enclave. Therefore, from the same documents it can be noted that child protection fails to provide child protection service delivery due to lack of material resources (Mwapaura et al., 2022:17).

Sub-theme 6.2: Capacitation of the Department of Social Development

The participants recommended the need for social workers to be visible in the remote areas and make them accessible and available to children in difficult circumstances. Observations and responses from this study revealed that there are no social workers in remote areas of Mutare district working with community members and teachers in identifying and assisting vulnerable children with child protection services. Some of the community members do not even know what a social worker is and what they do in protecting and assisting children in difficult circumstances. It reflected on the lack of expenditure on social services and incapacitation of the department of the Department of Social Development to reach to less privileged children living in remote marginalised communities.

> *"The main problem is that there are no such people (social workers) we have seen or heard of in our area. If it was possible such people were supposed to work hand in glove with our local leaders and in turn our chiefs updating us on such engagements and such should have time to come and hear the problems affecting children in remote areas"* [Participant N].

> *"Social workers? Right now no. Like last year I had a child who is deaf and dumb but I never find any assistance or saw any social worker"* [Participant E].

> *"You mean (social workers) from the Social welfare? ….no, we don't usually see them, when they come they go maybe to the next school. Here we haven't see them"* [Participant B].

The above interview notes are clear reflection of social services not being decentralised to marginalised communities. As advised by Shangwa and Mathende (2019:53), the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) in the United Kingdom are responsible for administering child protection services to children in need in their local authorities unlike in Zimbabwe where central government holds the statutory social work role for children. They further stated that one prime example of how Zimbabwe could maximise use of the little resources is boosting the human capital that could practice statutory social work for children through the granting of statutory powers to the local authorities social services departments social workers (Shangwa and

Mathende, 2019:54). For example, when looking at Harare province, the central government has offices in Highfield, Chitungwiza and Harare Central districts which are meant to cover the whole of Harare, on estimate these three offices have an average of 10-15 probation officers in total, this in itself means a greater number of children in need of care fall through the gaps as there are on average 15 statutory social workers at most covering the whole province (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:54). Therefore, decentralisation of social work services in Zimbabwe will go a long way in reaching every child in difficult circumstances living in marginalised communities.

Above all, the Council of Social Workers Zimbabwe (CWSZ), (2016:9), noted that Zimbabwe has been experiencing brain drain of skilled and experienced social workers to countries such South Africa, United Kingdom, Australia, United States of America, New Zealand and Canada, there is need to prioritise the capacitation of social workers in terms of recruitment and training as well as remuneration in order to attract skilled personnel in remote areas.

Sub-theme 6.3: Training of community members in child protection services

Participants recommended several programs and activities aimed at training of community members in child protection procedures. Community members require training in identifying, provide early help or intervention and do referral to social workers for assessment of the needs of children in difficult circumstances before the problems escalate. Training of community members will require to impart them with knowledge and skills of how to interact and assist children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Mutare district.

> *"In my view, I think as community members we should be empowered with knowledge and skills on how to identify vulnerable children in our communities. Above all, we should be faithful and trustworthy to carry out such a mandate for the sake of children in difficult circumstances without showing favouritism but the most deserving less privileged children should be the first to benefit"*
> [Participant I].

"I want to present that even if we say corruption is rampant, we still have some trustworthy and faithful people among us who can….. Therefore the idea of mobilising community resources, those who will be involved in such a process should be doing so in faithfulness for the sake of those who are in need even if we say the chiefs should not be part of the process due to corrupting fears, those involved should be faithful and not corrupt" [Participant K].

Sub-theme 6.4: Placement of social workers in schools in remote areas

Participants recommended that there is need to place trained, skilled and experienced social workers in order to provide psycho-social support and to offer early intervention were necessary in order to prevent social problems escalating to uncontrollable levels. Participants reported that children's behaviour at home and at school is moulded within the family. However, many families are also experiencing a lot of challenges which include family breakdowns as a result of death or divorce therefore there is need for social workers and other relevant stakeholders assist early social interventions such as referrals to relevant service providers and parental skills for the communities in remote areas.

"A social worker? Not here as necessary but we have a social worker from the Ministry of Education Mr Tichivangani. He is based in Mutare but he is the one who deals with social problems of the kids in schools in Mutare district" [Participant D].

"I think what we should do is to empower these children. When I say empowering these children I mean empowering them psychologically and also financially we should empower them because from my own observation most of them are not aware of their rights so they need to be empowered. That is the reason why we are having a lot of cases of child marriages, child abuse" [Participant D].

"Strategies? I think that can be done maybe starting from the top through enacting policies. And also we need to conscientious maybe the community and also the people around these children they need to be conscientious because it seems most of them are not aware of the problems these children are facing" [Participant D].

Ringson and Chereni (2020:102) are of the view that despite many children in difficult circumstances in Zimbabwe finding refuge in the extended family, this traditional care support system faces challenges that has a direct impact on orphans and vulnerable children and these increasing demand for OVC needs; poverty caused by the socio-economic challenges of the country; modernity; separation and separation from the family; and lack of adequate support from various stakeholders such as NGOs and government.

Sub-theme 6.5: Universal access to social services by all vulnerable children.

Participants expressed the opinion that assessment of social service needs of vulnerable children and families in peripheral areas should be abolished. The provision of social services to orphans and vulnerable children must be seen as a basic human right, therefore it is necessary to abolish the residual welfare model based on liberal ideology, which sees the welfare of the poor as a safety net for those who cannot do anything else.

"I can say what you are doing is good, but as you are doing this research, if you can find some donors to help these children it can better rather than just questioning and you go away, so if you can help us" [Participant C].

".....especially BEAM they give the school an amount and they divided it with total number of vulnerable children, so the small amount cannot cater for all vulnerable children. But FACT, it caters for all children who are HIV positive but it is the parents who do not want to disclose the information on the status of their children that is why some children end up being not assisted" [Participant B].

"Some are deaf, blind, some may have that down syndrome, you find out that it's not only the child who was like that, that's what I mean by heredity, it's within the family. There are no professionals to aid them with effective communication skills" [Participant E].

"At the present moment we don't have those people providing anything. Can only have one that is BEAM which assisting with school fees, but it can be on and off. I don't know if they have if they have some other support from the village, I don't know" [Participant E].

Provision of social services to children in difficult circumstances should be viewed as a basic human right for such children. When vulnerable children in marginalised communities are left out of receiving social services, the provisions of the UNCRC on the rights of children are not fulfilled. Therefore, child protection is an essential international policy and programming priority involving various efforts (Sandberg, 2018:16). The child's right to participation and protection is included in several UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and other international human rights treaties (Sandberg, 2018:16). The participants' views also confirmed earlier findings by Shangwa and Mathende (2019:50) that the residual model deals with needs as they come, addresses the presenting problem, not the root cause and is provided only when all other expected means of support for the individual have been exhausted (means-tested), it is short-term and usually withdrawn once the apparent need is no longer evident. It is reactive in nature and does not concern itself with anticipation and preventing social problems before they occur (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:50). All in all residual social service provision is reactive or relief and this is the model that largely exists within the social service landscape in Zimbabwe (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:50). There is a need therefore of an institutional redistributive system of social services. An institutional redistributive system is one in which need is accepted as a normal part of social life. Welfare is provided for the population as a whole, in the same way as public services like roads or schools might be (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:51). In an institutional system, welfare is not just for the poor: it is for everyone. Institutional social work focuses on giving each person equal

opportunity to be supported, whatever their circumstance. Government-funded social services are some of the best examples of this type, as it is offered to everyone without the need for application or justification (Shangwa and Mathende, 2019:51). Therefore, this approach to welfare in rural Zimbabwe is consistent with developmental social work, which recognizes and responds to the links between social, economic and environmental development to expand people's freedoms and capabilities (Lombard and Twikirize, 2014: 318).

Sub-theme 6.6: Engagements of African churches and traditional leaders

It is in the best interest of this study to recommend the need for engagement of African traditional churches and community leaders by authorities in remote areas on the need to address the issue of rejection or prevention of access to social and health services due to religious and traditional beliefs in order to promote and encourage inclusivity child protection services. The study noted that there are still some members of particular churches which are being left out from mainstream government engagements on social services programmes because of their religious and traditional beliefs despite the fact that some of their members suffer from chronic illnesses such as HIV and AIDS. However, it was discovered that these churches are also engaged by government when coming to political engagements. There is need therefore to use such similar political engagements to engage traditional African churches to effectively end child maltreatment such as sexual exploitation and child marriages which being widely practiced in these churches and traditional communities.

> *"……in our scenario the apostolic sect is has the highest population so some learners won't visit hospitals when infected with malaria or measles which sometimes end up causing some deaths. Child marriages, many girls from the Johanne Marange church drop out of school, the reason behind this is the apostolic sect due to religious affiliation, and gender some do not value education. Some as early as form two and are married off by their parents. It is a widely practiced phenomenon in this church and it is the dominant traditional church"* [Participant A].

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"I can say according to the situation that is here in Marange area, sometimes parents they don't like what we do, especially if we try to sue them (on child marriages), so it will make us ignore some the cases just being afraid of what the parents will do especially on early child marriages, when their child get married some of the children can tell you that a child had been married but if you call the parents they deny it" [Participant B].

"Yeah, we have a number of cases of children who are being infected by sexually transmitted infections and some them are being married at a tender age maybe because of religious beliefs, because most of around 50% of our learners comes from the apostolic sect, Johanne Marange apostolic sect, so most of them are being married at a tender age and also being psychologically affected. Most them are also failing to come to school" [Participant D].

The findings are line with research outcomes of Muchacha and Matsika (2017:5) that there are signs of gender discrimination in girls' access to education. Most girls drop out of school due to high education costs and poverty and end up getting married (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5). On the other hand, Sibanda (2011:5) pointed out that boys are given special treatment to continue their studies, while girls are kept at home waiting for marriage. In many cases, parents insist that the girl should marry and the boy should support his family; therefore, he should be given an education and a career (Muchacha and Matsika, 2017:5).

"Some of the orphans in our community come from the dominant apostolic church families, when the get sick, they don't take them to hospitals or clinics. Some are even having some mental illnesses but they are not taken to hospitals to seek health services due to religious beliefs. It is one of the major problem affecting vulnerable children in our area" [Participant G].

"What happens is that concerning the male members of that apostolic church, they consult private doctors secretly when they get sick but they don't allow

their wives and children to do likewise on grounds of the church doctrine"
[Participant K].

The above statements confirms the findings of Muchacha & Matsika (2017:5) that in Zimbabwe and other patriarchal societies, women and girls are subject to deep-rooted cultural norms that relegate them to second-class citizen status compared to men and boys in the household, community and society in general, because they are unable to make decisions that affect their health and well-being alone but subject to decisions dictated by their male partners.

Another issue is of relevance of social work services to the established African traditional systems. Social work practice in Zimbabwe remained steeped Western social work approaches and remain fully established in urban areas than rural areas and social workers are rarely known or seen in remote areas.

"The main problem is that there are no such people whom you are referring as social workers we have seen or heard of in our area. If it was possible such people were supposed to work hand in glove with our local leaders and in turn our chiefs updating us on such engagements and such people should have time to come and hear the problems affecting children in remote areas" [Participant N].

The fact that social workers are not visible in remote areas reflects that social work practice in Zimbabwe is centred in urban areas and remain heavily align to western approaches and is failing to embrace or adopt ethics of decoloniality for social work services to be relevant in rural areas where African traditional practices are heavily observed (Shokane and Masoga, 2021:25). Shokane and Masoga (2021: 25), maintain that the impact of colonialism has forced generational impositions that separated individuals, families and entire nations from their original knowledge systems and social structures. They elaborate on this by stating that these traumatic events have disintegrated family and community relationships, structures and

traditional or indigenous practices. Like many other Africans, Madzimbabwe (people of Zimbabwe) have several ways of preventing social ills and ensuring the social functionality of their families, villages and societies at large (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:2). Before colonisation, systems that grew naturally were in place to provide welfare to the vulnerable populations (Mabvurira et.al. 2021:2).

In keeping with what is stated by Kurevakwesu and Chizasa (2020:90) that in traditional Zimbabwean society, families and relatives were closely knit together and in the event that the immediate family was no longer there, the child had readily available safety nets and these nets related to the nuclear family and the community. As argued by Shokane and Masoga (2021:23), fundamental point of decolonising research methodologies debates is how research is still steeped in the Euro-North American-centric worldview. Community engagement in remote areas thus should follow an Afrocentric approach rather than Eurocentric in order to be relevant in rural and traditional communities. As argued by Shokane and Masoga (2021:26) utilisation of indigenous knowledge in addressing social problems brings pleasure, reinforces tradition and belief systems and gives a sense of belonging and relatedness.

4.3   Conclusion

The results of this study proved that children in difficult circumstances are faced with a myriad of challenges, and in all these difficult conditions, in as far as the children's rights are concerned; there has been limited to no social work interventions to address the issues, especially in the government's department of social development, which lacks resources to directly prevent or address issue of child marriage. Above all, the well-being of children is crucial, and lack of services to improve their living conditions and address the socio-economic needs of children impact negatively and may result in severe challenges and risky behaviours as noted above. Therefore, there is need to consider seriously social work services for vulnerable children and families in remote communities considering the worldwide plea to ensure children's well-being and focus on their rights.

CHAPTER 5: KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter marks the final stage of the research study and presents the main results, recommendations and conclusions of the study. The chapter summarizes how the objective and objectives of the study were achieved. The researcher concludes the report by making recommendations and suggestions for further research based on the results and drawing conclusions from them.

5.2 Key findings

The main results of the study were obtained by asking probing and open questions according to the interview schedule. The questions focused on children in difficult circumstances in remote areas. The main results are presented below according to the main themes identified during the research according to the research objectives. The main aim of the study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and community members working or interacting with children in difficult circumstances about social work for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe. The goal was achieved by achieving the following specific objectives:

5.2.1 To explore the perceptions of participants about the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by children in difficult circumstances.

Key findings regarding participants' views about the circumstances confronting children in difficult circumstances in Mutare district showed great levels of concern and very serious difficulties faced by children. Many children in difficult circumstances are confronted with many vulnerabilities and structural issues such as poverty, hunger, lack of shelter, diseases, and in addition, a lack of social services to aid them in time in need. Their basic needs such as food, clothing and access to health services are therefore unfulfilled.

They are challenged by high levels of drug and alcohol use in their community, which promotes addiction and affects their behavior in the community and at school. Many such vulnerable children are also thought to behave antisocially and do not follow social norms.

Many children are exposed to sexual exploitation and child marriages which is detrimental to their rights and future well-being. These conditions put vulnerable children at high risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections and make girls vulnerable to unplanned teenage pregnancies, adding to existing generational problems. In all the socio-economic problems confronting children in difficult circumstances, there is limited to no social work interventions in place to engage and assist vulnerable children and families in remote areas. Thus it is in the best interest of this study to conclusively indicate that vulnerable children living remote areas are not receiving social work services from the government.

5.2.2 To explore implications of a lack of social work services for children in difficult circumstances living in a remote area.

The results of the study showed that the future of children in difficult circumstances in remote areas of Mutare district is not promising as they lack opportunities and resources to lay a strong foundation to realise and fulfil future goals to their fullest potential.

Social work services should be viewed as a basic human right. However, this right was not being realised for children in the case of this study. There were limited to no social work service interventions for children in difficult circumstances and this was shown to be detrimental to orphans and vulnerable children's future well-being. Early intervention programmes to assist vulnerable children are shown to enhance their chances to realise their life goals, in contrast with living without any interventions at all. For example, some children were reported being excluded from receiving medical treatment while they are HIV positive due to traditional and religious beliefs. Some disabled children such as those with hearing impairments do not receive any assistance such as learning vital communication and life skills leaving them at the mercy of their impoverished families struggling to make ends meet. Social work services are crucial in enhancing the social functioning of children and also equipping them with relevant life skills to realise their potential. Hence, the safety, psychosocial, emotional and mental well-being of children in difficult circumstances should be government priority in order to effectively attend to problems affecting children in need.

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5.2.3 To explore what support is available for such children in difficult circumstances living in a remote area.

This study found that many orphans and vulnerable children in remote areas found support from traditional systems such as family, extended family, church and the well-wishers or concerned community members. Some children were receiving support from non-governmental organisations.

The above specific objectives were attained from the findings of the empirical study. An exploration was also done in the review of literature of Zimbabwean social welfare policy and its shortcomings. The state of children in difficult circumstances in remote areas, psycho-social service provision for children of Zimbabwe, nature of social work service provision in Zimbabwe and coloniality of social work practice in Zimbabwe.

While collecting information from the participants, the researcher asked related questions to challenges confronting children in difficult circumstances and nature of social services they are receiving, and this assisted in context-specific findings. It was discovered that many children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas are receiving very limited to no social service interventions. As a result, in case of child headed household the burden of a child or children taking care of each other is overwhelming and therefore children in difficult circumstances are left with little options but engage in risk behaviours. These range from involvement in criminal activities, under age sexual activities and alcohol and drug misuse.

Due to poverty conditions and lack of socio-economic support, orphans and vulnerable children are forced by circumstances to seek piece jobs in order to make a living. This exposes children to child labour and exploitation as they may perform certain tasks before they are physically, mentally and emotionally mature enough to perform such roles. This negatively affects child development as the children will not develop according to childhood stages. Older children start to assume the parental roles towards younger siblings. The roles include applying discipline to the younger children, placing them at higher risk of physical abuse. Older children, particularly those living

in the rural areas might go through neglect as they must provide for their own needs and also of the younger siblings.

In particular, it was also noticed that the mental well-being of orphans and vulnerable children in difficult circumstances can create in them a lot of anger, which can be directed at peers, teachers and other members of the community, and which often affects the children's interpersonal relationships. Vulnerable children develop anger and resentment against peers and teachers because they feel rejected and unloved. Anger manifests as aggressive behaviour that can be directed at others dealing with children in difficult circumstances because they are not respected.

 Orphans and vulnerable children feel abandoned and grow up with great pain, which can even affect their adult lives. When children in difficult circumstances face traumatic experiences such as sexual abuse and other painful experiences, social services are certainly very necessary, but without early intervention, the problems can worsen. Orphans and vulnerable children struggle to develop dignity and positive self-esteem and can experience a range of mental health problems. They may choose wrong friends due to low self-esteem and self-esteem. Many of these vulnerable children have mental health problems such as suicidal attempts and self-injurious behaviour.

 Many orphans and vulnerable children may not have the opportunity to learn proper morals, norms and values. As a result, they are often in conflict with the law and authority, as members of the teaching community, often breaking the rules and behaving disrespectfully. Children in difficult situations, especially girls, are more vulnerable to manipulation, sexual abuse, child marriage and human trafficking because they may not learn enough to maintain boundaries with members of the opposite sex.

5.3 Conclusions

This study raised some serious concerns regarding the challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children living in remote areas in Mutare district such as high levels poverty, child headed households, hunger, child labour, and severe resource and services deprivation. However, the most striking concern is that in all these adversities affecting vulnerable children in remote areas, there is no social work services interventions for these vulnerable children. What is means that there is a possibility of many children and families being trapped in economic and social problems for generations to come. Criminal activities, chronic diseases, teenage pregnancies, child marriages, poverty, under development are some of the likely outcomes affecting orphans and children in difficult circumstances not realising their future goals in line with the United Nations millennium development goals. Therefore, there is need to prioritise social services for orphans and vulnerable children in the rural areas to enhance children's rights and well-being in line with national and international conventions on the rights of children.

If the situation left unresolved, many vulnerable children living in the countryside would likely not able to make it to higher education institutions and also accessing information which is vital for them to cope in the ever changing technological era. In particular, the well-being of vulnerable children in marginalized communities is further affected by the government's failure to accelerate the deployment of the necessary resources and capacitating the Department of Social Development, as well as traditional systems in remote areas thus reneging on the fulfilment of the United Nations millennium developmental goals on Convention of the Rights of the Child in (UNCRC).

In addition, severe resource and service deprivation has a potential of creating lost generations as the young people are entangled in child marriages, substance misuse, school dropouts and engaging in criminal activities. This can be very costly to many families, communities and the country at large by creating cycles of poverty, violence, crime, chronic diseases and many other social and economic problems. Therefore, there is need for the government and other stakeholders to come up with social work service interventions aimed at ameliorating orphans and vulnerable children living in marginalised areas.

There is a great danger in overlooking the social service needs of children in difficult circumstances living in remote in the sense that their future wellbeing is heavily compromised and their future off-springs would likely to continue being trapped in the same difficult circumstances. Consequently, highlighting the need for social work service for children in difficult circumstances is in line with global consents and the recognition that child rights are important in creating responsible and productive citizens. There is need also to include vulnerable children in important decision-making process of development interventions that affect them to hear and consider their concerns.

The plight of disabled children living in remote areas of Mutare district needs attention as they lack trained professionals and adequate social services and is heavily compromised. In Mutare district, there are no institutions to take care of their special needs, they are not given skills by their families and learning institutions, so they are left to falter on their own. Their future welfare is not seriously considered and only God knows what awaits them. Home and school facilities are not usable for many children with different types of disabilities and this is a major concern from a practical social work perspective.

Lastly, some of the major social problems in Zimbabwe identified by the research are poverty, unemployment, food security, limited access to water and sanitation, structural issues, and limited access to no social services. These problems require models such as developmental social work and strengthening of African traditional systems to adequately address social problems of vulnerable children, because these problems are deeply rooted in complex cultural, economic, religious, political and social factors that require structural solutions.

5.4   Recommendations

This section presents the researcher's recommendations based on the results of the study. As the research results suggest, solving the problems of social services with children in difficult circumstances in peripheral areas requires a multidisciplinary

approach, not only the efforts of social workers or a single agency. The dire circumstances upon which orphans and vulnerable children have to grow up in are detrimental to their current and future well-being. Social work services seemed to be centred in the urban areas which was the case in the colonial period hence there is limited social work interventions in the rural areas to meet children in difficult circumstances at their time need.

5.4.1 Recommendations for practicing social work with children in difficult circumstances

For social workers to effectively address some of the social problems affecting children in difficult circumstances, there is need for an interdisciplinary co-ordination and team work especially with traditional leaders and African churches in Mutare district. Social workers must assess the underlying problems such poverty, diseases, hunger, child marriages and drug misuse that are prevalent in communities in Mutare district and come up with resolutions and recommendations on how best to assist vulnerable children in marginalised areas. This study found out that many service providers in rural areas tend work only with those willing to accept their services and leaving behind those that are not accepting social services, for example advice on the need to immunise children against six killer diseases and taking medication by children born with HIV. In fact, ethics of decoloniality for social workers come into play and social workers should find an African approach to involve African traditional communities and churches to ensure social work services reaches the most vulnerable children in remote areas. Therefore, social workers need revise their community engagement approaches when dealing with African traditional leaders and churches so that they suit the environment they are operating than to be viewed as foreign interventions.

Social work services availability in remote areas in Mutare district will assist greatly in identifying problems such as child marriages and child sexual exploitation. Interventions such as community education and awareness campaigns against such negative practices would contribute to protecting children from abuse, neglect and all forms child maltreatment. Social work reports and recommendation can assist policy

makers on best options to engage and involve African formed churches and community leaders on child protection issues.

- Social workers should formulate awareness programmes applicable for African rural communities to address adult risk behaviours that lead to children becoming victims of child marriages and teenage pregnancies.

- This study also strongly recommends pursuing of criminal charges against the perpetrators of child sexual abuse in remote areas in Mutare district. The researcher however, noted that as a result religious and cultural practices as well as government inaction, many cases of child neglect, child sexual abuse remain unreported. In fact laws on child marriages are rarely enforced and few cases are attended to especially by non- governmental organisations.

- Children in difficult circumstances who may have emotional and mental problems should be offered treatment and referral to special services, special services should also be offered to children with disabilities.

- Social workers should consider ways to involve and train community members, teachers and perhaps working in partnership with other agencies on child protection services for children in difficult circumstances living in remote communities.

- The researcher recommends that community members in Mutare district should receive specialised training and be capacited to identify, assist and refer children in difficult circumstances to appropriate social welfare programs.

5.4.2 Recommendations for policymakers

- There is a need for re-alignment of Children's Act with the Constitution and International Conventions to strengthen child protection in Zimbabwe. There is currently such as process underway in Zimbabwe, however, the process has been slow. For example, there is a need to align the definition of a child as being someone below of 18 with the age of consent to 18 years to protect children and address the issue child marriages and child sexual exploitation in Zimbabwe.

-       There is also need to capacitate the Department of Social Development in Zimbabwe through allocation of adequate human, material and financial resources to enable social workers to respond effectively to social problems affecting children in difficult conditions in rural areas. Non - governmental organisations rendering services in rural areas are unable to cope with the burden with unpredictable donor funding.

-       Social services should be devolved to remote areas where local communities can be involved in budgeting and planning of child protection services.

- Local communities should be involved in decision making around the allocation of human, material and financial resources to implement their own targets on enhancing children's well-being in their own area of jurisdiction.

- Since the central government is constrained in providing essential services to vulnerable children, the local authorities such as Mutare Rural District Council (MRDC) should be given capabilities to recruit social workers according to identified needs in order to address the social problems found in their area unlike the current situation where social services are centralised by the government.

-       There is need also to adopt a developmental social work approach to end child marriages in rural communities in Mutare district than to continue with the remedial approach which is dominant in the department of social welfare.

5.4.3 Recommendations for other organizations and individuals who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances

-       Effective identification of child abuse and early intervention before problems escalate require partnerships and multi-agency working groups between different organizations and volunteers working with disadvantaged children. Qualified social

workers must take the lead in promoting, monitoring and controlling such groups so that they can effectively provide child welfare services.

- Government and other actors should consider mandatory provision of community and school feeding programs in some remote areas to alleviate child hunger, which was considered a critical situation. In addition, recreational activities such as youth clubs, sports activities, drama, debating, choral groups and other professional activities aimed at developing the skills and abilities of disadvantaged children and promoting good behaviour are funded for children from disadvantaged communities.

5.4.4 Suggestions for further research

- More research should be done on how provision of social services in remote areas may be able to prevent social problems of vulnerable children in these marginalised communities. The topic was a recurring theme in the survey, with many participants arguing that a lack of public spending on social services contributed to more children falling into the vicious cycle of poverty from generation to generation. However, the study did not reveal whether social services could prevent such social problems in children.

- An exploration of the challenges facing children in difficult conditions living in remote areas should be conducted in other geographically remote rural areas to give a broader view of the impact of the lack of social work service provision to vulnerable children in Zimbabwe.

- Last but not least, there is a need for research with social workers or social development agency cell stakeholders on social services and vulnerable children living in remote areas. In this study, they were excluded because of the concern of putting them at risk with their superiors to discuss on the shortcomings of their own

department. Therefore, their views and opinions are crucial in defining the scope of social work for children living in difficult circumstances.

5.5   Limitation of the study

The main limitations of the study were:

Qualitative research findings cannot be generalized, as in the case of this study. However, with the help of in-depth interviews, the researcher managed to identify themes that can be used as a starting point for future research.

The sample size was small and other potential research participants who, in the view of the researcher would have made valuable contributions, could not be included due to ethical considerations; for example social workers. The input of social workers concerning the challenges facing children in difficult circumstances and what needs to be done to address such problems would have been valuable. However, due to the sensitivity of the research topic and the small size of the study sample, it they may have been identifiable and so put them in a difficult position if they had reflected short comings in the Department of Social Development. Therefore, if social workers were included in a larger study, they would not be identifiable but in this case the size of the study may have led them to be identifiable.

The study was limited by the fact that it did not consider the whole population of children in difficult circumstances in Zimbabwe, Mutare district, but relied on a small sample of teachers and community members who work with or interact with children in difficult circumstances. The study was also limited by its focus in a single district due to logistical, administrative and financial constraints, and limited time. This meant that it was possible to generalise the findings to all children living in these circumstances. However, it is not the aim of qualitative research to generalise, but to understand lived experiences, and in this case, through exploring the views of those that work or interact with vulnerable children (Creswell, 2014:186)

5.6 Summary

Severe social service deficiency for children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Mutare district has the potential of creating a lost generation and affect negatively on the social functioning of orphans and vulnerable children. Vulnerable children are being exposed and entangled in despicable activities which are detrimental to their wellbeing and the country at large. There is need to capacitate the department of social development to respond effectively to numerous socio-economic problems antagonising orphans and vulnerable children in remote areas in Zimbabwe.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

19 April 2023

Dear Fungai Mushunje

Project Title:	Social work services with children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe The case of Mutare district
Researcher:	Fungai Mushunje
Supervisor(s):	Prof LH Smith
Department:	Social Work and Criminology
Reference number:	21648094 (HUM036/0822)
Degree:	Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 19 April 2023. Please note that before research can commence all other approvals must have been received.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH SHOOL TEACHERS

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Department of Social Work & Criminology

9th March 2023
Researcher: Mr Fungai Mushunje
Telephone: 071 907 7788
Email: ecnyasha@gmail.com

University of Pretoria
Private Bag x 20, Hatfield
0028
South Africa

The District Education Officer
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Mutare District

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT ACADEMIC RESEARCH INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MUTARE DISTRICT

I, Mushunje Fungai do hereby apply for the permission to hold face to face interviews with approximately five (5) teachers from two (2) schools, one primary school and one secondary school in Mutare district on the research topic:

> **Social work services with children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe. The case of Mutare district**

The goal of the study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances about social work services for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe.

Forming part of the interview questions will be questions pertaining to provision of social work services to children living in difficult circumstances in a remote area in Mutare district. It is emphasised that no identities of children, of research participants, or the names of the schools will be published in the research report. The research study is for the purposes of the compilation of an academic research dissertation as requirement for the award of a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

I hope my application will receive your favourable response.

Yours Faithfully,

Fungai Mushunje (Mr)

Phone: +263 719 077 788. I.D Number: 75-394691A-75.
Research Supervisor: Prof Linda Harms-Smith Email: Linda.Smith@up.ac.za

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DISTRICT SCHOOLS INSPECTOR AND SCHOOL HEADS

Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Department of Social Work & Criminology

9th March 2023
Researcher: Mr Fungai Mushunje
Telephone: 071 907 7788
Email: ecnyasha@gmail.com

University of Pretoria
Private Bag x 20, Hatfield
0028
South Africa

(Stamp:) THE HEADMASTER *Humaniti 102*
MANHU ADVENTIST PRI SCH
PRIVATE B P PTD 3
MUTARE
DATE 22/03/23
SIGN

Att. Heads of Manhu Pri. and Nharira Secondary Schools

The District Education Officer
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Mutare District

(Stamp:) MIN. OF PRY. & SEC. EDUCATION
DISTRICT SCHOOLS INSPECTOR
MUTARE DISTRICT
19 MAR 2023
P. BAG 7755, MUTARE
ZIMBABWE TEL: 020-67337

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT ACADEMIC RESEARCH INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MUTARE DISTRICT

I, Mushunje Fungai do hereby apply for the permission to hold face to face interviews with approximately five (5) teachers from two (2) schools, one primary school and one secondary school in Mutare district on the research topic:
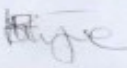
> **Social work services with children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe. The case of Mutare district**

The goal of the study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances about social work services for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe.
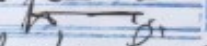
Forming part of the interview questions will be questions pertaining to provision of social work services to children living in difficult circumstances in a remote area in Mutare district. It is emphasised that no identities of children, of research participants, or the names of the schools will be published in the research report. The research study is for the purposes of the compilation of an academic research dissertation as requirement for the award of a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

I hope my application will receive your favourable response.

Yours Faithfully,

Fungai Mushunje (Mr)

(Stamp:) THE DEPUTY HEAD
NHARIRA HIGH SCHOOL
P. O. BOX 40, MARANGE
DATE 15/05/23
SIGN

Phone: +263 719 077 788. I.D Number: 75-394691A-75.
Research Supervisor: Prof Linda Harms-Smith Email: Linda.Smith@up.ac.za

Room XXX, Humanities Build g
University of Pretoria, Private Bag 0

APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Humanities 100.
Since 1919

Department of Social Work & Criminology

9th March 2023

Researcher: Mr Fungai Mushunje
Telephone: 071 907 7788; Email: ecnyasha@gmail.com

University of Pretoria
Private Bag x 20, Hatfield, 0028
South Africa

The District Development Co-ordinator
Ministry of Local Government and Public Works
Mutare District

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT ACADEMIC RESEARCH INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN MUTARE DISTRICT

I, Mushunje Fungai do hereby apply for the permission to hold one (1) focus group discussion with approximately seven (7) participants who work or interact with children living in difficult circumstances in Mutare district on the research topic:

> **Social work services with children in difficult circumstances living in remote areas in Zimbabwe. The case of Mutare district**

The goal of this part of the study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances about social work services for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe. They will be recruited by seeking recommendations from participants (teachers), in the first part of the study, who may know community members that work with children. Further participants will be recruited if necessary, by asking those that agree to participate in the focus group, if they know others with similar involvement with vulnerable children.

Forming part of the focus group discussion will be questions pertaining to the difficulties faced by vulnerable children and the provision of social work services to such children living in difficult circumstances in a remote area in Mutare district. It is emphasised that no identities of children, and of research participants, will be made known or published in the research report. The research study is the requirement for the award of a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

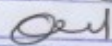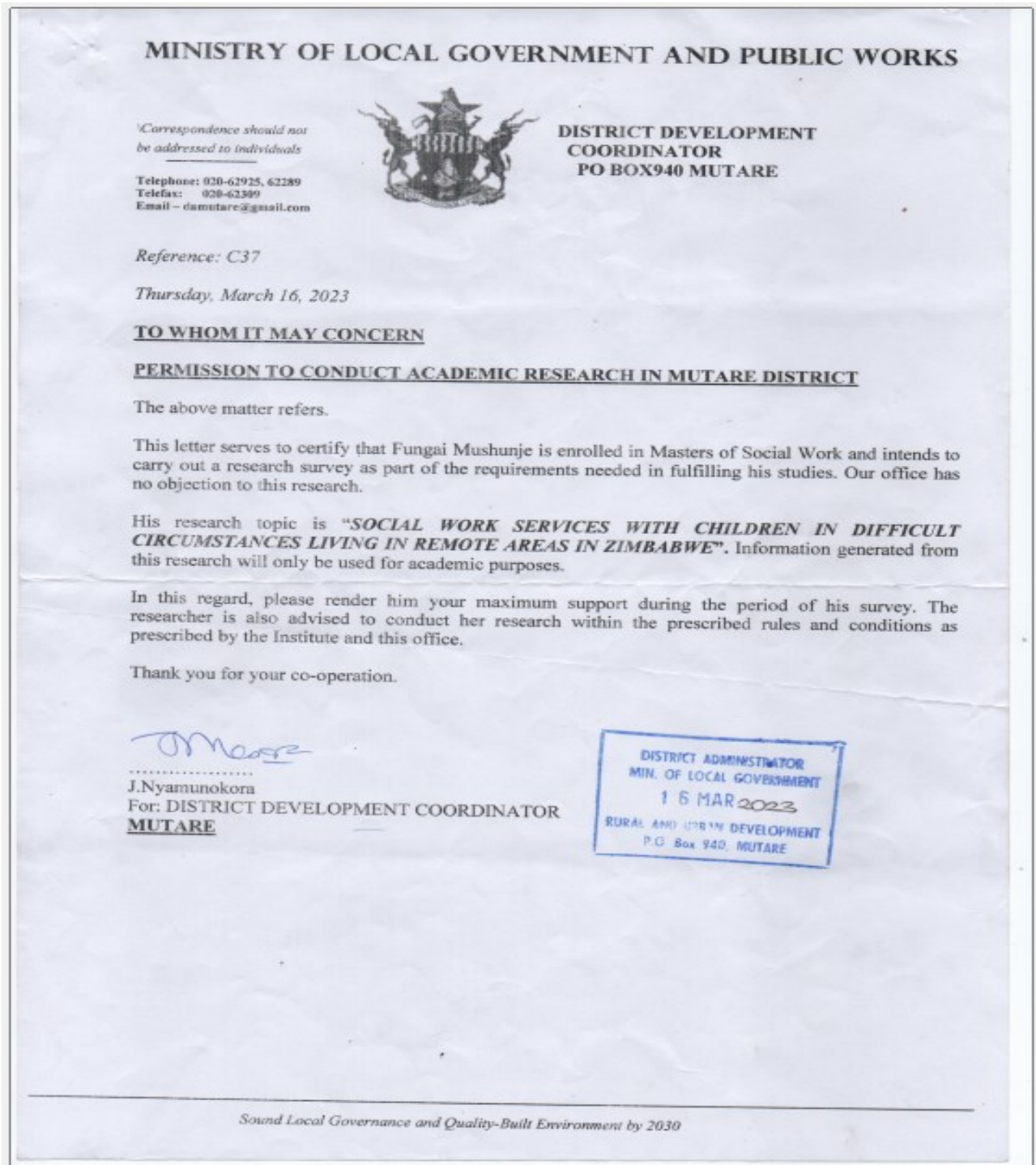I hope my application will receive your favourable response.

Yours Faithfully,

Fungai Mushunje (Mr)

Phone: +263 719 077 788. I.D Number: 75-394691A-75.
Research Supervisor: Prof Linda Harms-Smith Email: Linda.Smith@up.ac.za

Room XXX, Humanities Building
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 xxxx | Fax +27 (0)12 420 xxxx
Email xxx@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za

APPENDIX E: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT CO-ODINATOR

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

\Correspondence should not be addressed to individuals

Telephone: 020-62925, 62289
Telefax: 020-62309
Email – damutare@gmail.com

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR PO BOX940 MUTARE

Reference: C37

Thursday, March 16, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN MUTARE DISTRICT

The above matter refers.

This letter serves to certify that Fungai Mushunje is enrolled in Masters of Social Work and intends to carry out a research survey as part of the requirements needed in fulfilling his studies. Our office has no objection to this research.

His research topic is *"SOCIAL WORK SERVICES WITH CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS IN ZIMBABWE".* Information generated from this research will only be used for academic purposes.

In this regard, please render him your maximum support during the period of his survey. The researcher is also advised to conduct her research within the prescribed rules and conditions as prescribed by the Institute and this office.

Thank you for your co-operation.

J.Nyamunokora
For: DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
MUTARE

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR
MIN. OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
1 6 MAR 2023
RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
P.O Box 940, MUTARE

Sound Local Governance and Quality-Built Environment by 2030

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Department of Social Work & Criminology

9th March 2023

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

Mr Fungai Mushunje
Telephone 071 907 7788
Email: ecnyasha@gmail.com

University of Pretoria
Private Bag x 20, Hatfield
0028
South Africa

Good day

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I would like to invite you to participate in my study titled:

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES WITH CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS IN ZIMBABWE. THE CASE OF MUTARE DISTRICT.

This research study is the work towards a Master's in Social Work Degree at the University of Pretoria. The goal of the study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances about social work services for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe. It is hoped that the findings will be helpful in planning and providing services for such children. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself as the researcher, Mr Fungai Mushunje Telephone 071 907 7788 Email: ecnyasha@gmail.com or my research supervisor, Prof Linda Harms-Smith at Linda.Smith@up.ac.za

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

The procedure for the research will entail individual interviews with a duration of 45-60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded by the researcher.

Room XXX, Humanities Building
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 xxxx | Fax +27 (0)12 420 xxxx
Email xxx@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za

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RISKS AND EFFECTS OF INTERVIEW

No risks, discomforts or emotional harm are foreseen. Should you experience any emotional discomfort prompted by sharing your views and experiences of vulnerabilities of children in difficult circumstances in your area, you should inform the researcher. The researcher has prepared for free psychosocial support from a registered Social Worker.

BENEFITS

As a research participant this study has no immediate benefit for you. However, the results of the study could contribute to enhancing the knowledge and techniques that can be used to gain a better understanding of the views and experiences of teachers and community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances about social work services for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe.

COMPENSATION

You will receive no financial or other form of compensation for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

You will not be coerced into participating in the interview. You will participate at your own free will and can withdraw from participating at any given time without reason. Withdrawing will not affect any relations between you and the organisation or the researcher. If you withdraw during the interview, the data gathered will be destroyed or provided to you to keep.

INTERVIEWEE'S RIGHTS

You can withdraw within the interview, when feeling uncomfortable, at any point. You may decline answering any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. All information obtained will be treated confidentially. In order to protect the identity of the participant, the researcher will use a pseudonym. Neither the data nor the conclusions reported will include any information which may lead to the identification of the participant, unless required by law. Names of the teachers, schools will also not be identified as the participating organisation in the study. The documentation will be accessed by the researcher and authorised by the University of Pretoria research team. The researcher, with assistance from the University of Pretoria, will keep all documentation collected from the interviews in a safekeeping cabinet in the Department of Social Work and Criminology,

INTERVIEWEE CONSENT

I, _____ (full name) have had the researcher explain the Informed Consent form and understand my rights in participating in the study. I voluntarily consent to participating in the study, with insight of the purpose of the study, the research methods and what the data gathered will be utilised for. I will be provided a pseudonym for the study and all information shared will be handled with confidentiality, unless requested otherwise by myself. All information shared will be kept at the University of Pretoria for safekeeping for 10 years. I will be provided with a copy of my signed consent form.

_____   _____
Interviewee's signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's signature   Date

APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR OMMUNITY MEMBERS (FOCUS GROUP)

Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Department of Social Work & Criminology

9th March 2023

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Researcher: Mr Fungai Mushunje
Telephone 071 907 7788
Email: ecnyasha@gmail.com

Social Work and Criminology
University of Pretoria
Private Bag x 20, Hatfield
0028
South Africa

Good day

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I would like to invite you to participate in my study titled:

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES WITH CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS IN ZIMBABWE. THE CASE OF MUTARE DISTRICT.

This research study forms the requirement for the Master's in Social Work Degree at the University of Pretoria. The goal of the study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances about social work services for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe. It is hoped that the findings will be helpful in planning and providing services for such children. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself as the researcher, Mr Fungai Mushunje Telephone 071 907 7788 Email: ecnyasha@gmail.com or my research supervisor, Prof Linda Harms-Smith at Linda.Smith@up.ac.za

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The procedure for the research will entail group discussion with community members for approximate duration of 120 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded by the researcher as well as taking down of some notes.

Room XXX, Humanities Building
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 xxxx | Fax +27 (0)12 420 xxxx
Email xxx@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za

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RISKS AND EFFECTS OF INTERVIEW

No risks, discomforts or emotional harm are foreseen. Should you experience any emotional discomfort prompted by sharing your views and experiences of vulnerabilities of children in difficult circumstances in your area, you should inform the researcher. The researcher has prepared for free psychosocial support from a registered Social Worker.

BENEFITS

As a research participant this study has no immediate benefit for you. However, the results of the study could contribute to enhancing the knowledge and techniques that can be used to gain a better understanding of the views and experiences of teachers and community members who work or interact with children in difficult circumstances about social work services for such children in a remote area of Zimbabwe.

COMPENSATION

You will receive no financial or other form of compensation for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

You will not be coerced into participating in the interview. You will participate at your own free will and can withdraw from participating at any given time without reason. Withdrawing will not affect any relations between you and the organisation or the researcher. If you withdraw during the interview, the data gathered will be destroyed or provided to you to keep.

INTERVIEWEE'S RIGHTS

You can withdraw within the interview, when feeling uncomfortable, at any point. You may decline answering any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. All information obtained will be treated confidentially. In order to protect the identity of the participant, the researcher will use a pseudonym. Neither the data nor the conclusions reported will include any information which may lead to the identification of the participant, unless required by law. Names of the teachers, schools will also not be identified as the participating organisation in the study. The documentation will be accessed by the researcher and authorised by the University of Pretoria research team. The researcher, with assistance from the University of Pretoria, will keep all documentation collected from the interviews in a safekeeping cabinet in the Department of Social Work and Criminology,

INTERVIEWEE CONSENT

I, _____ (full name) have had the researcher explain the Informed Consent form and understand my rights in participating in the study. I voluntarily consent to participating in the study, with insight of the purpose of the study, the research methods and what the data gathered will be utilised for. I will be provided a pseudonym for the study and all information shared will be handled with confidentiality, unless requested otherwise by myself. All information shared will be kept at the University of Pretoria for safekeeping for 10 years. I will be provided with a copy of my signed consent form.

_____   _____
Interviewee's signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's signature   Date

APPENDIX H: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

1. What is your role both at a formal and an informal level, in relation to children living in difficult circumstances in remote rural areas?

2. How long have you worked with or come into contact with children in difficult circumstances?

3. What, in your view, are some unique circumstances that are confronting children living in difficult circumstances living in this remote community?

4. In your opinion, what role do social workers play particularly in working with vulnerable children and their families?

5. Please describe your perceptions about how these difficult circumstances impact children at all levels such as their development, health, psychological, and social wellbeing

6. Could you describe any situations/cases of such children in difficult circumstances who do/did not receive social service interventions of support from service providers, or who received inadequate interventions?

7. What is your view on the future well-being of children in difficult circumstances who are not getting assistance from service providers?

8. What are some of the issues and challenges that affect children in remote rural areas living in difficult circumstances?

9. What kind of support or social care, of a formal or informal nature have you or people that you know, provided personally or through your community or organisation

10. What support or care are you aware of that the general community may be providing for such children and/or their families?

11. What in your view, might some of the risks be that children living in difficult circumstances face?

12. What protective factors do you think might be present for children living in difficult circumstances?

13. What are your views about the reasons for inadequate interventions and support for such children and their families?

14. In your opinion, what are the services, measures or strategies that should be put in, place to effectively help children living in difficult circumstances in remote rural areas?

15. Any other comments?

Thank you very much for participating and sharing your views with me. I greatly appreciate your contribution.

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS (ENGLISH)

1. In your view, what are the current vulnerabilities and challenges confronting children in difficult circumstances in your area?

2. What are the available resources that offer support to children in difficult circumstances?

3. How can community leaders, and various organizations in your community be equipped to identify signs of abuse and trauma confronting children?

4. What measures can the community put in place to identify and support children in difficult circumstances and are in need of care and protection?

5. How can children be supported to access social work services when needed?

6. Protecting children from harm should be everyone's responsibility, how can the community assist social workers to address concerns of harm to children?

7. What recommendations would you like to make for social workers to effectively respond to children's needs in your community?

8. Any other comments?

APPENDIX J: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS (SHONA)

1. Semaonero enyu, ndeapi magariro arikushungurudza vana vechidiki vanogara kumaruwa?

2. Mumagariro enyu, mati mambosanganawo here nevana vanotambura vasingawane rubatsiro kubva kuvabatsiri vakasisyana siyana?

3. Semaonero nemafungiro enyu, vana vanorama mukushungurudzika vari kunganisika sei mumaramiro avo?

4. Rubatsiro rupi rwamuri kupa vana ava kana rubatsiro ruri kubva munharaunda kana kupato akasiyana siyana?

5. Ndezvipi zvamunofunga kuti zvingaitwe kupedza dambudziko kana kubatsira vana varikushungurudzika vanogara kumaruwa?

6. Semaonero nemafungire enyu, chii chirikukonzeresa kuti vana ava vasawana

rubatsiro rwakakwana?

7. Ndezvipi zvamunofunga kuti zvingaitwe kupedza dambudziko kana kubatsira vana varikushungurudzika vanogara kumaruwa?

8. Mamwe mafungiro enyu ?

Maita basa nenguwa yenyu uye nemhinduro dzose dzamatipa. Tinotenda.

APPENDIX K: CONSENT LETTER FROM A SOCIAL WORKER

The Provincial Social Development Officer

Department of Social Development

P Bag Q7743

Mutare

University of Pretoria

Private Bag x 20

Hatfield

0028

South Africa

21 November 2022

Subject: Re: Consent Letter: Ethics Application HUM036/0822 (Mr F Mushunje)

I, MASIMBA MACHISA, I am a practising social worker in the Department of Social Development (DSD) in Mutare district. I have consented to Mr Fungai Mushunje's request that I will be available free of charge to give debriefing or support sessions if the need arises, to the research participants on the topic:

Social work services with children in difficult circumstances living in remote area in Zimbabwe, the case of Mutare district.

The research is being undertaken by Mr Fungai Mushunje, student number: u21648094 with the University of Pretoria.

> PROVINCIAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
> OFFICE
> MANICALAND
>
> 2 1 NOV 2022
>
> P. BAG Q 7743, MUTARE
> ZIM. TEL: 02020-64615/64674

Yours sincerely

MASIMBA MACHISA

Social Worker, Practice number: 42/2022