

**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**



**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY STRUCTURES AND FAMILY PROCESSES ON THE  
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I SHANTEL VANDIRAYI R144085E declare that this dissertation is the product of my work that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all sources I have used have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Signed.....

Date...../...../...../

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research to the Lord Almighty and my beloved mum, Lizzie Moyana for their support throughout my four years course. I also dedicate this research to my late grandmother Masline Moyana and my late uncle, Milton Chari.

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper provides a brief overview on the effects of family structures and family processes on the psychological well-being of children. The continuous changes in the demographics of families have had positive and negative effects on the psychological well-being of children. How do family structures impact on a child's psychological well-being? What are the effects of background differences, family structural change and social environment on the psychological well-being of children? What are the effects of family processes on the psychological well-being of children? How does socioeconomic status affect children's psychological well-being? The paper tried to answer these questions. Children from two parent family structures have shown to be displaying high levels of psychological well-being in most areas of development than their associates from single parent families. Two theories dominated the study, the family composition perspective which looks in the structure of the families and the family process perspective which looks into the processes of the families. A qualitative research approach was adopted so as to establish an in-depth information in the research understudy. Through careful analysis, the research found that children from two-parent family structures have found to be performing well in their academics because of dual support from both parents. Children from single-parent families have been found to be associated with poor academic performance and poor social relationships. The conclusion drawn from the study show that the two-parent family structures contribute largely to the psychological well-being of children than a single-parent family structure.*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

Chapter one delivers a passing summary of the research literature in this field. This chapter looks into the background of the study, problem study and the purpose behind the research, the objectives and research questions, significance of the study, delimitations and limitations as well as the definition of key terms.

#### 1.2 Background of the study

It is well agreed that the living arrangement of children is diverse (Kreider & Ellis, 2015). With the continuous changing of the demographics of families, underpinning relationships are also changing. (Charles, et al, 2008). Divorce, marriage, cohabitation and births outside marriages have created and recreated two structure families and single structure families. A large number of children resides with two cohabiting stepparents, unmarried parents, a mother or a father, and a very little number of children are raised from a two biological parent structure (Wadfogel, 2010). Past researches on family structures pinpoint that family structures and family processes have implications on the child's well-being (Carr & Springer, 2010). Children from intact biological families have high levels of psychological well-being and those that are raised outside families of intact biological parents tend to do less well on average (Amato, 2005). There is relatively a small difference that exists between children from different family structures and this arrangement embraces numerous spheres of children's outcomes including behavioral, cognitive, mental health and physical health (Mamot, et. al, 2012).

Parent child relationships are captured to a greater degree by measures of family structures (Videon, 2005). This clearly shows that the most significant feature of the family environment are parents who direct resources that include money and time which however molds the growth of the child's psychological well-being (Walsh, 2015). With the cumulative variety of family structures, researches indicate that 59% of children are living with their biological parents (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). About 16% of children have been recorded to be living in single-parent world-wide (Huffman et al, 2010). About 57% of children in Zimbabwe come from single-parent families (Zimbabwe Population Census, 2012). A commonly used formula differentiates parenting styles in relation to the provision and level of monitoring that parents

apply on their children which however, have an impact on their psychological well-being (Eisenberg; et al, 2010). This formula identifies that two-parent families exercise a lot of control and support on their children and single-parent families, due to depression tend to exercise excessive monitoring and little care, and they are hardly involved in their children's lives (Mowen, 2011). Of these, two-parent families have been found effective for children's school commitment, self-esteem, and general decision making

Transition in the family structure is brought about by new relationships in the family and different family changing aspects such as divorce, and parental re-partnering (Sweeney, 2010). Past research studies have shown the significances of these continuous changing demographics of family structures on the psychological well-being of children (Amato, 2005). Their findings have concluded that there is a connection that exists between family structures and family processes that takes place in the family and the well-being of children. Studies on the family structures and family processes indicate that the differences in family structures and family processes result in children displaying different well-beings in different settings (Maupin; et al, 2010). Family structures affect the psychological well-being of children directly and they indirectly affect the family processes such as parental-conflicts, parent-child relationship, background differences such as background differences such as salaries and the psychological well-being of the (Amato, 2005). As a result, family processes and background differences are predictors that convey the effects of family structures on the well-being of children. Family processes have a greatest impact on the children's psychological well-being (Davis-Kean, 2005). Children's psychological well-being has proven to be of greater importance because what influences the child's social relations with associates are depressed moods (Brackett; et al, 2006). Episodes of depression in children's lives are likely to be continuous and repetitive throughout the life sequence. Lastly, depressive moods are a pointer especially in early life that an individual is likely to develop critical depressive disorders later in life (Waite, 2010).

While families have consistently experienced change throughout history, children have displayed different outcomes in all settings due to different family structures and family processes (Sweeney, 2010). Children residing in single-parent family structures have displayed low levels of psychological well-being across a wide range of events than their associates in two-parent families, while separation of parents has come along with it a large collection of negative results

for children (Mackay, 2005). Past studies indicate that children that live with single-parents from divorce or matrimonial births display poor results than children that are being raised by both parents (Ryff, 2014). Research findings indicate that single mothers tend to spend about 10-16% less time with their children as compared to mothers of intact families (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008). The differences lie in the education and household incomes. A lot of studies have shown that the more children contact with their parents in intact family structures results in high levels of well-being (Peters & Ehrenberg, 2008). Children that are raised by single-parent families tend to execute poor performance in school, (Sigle-Rushton and Kradvdal, 2009), display more violent behaviors (Davis-kean, 2005), have poorer cognitive development (Kim, 2011), behavioral adjustment (Magnuson and Berger 2009), and health outcomes (Heard, et al 2008).

According to Zimbabwe National Plan of 2014, a quite number of families are headed by children under the age of 18 and these children face much greater life materials and psycho-social challenges and stigma than other children with stable family structures and stable social background. The National AIDS Council in its 2016 fourth quarter report in Shurugwi mentioned that children heading families tend to resort to mining and prostitution as means for financial backup. In support of this, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education in Shurugwi reported that the grades for such children in schools have dropped by 68%. As it may be, it has been reported that children from such families tend to fail to make decisions, display violent behaviors and have poorer cognitive developments since there are no adults to back them up (NAC, 2016)

Following the studies on the changing demographics of families, many researchers who have looked into the relationship between family structures and family processes and the well-being of children have been limited to somewhat small size of the effects that is, their findings were based only on the parents' report on the psychological well-being of their children. The aim of this study is to add related information on the already existing documents. Hence it will be concentrating on children's reports on the quality of the relationship between parents and their children. How children see themselves in terms of psychological well-being would seem important. Secondly, parent-child relationships is measured by the children's report on the levels of their parent's supervision, involvement, discipline, control and the times enjoyed with their

children. Lastly, various family structures will be discussed. These include intact family structures, divorced and separated family structures, cohabiting families and child-headed.

This research is of vital importance as it has social policy implications. There is a continuous debate around the state of families in the political world in Zimbabwe hence divorce has to be tough and its procedures harder to attain completely. The basis of this notion lies on the certainty that the two-parent family structures are the best family structures for the development of well-being of children. Transformations in the family structures in the world are however linked to wider social forces and are obverse. In view of this, transformations in the family structures are however difficult to elude for the majority of Zimbabwean adults and their children. As an alternative of compelling values on families, regulations ought to address distinctive requirements of families on the basis of socioeconomic features and family processes that exists in each family structure.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Zimbabwe Action Plan of 2014 detects that a greater material of poorer cognitive development and psycho-social challenges and stigma among children are spearheaded by the relationships that exists between parents and their children and other background differences such as income which are inclined to differences of family structures. Shurugwi mining town has been extremely dominated by single parent and cohabitation family structures as a result high death rates due to HIV/AIDS pandemic and mining activities. Such family structures and processes have had effects on child behavior and career choices. NAC 2016 report for video screenings for youth in schools in Shurugwi district coupled with the report from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Shurugwi indicated that a host of children who perform better in schools were linked to two- parent family structures. A high increase in poor performance, school dropout, drug abuse, early marriages and violence among young people in this area were linked to single-parent families. A growing board of evidence also indicated that 66% of children involved in bullying, school dropout, drug abuse, early marriages and general poor school performance were raised from single parent, and cohabiting families or they are from poor family background experiencing domestic violence (NAC, 2015). More so, 35% of children in Shurugwi, below the age of 16 drop out from school every term and as means of sourcing funds to complete education, they either engage in mining activities or prostitution (Shurugwi times, 2017). This

may indicate the effects of family structure and process on children's behavior. However despite an observed growing board of information on children's performance , drug abuse , violence, school dropouts, high mischievous and early child marriages, little has been known on the effects of family structures and family processes on children's psychological well-being. Therefore this research is endeavor to determine the effects of family structures such as single parent, cohabitating families and family processes such as quality parent-child relationship, communication patterns and the relationship between parents on psychological wellbeing of children. The research examines the effects of parent-child relationships, family communication patterns, family economic status and other family structures such as intact families, divorced-separated families, stepfamilies and mother-partner families and their effects on child's self-esteem, school performance, self-confidence, career choices and involvement in antisocial behavior.

#### **1.4 Purpose**

The purpose of the research is to shed light on reasons as to why child outcomes are dependent on family setting so as to add related information on the psychological impact of social background on children's behavior which helps on understanding and modifications of intervention programs. The research adopted a qualitative approach to examine the impact factors such as family social structure , communication patterns, parenting skills, family economic status, and family process on child's perception of life , decision making , self-esteem, career choice , life satisfaction and behavior in general.

#### **1.5 Research objectives**

1. To explore on the impact of family structures on the psychological well-being of children.
2. To explore on the background differences and social environment on the psychological well-being of children.
3. To examine on the effects of family processes on the psychological well-being of children
4. To determine the effects of socioeconomic status on the psychological well-being of children

#### **1.6 Research questions**

1. How do family structures impact on a child's psychological well-being?

2. What are the effects of background differences, family structural change and social environment on the psychological well-being of children?
3. What are the effects of family processes on the psychological well-being of children?
4. How does socioeconomic status affect children's psychological well-being?

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

The study seeks to address on the effects family structures and family processes have on the psychological well-being of children. This is not only important for filling the literature gap and establishment of other research topics but also, for creation of sound intervention strategies and rehabilitation strategies as well as identification of social problems pertaining the psychological well-being of children. The study saves to educate parents on the importance and effects of parenting skills, family communication patterns and family structures on children's psychological wellbeing. It also helps to inform the child and social care, policy makers, ministry of education and other interested stakeholders on the impact of family structures and family processes on child's self-esteem, decision making, school performance, early child marriages, violence and behavior in general. More so information from the study can also be used as a good foundation for upcoming work. Thus the exploration can assist as the guideline for other researchers to draft in their research problem as well as the literature review.

### **1.8 Delimitations**

The study was conducted in Shurugwi District in a location called Dark City and children between the ages of 14 and 18 years were used as research participants. The research sample site was chosen for the following reasons; the research sample site has dominant family structures which mostly rely on mining activities and secondly, there is an increasing rate of low school performance, early child marriages, school dropouts, violence and child drug abuse most linked to family structures and social background. A qualitative approach was adopted in order to get a depth insight on the effects of family structures and family processes on the psychological wellbeing of children. The study also gives attention on the psychological well-being of children that are groomed in diverse family backgrounds who display differential patterns of outcomes across a wide range of developmental domains.

## **1.9 Limitations**

The research adopted a qualitative approach which requires the use of semi-structured interviews. The problem with the approach is that it can lead to distortion and essay affected by social desirability. Confidentiality in family matters was very vital for the sake of peace, therefore some of the vital information required by the researcher was deemed confidential. More so the issue of informed consent from parents of the children also proved to be time consuming. However, to avert the aforementioned limitation the research used interview guide for the interviewing process. The researcher also made appointments with the parents of the children selected for study to get informed consent. More so the research ensures a high level of confidentiality to lure children to participate and give truthful information. Probing skills were also used to gather information from children not willing to talk. Perhaps the most obvious limitation is that data will be based on the client's perception and therefore liable to subjective errors

## **1.10 Assumptions**

The researcher assumes that respondents are provided with right and accurate information. It is also assumed that the information from the respondents will be sufficient to deduce findings and conclusions. The researcher assumes that the findings attained from reports from the carefully chosen participants on parental conflict and parent-child relationships will apply to all families in Zimbabwe. The research also assumes that the limitations encountered do not have a negative impact on the validity of the research. It is also assumed that the instruments used for data collection are valid and reliable.

## **1.11 Key terms**

**Family Structure-** this refers to the various characteristics of the family, the way they are organized and the power relations within the group. A family includes either a couple or not and its children or a person without a spouse and her children (single parent family). It is defined as a family support system that channels resources such as time and money to the child (Goodman; et al, 2005). However, the traditional family structure has become less dominant due to transition of family relations due to mining and HIV pandemic. Hence, family structures outside the biological two-parent family structure are created and recreated.

**Family Process** - this refers to the relationship that exists between parents and their children. The relationship between parents and their child and the parent to parent relationship are considered to be the most important family processes that make up the child's psychological well-being (Brown, 2004). Distortion of family processes result in adverse outcome behaviors.

**Children** - children are defined as victims of disrupted family structures and family processes who are below the age of 18 (Cowan & Hetherington, 2013)

**Psychological Well-Being** – this refers to how a child examines and evaluates his or her life at home, or with other peers or in the school environment. Diener (2012) notes that these evaluations come in form of cognition or affect. Information based appraisal of one's life that is, a child gives conscious evaluative judgements about his or her satisfaction with life as a whole affects one's well-being.

**Single-parent Family** - those families with children under the age of 18 headed by a parent who is widowed or divorced and not remarried, or by a parent who has never been married.

**Two-parent Family**- this refers to a family group that consists of the mother, the father and the child and provides dual support for the child which promotes the psychological well-being of a child.

### **1.12 Chapter summary**

Chapter one is the introductory to the research and basically outlines the background of the research and outlines the research problem. This chapter outlines the significance of the study to the student, the university, parents as well as policy makers. Chapter one contains the main research objectives and research questions as well as challenges faced in the course of undertaking the study. Chapter 2 will provide a literature review behind the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter analyses previous research findings. It focuses on the ideas, opinions, and views of other researchers concerning the topic under study. The study will describe, summarize, evaluate, clarify and integrate the content of other scholars. The literature review was undertaken so as to determine the effects that different family structures and family processes have on a child's psychological well-being.

#### **2.2 The relationship between family dynamics and children's psychological wellbeing**

It has been shown in total that children who come from two-parent family structures have high levels of psychological well-being (Amato, 2005). In an interesting way, children who come from never-married families have scored high in temperamental well-being than those children who come from step families and divorced families. Low levels of emotional well-being are scored by the children that come from divorced families (Amato, 2005). Research findings which support this study indicate that reports of mothers on the psychological well-being of their children were used basing on the measures of world-wide well-being (Samman, 2007). How family structures influence the psychological well-being of children have been displayed in many distinct factors (Andrew & Withey, 2012). The most relevant of factors appear to be the parent-child relationships. Recent studies have been based on the reports of mothers on their children's psychological well-being and parent-child relationship (Amato, 2005). Reports of children indicate that differences across family structures and family processes and other variables produce the connection that occurs among family structures and the psychological well-being of children. Kelly (2007) notes that the levels of parental discord and the parent-child relations and

background differences such as income and the psychological well-being of the mother have an influence on the psychological well-being of children

Basically, parents in divorced families or separate families are less likely to be involved in their children's lives. Researchers who have looked into this study show that children who reported low self-esteem came from divorced families and separated families. Kelly, (2007) notes that the less parents respond to their children affect their development of self-esteem and self-confidence. When parents less involve themselves in their children's lives, they typically receive scant encouragement (Cherlin, 2007). Divorced parent, the non-custodial tend to have less connection with their children which also affect financial contribution which is a social capital that forms the basis of a child's self-esteem. Children from intact families, where both biological parents' involvement is high, tend to display high self-esteem. Kelly, (2007) notes that when parents are over-involved, they control their children excessively, providing few chances and opportunities for children to self-reflect and have positive thoughts and feelings (Amato, 2005). Single-parents involve themselves in their children's lives and they care more and this contributes to the development of self-esteem and self-confidence.

A vast number of families are not aware that in as much as they would want their children to excel in school, family structures have an important impact on children's academic capacity (Amato, 2005). Research findings support that two-parent families have a great impact on school behavior and children's educational achievement. Brown, (2004) notes that the two-parent families are an ideal type of family in which a child can be raised. Children from intact biological families have high performance in school. Children from divorced-single and always single parent display low performance in schools (Dingwall, 2012). Notes that these children's family structure is associated with depression, conflicts and this affects children's psychological well-being. More so, past researches show that mothers from single-parent family structures have low levels of psychological well-being and this drifts them from their involvement in their children's lives.

Davis-kean, (2005) notes that the differences in family structures also impact on the behavior outcome of children. Research findings indicate that children from single-parent families are associated with high antisocial behavior. Past researches that take justification for the socioeconomic circumstances of single-parent families and other risks including parenting styles,

level of supervision and monitoring children indicate that these factors account for differences in the behavior outcomes of children (Hart, 2013). Single parent families have difficulties in getting assistance. Doubt they are to work to support their children, they have difficulties in providing supervision for their children. The basis of violent behaviors is poor supervision (Henggeler, et al, 2009). Children from intact families may also not receive the supervision that is needed to safeguard a positive developmental course for children (Hart, 2013). A quite number of studies indicate that deprived parental management and disciplinary practices are associated with violent behaviors. Parent's poor monitoring, supervision, failure to set clear goals, excessively discipline of children predict violent behaviors (Amato, 2001).

### **2.3 The impact of family structures on the psychological well-being of children**

Family structures have both positive and negative effects on the psychological wellbeing of children. The family provides a foundation where children develops social skills, emotional attachments and psychosocial wellbeing. The family structure determines the kind of safe heaven the child receives during early socialization which facilitates child's emotional and mental wellbeing (Thompson, 2007). Cancian and Reed, (2013) assert that different family structures have great influence on children's psychological well-being.

#### **2.3.1 Intact family structures**

Anderson et .al (2015) in his researches evaluates the impact family structures have on the health and well-being of children, supporting that children residing with biological parents who are married consistently have better emotional, physical and social well-being. This is because they experience dual support from both parents (Cancian & Reed, 2013). Early childhood experiences or the structure of the family where the child comes from have an effect on child's self-esteem, career choice, confident level, school performance and social interaction. Copen et.al (2012) posits that 80% of children raised with both biological parents have high degree of emotional well-being, high self-esteem and they are more likely to perform better at school than those from child-headed families, cohabitation, single-parent families. Amato and Keith (2013) also find out that children with divorced parents continued to score significantly lower levels on measures of psychological adjustments academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-concept, and social relations. This is due to the losses that occurs during marriage breakdown. Thus during the divorcing period parents engage much on their marital

issue than taking care of the child as a result the child feels rejected and this feeling affect child's emotional development and psychological well-being.

### **2.3.2 Single parent and separate**

Single-parent and separate family structures are among family structures that predispose children to ill psychological wellbeing. Past research findings indicate that there is a close association between family structures and children's psychological wellbeing. Children born out of marriages and those raised by single parents are mostly affected by poverty, the experience that affect their self-esteem, career choice, self-efficacy and psychosocial wellbeing in general. Amato, (2006) posits that children from single parent families are more likely to experience poverty which consequently affect their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Chetty et.al (2014) also suggests that there is direct link between family structures and financial mobility. Thus children living with single parents are less likely to experience upward financial mobility. More so, the implication of such family structure determine child adulthood behavior.

### **2.3.3 Child headed and cohabiting family structures**

Child headed and cohabiting family structures have detrimental effects on children psychological and emotional wellbeing. Past research indicates that children raised from child-headed family have low self-efficacy, low self-esteem and emotional problems due to lack of attachment (Chetty et.al 2014). Child headed family structures are also responsible for raising children with anti-social behaviors. Moore (2015) posits that children raised in the absent of both biological parents are twice likely to engage in antisocial behavior, a significance of their growing family environment. Chetty et.al (2014) also illustrates that cohabiting family structure facilitate early sexual debut and child abuse an experience that affect child's psychological wellbeing. Children raised in cohabiting families with the mother changing partners often are prone to abuse, experience anxiety and desire more a fatherhood figure which affect their emotional wellbeing. Anderson (2015) asserts that children from cohabiting family and child headed family structures are twice likely to engage in sexual behavior than those raised by both biological parents due to early childhood environment.

### **2.3.4 Divorced family structure**

Divorced family structure also affects children psychological wellbeing. A growing body of evidence shows that many changes that take place inside family structures expose children to

greater risks of behavioral problems (Brown, 2004). Children usually suffer from divorce that takes place between parents. The impact of divorce on a child turns into long-term psychological damage (Camfield, 2013). Children that come from divorced families usually engage in early sexual activities that may lead to early teen pregnancies, associate with antisocial peers because of low parental monitoring and supervision, high levels of autonomy and lack of quality parental responsibilities (Farrington & Welsh, 2012). Children who live in divorced families tend to spend time with stepfathers. As a result of these disruptions there is an increase of different several partners who come and stay in the home at different times. Because of such environment, children from these families develop antisocial behaviors such as theft, drug use which are illegal (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007). Children's social behavior is under control in two parent families. For example, teen pregnancies are very low when children offer appropriate understanding with parental rules. Lack of parental warmth, affection and care are identified in unstable families and they push teen onto early sex (Ambert, 2016).

#### **2.4 The effects of background differences, family structural changes and social environment on children's psychological wellbeing.**

Family background differences, social environment and changes on family structure contribute much to the overall well-being of the child (Amato, 2005). Factors such as family intact, number of children or siblings and family location are vital on children's psychological wellbeing. Many children who grew up in intact families live with both biological parents and they have never experienced the effects of parental marital conflict (Amato, 2005). They have better self-esteem and they are also able to withstand social relationships than the ones who observe their parents quarreling (Clark, 2015). Family background has a core effect on child development. Family setup that hinders personal space impact on child mental health and psychological wellbeing. Amato & Afifi, (2006) on the effects of poverty on the psychological well-being of children and adult development discovered that 70% of the children who reported to be sharing a room with parents or opposite sex siblings, have low self-esteem and poor social interaction. Such factors also predispose children to sexual abuse, and can also facilitates early sexual debuts. Cornell (2017) posits that most poor children from poor background families have more chronic psychological stress and have more anti-social conduct such as bullying and aggression. They also have more deficits in short-term spatial memory.

Rapid family structure changes due to divorce, separation, cohabitation, death, and relocation also affect children mental wellness. Factors such as divorce, separation, death and cohabiting are predictors of social environment that impact children psychological wellbeing (Hoffman, 2013). Children from divorced family are mostly likely to have psychological problem such as lack of attachment, stress and distress which tend to affect their psychological wellness. Divorced and separated families produce children experiencing marital interruptions (Gary 2016). Children with divorced parents report less satisfaction, weaker sense of personal control, greater unhappiness, more symptoms of anxiety and depression (Amato, 2005). These family structures have limited financial resources which affect children's well-being (Dingwall, 2012). Separated families tend to suffer more ups and downs in family processes and socioeconomic.

Social environment that includes individual physical surrounding, community resources and social relationship also influences children's psychological wellbeing (Umber & Karas, 2010). The physical surrounding of a social environment include housing, facilities for education, and open space for recreation influence the quality of parenting and in turn affect the health and wellbeing of children within that environment ( Evans 2016). As it may be, the availability of community resources influence the health of individuals living within it. Living in a socioeconomically deprived, underdeveloped community has a negative impact on the child's outcome (Dingwall, 2012). Environment related issues play a vital role on children's psychological wellbeing (Evans, 2016). (Biglan, et. al, 2012) asserts that mining environment, overcrowded communities and growth points have an impact on child's overall behavior and carrier choices. More so, where parents send their children for schooling and where they live dictates their social environment at large. (Robson, 2004). In turn, the social environment mostly defines who children form social relationships with and the quality of those social relationships, as many of the relationships children form are within their family or neighbourhood (Garbarino, 2017). As such, the decisions by parents of where they work or where they live and the school children will attend evidently affect the wellbeing of their children (Waldfoegel, 2006). The likelihood that a child will develop positive social relationships is determined by living in a good social environment (Cornell 2016). Social behaviour and the ability to develop positive relationships with others were traditionally conceived as skills which would develop naturally. However, children must be taught pro-social behaviour because there is an increasing recognition that social behaviour is learned. Children learn from their social environment, for

example by mimicking (or challenging) the social behaviour of their peers, and thus what they see in their day to day environment is likely to influence their social behaviour (Amato, 2005)

## **2.5 The effects of family processes on children's psychological wellbeing**

Family process such as communication patterns, family relationships and parenting style contribute to child psychological well-being (Armstrong, et al, 2005). Communication between parents and children associates with psychological wellbeing such as depression, self-esteem, substance use and school adjustment (Park, 2004). Quality of communication among family members contribute to the quality of the relationship between parents and their children which in turn predicts children's well-being. (Broberg, 2012). Past research studies on the impact of parent-child relationships on children's psychological development concluded that lack of supportive parents can lead children to a number of social, emotional and health related negative developmental trajectories (Clayton, 2014). One aspect of good parent-child relationships is through open communication which plays a critical role in maintaining healthy child's development and family functioning. Moreover, communication is important for upholding and supporting close family relationship and it contributes to affective qualities of parent-child relationships (Bowlby, 2008). Therefore, communication becomes an important key issue of predicting the psychological well-being of a child. A host of researchers have established that poor parent-child relationships and poor communication patterns expose children to increased risky sexual behaviors (Rogers et.al 2015). Goldberg-Looney (2015) also maintains that parents who involve themselves much in discussion with their children and who communicate effectively have children who are less involved in anti-social behaviors. More so, various studies also suggest that an improvement in the quality of communication between a child and a parent reduces the risk of poor academic achievement and low self-esteem among children. According to Singh and Lal (2012) children's subjective well-being includes children's self-evaluations of their lives, and contains cognitive judgments, such as life satisfaction, and affective evaluations.

The quality of relation between parents and their children, parent to parent relationship and family interactions is highly associated with child's self-esteem, school behavior and social relationships (Park, 2004). Past research studies support that communication problems between parents and their children result in higher probability of school behavioral problems and positive parent-child communication are specifically essential for children's healthy development and

academic success (Chill et.al 2016). Jeynes (2014) also asserts that open or positive communication between a parent and child is associated with decreased levels of anti-social behaviors, child's life satisfaction, fewer child externalizing symptoms and child's coping strategies. The ability of children to develop social relationships in the community is also affected by the relationship between parents and their children (Steinberg, 2001).

The foundations of individual's psychological well-being lies in the interaction in general and role playing (Steinberg, 2001). Videon (2005). The central and relevant role a child should play is being a son or a daughter. The relevant roles for children have a great influence on psychological-well-being (Kelly, 2007). The interaction that children have with their parents forms the basis of their psychological well-being, which may however have an effect throughout the life of children's psychological well-being. A growing board of evidence support this notion. Children with parents that have high acceptance, support and affection have reported low levels of depression (Videon, 2005). How children perceive their relations with their parents also influence their well-being (Stroufe, 2005). Past researches have shown that the relationship that have a great impact on the child's psychological well-being is the mother-child relationship unlike the father-child relationship (Dingwall, 2012). The involvement of fathers in their children's lives is very low across all family structures (Videon, 2005). In cases where there is low paternal involvement, mother-child relationships become more influential on the psychological well-being of children.

Parent to parent relationship or family environment also affect children's psychological wellbeing (Davis-Kean, 2005). Marital conflict between parents has a direct negative effect on children's psychological wellbeing (Amato & Afifi, 2006). Davis-Kean (2005) propounds that experiential overt conflict is a direct stressor for children. Parents who engage in too much conflicts tend to discipline their children more harshly and display less warmth in turn affecting their emotional well-being. Seemingly, children in high conflict families have difficulties in concentrating in all areas and are at high risk of anti-social behaviors, depression and anxiety (Hoffman, et al, 2013). More so, Hoffman et.al (2013) notes that there is a visible positive connection between parental marital happiness and children's psychological wellbeing. Parental conflicts cause emotional and physical distress on children (Amato, 2005). One research study reported that children of parents who had difficulty disciplining their children and being

affectionate towards them was due to stress because of conflict between parents and these children received lower teacher ratings in their social behaviors compared to children whose parents did not experience difficulties (Mistry, et al, 2002).

## **2.6 The impact of family socio-economic status on children's psychological wellbeing**

Family socioeconomic status plays an important role on promoting children psychological wellbeing. Davis-Kean (2005) notes that socioeconomic status, specifically parent's education and income, indirectly relates to children's academic achievement through parent's belief and behaviors. Parents' level of education affects the kind of jobs that come along their way which affects the amount of income generated in the family (Duncan & Magnuson, 2003). This has an indirect influence on the child but however affecting the kind of school, people to interact with, the kind of neighborhood where they reside and having adverse impacts on the psychological well-being of the child. Low income is associated with poverty. Li et.al (2016) asserts that there is common and visible relationship between family economic status and child's psychological wellbeing. Past research findings indicate that children from low income families are twice likely to be associated with low self-esteem, depression and physical health problems. According to Li et al (2016) low income families are not able to access good education facilities for their children, health and leisure facilities that helps them relieve pressure but rather they rely on outdated staff which make them feel inferior. This experience have detrimental effects on their psychological wellbeing. The daily lived activities of children from low income families differ from that of high income family who can afford to enjoy leisure as well having better medical care and diet to keep them health. Children from low income families have limited access to material resources and social activities, which discourage them from participating in various social (Ho et.al; 2015). This lack of access to resources has greater than expected negative impact on children's psychological wellbeing

Ho et.al (2015) support that children are interested in making comparisons between other society members in terms of their financial conditions. Children who consider themselves in a better position obtain a sense of superiority, which helps them build up their self-esteem whereas exclusion from services creates a sense of inadequacy thereby lowering a child's self-esteem. Economic status also affect children social relationship, prohibits them from having open interaction with their peers. Asare et.al (2015) posits that children having difficulty in accessing

material resources and social services reported to be avoiding to make friends with children from high-income families and feeling inferior due to their financial situation. Parental sources of income also affect children's behavior, career choice, self-esteem and depressive symptoms (Duncan & Magnuson, 2003). Clayton (2014) describes income poverty as the condition of not having enough income to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. Because children are dependent on their family, they enter or avoid poverty by virtue of their family's economic circumstances. Children cannot alter family conditions by themselves, at least until they approach adulthood. Children often rate themselves according to their parent's occupation and those from low income find it difficult to talk about parents' occupation. This experience affects their social relationship, as results affect their psychological wellbeing.

## **2.7 The family composition perspective**

Theorists who are in favor of the family composition perspective support that the two-parent intact family structure is the most suitable structure for children's psychological well-being (Orthner, et al, 2004). Their argument is based on the findings that indicate that children that are not raised by intact families tend to display lower levels of well-being than the children that are raised by intact families. Amato, 2005 posits that children that grow in single-parent families tend to display low levels of well-being. Wandering from social capital is the main reason that was shown from past research studies. Amato (2005) notes that the social capital that is important for children is the economic, emotional and educational support parents provide for their children. The choices that parents make of living apart, arising from parental discord harms, and on certain occasions damages the social capital that would have been accessible for children had the parents lived together (Orthner, et al, 2004). The parents that have separated themselves from their children hardly involve themselves emotionally in the lives of their children. Their involvement in financial support of their children is likely to decrease. As a result, many children from single-parent families are likely to receive lower levels of educational, emotional and economic support (Orthner, et al, 2004). As it may be, past research findings show that children who grew up in families where biological parents were present (continuously single parents, divorced families, step families) will exhibit a lot of adjustment problems than children from intact families, first married family units (Amato, 2005).

Shared views in the family composition perspective claims that biological parents assure the most favorable environment for healthy developments for children (Sroufe, L. A. (2005). Bursts from two parent family structures as it is shown, are a problematic for the psychological well-being of children (Dingwall, et al, 2012). A single parent structure is joined with low levels of parental supervision, parent-child interaction, support and control-family dynamics have been shown to have deleterious consequences for children, (Hoffman et al, 2013). Socialization deficits for children in single-parent families have been caused by the lack of generational boundaries and hierarchical authority. Single-parent families disadvantage children in that the children have lived long period of time following their parental separation and this is adversely affected by interruptions or reductions in parental interaction, monitoring and support in relation to the formation of stepfamily (Umber & Karas, 2010). Theorists in support of family composition perspective claim that family structures do have a direct connection to the well-being of children.

### **2.8 The family process perspective**

Theorists in support of the family process perspective claim that family processes alter the well-being of a child and that these processes influence the transition of different family constructions (Amato, 2000). Family processes that are of great importance for children are the relationship between parents and their children and the relationship of parents (Nurek, 2006). Families characterized by good relationships between the parents and the child and low parental discord have high levels of psychological well-being despite the structure of the family (Amato, 2005). Family processes can also be altered by the structure of the family (Parson& Parson, 2004). Parent-child relationships can be more difficult to maintain in families where biological parents have separated. (Hoffman et al, 2013). Carlson & Corcoran (2001) posit that income is one of the most important resource across families. Naturally, single parent families have the lowest household income (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). The mother's psychological well-being is another important resource that promotes the child's psychological well-being. The differences in family processes and other variables across family structures cause different levels of children's well-being.

## **2.9 Knowledge gap**

The research gap the study sought to address lies in the effects of the family structures and family processes on the psychological well-being of children. The dominant question that is to be addressed in this study is: what are the effects of different family structures on the psychological well-being of children. The aim of this research is to address the question. Related information to the past researches will be added. A host of researchers that have looked into this study had no specific age group which is an important aspect in the research study. Past researchers who have looked into this study have focused mainly on the reports provided by parents on their children's psychological well-being only. This research will be looking in detail on the reports provided by children. The relationship of parents and their children will be a great necessity in the study and the reports will be based on children's views. The way children see themselves in terms of psychological well-being would seem important. The relationship between parents and their children will be based on the reports provided by children on the levels of parental involvement, discipline, supervision, control and the times enjoyed with their children.

## **2.10 Chapter summary**

Chapter 2 was the literature overview. It focused on the major concepts in the topic, themes of the topic, theoretical framework and the knowledge gap. Chapter 3 will be focusing on the research methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The study employed qualitative approach as a method of gathering first-hand information. Semi-structured interviews meetings were used as a research instrument with the intention of creating a safe and friendly interview so that the participants can open up and communicate openly. The research used a phenomenological research design to explore on the effects of family structure and family processes on children psychological wellbeing. The chapter contains information on ethical consideration, research design, data collection procedure, population sample and target.

#### **3.2 Research approach**

A research paradigm guides the way things are done or more formally establishes a set of practices. This study adopted the qualitative approach. Yilmaz (2013) posits that a qualitative study is an investigative process of understanding a social human problem conducted in a natural setting that is based on constructing complex, holistic pictures, formed with word and reporting detailed of informants. He farther explains that a qualitative research tries to create sense of interpreted phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Emphasis is put on the

natural setting and the points of view of the research participants. Seidmen (2013) posit that qualitative research is always subjective to the researcher. A qualitative approach was useful for this research because through a close look at people's words, actions and records, it placed emphasis on understanding. The approach was useful for the research because the study required to establish an in-depth information in the effects of family structures and family processes on the psychological well-being of children thus the qualitative approach provided with such. The qualitative approach was effective for this research because the topic needed to be ventured as variables could not be easily identified. Moreover, the qualitative study was useful because of the need to present a detailed view of the topic. The approach enabled the researcher to study individuals in their natural setting. This involves going out to the setting or field of study, gaining access, and gathering material. The collection of data in qualitative approach enabled personal experience and engagement (Tuffold & Newman, 2012). In this, the researcher had direct contact with the people and situation and phenomenon under investigation.

### **3.3 Research design**

This research adopted the IPA analysis (Interpretive Data Analysis). IPA is an approach that targets to offer insights into how a given person in a given context makes sense of a given phenomenon (Palmer et al, 2010). The aim that is generated by this research design is to explore in detail individual experiences and to examine how participants are making sense of their personal and social world. IPA allows the researcher to gain a phenomenological account of participants' experiences (Pringle et al, 2011). Participants may struggle to express what they are thinking and feeling. The researcher will have to interpret the person's mental and emotional state thus it was the important research design for the topic under study.

### **3.4 Target population**

Participants will be children between the ages 13 and 18 from biological two-parent family structure and single-parent family structure. Children from other family structures outside the biological two-parent families will also be included. The study will consist of 9 participants.

### **3.5 Sampling size**

A sample is a subset of measurement or a part of the whole drawn from a certain population (Collins et al, 2000). A sample is selected from a defined population. The research sample for this custody will comprise of 9 participants from various family structures.

### **3.6 Sampling method**

A homogenous sampling method will be used for the research. A homogeneous sampling is the process of selecting a small homogenous group or units for subject for examination and analysis (Johnson, 2008). Homogeneous sampling is used when the goal of the research is to understand and describe a particular group in depth. Homogenous sampling method is a purposive sampling method that aims at the identification and selection of individuals that are really knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon in the question.

### **3.7 Research instruments**

Semi-structured interviews were used for collecting data. Semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further (Wahyuni, 2012). An interview guide will be used to make the interview a lot easier. This research tool is effective for qualitative information as it helps to gather in-depth information and it allows participants to explain and express more on what they are going through (Merriam, 2015). More so, semi-structured interviews provide a vibrant set of guidelines for interviewers and can provide dependable, and comparable qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews permit participants a free expression of views in their own terms hence it is important for acquiring in-depth information (Merriam, 2015)

### **3.8 Data collection procedure**

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. This method will allow the researcher to come up with an understanding of phenomena through observing particular instances of the phenomena as they emerge in specific contexts. The researcher was given a data collection letter by the MSU department of Psychology which she directed to Shurugwi Town Council for approval and clearance. The researcher used an interview guide to lead the interviewing process. Probing skills were also used to gather information from children not willing to talk.

### **3.9 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis was applied by the researcher for analyzing data. Thematic analysis refers to the narrative data whereby resultant themes are identified (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Thematic analysis was important in this research study in analyzing data as it analyzed qualitative information and helped the researcher to thoroughly acquire knowledge and empathy about a person as well as the situation. The method enabled the researcher to grow a profound appreciation for the participants and the situation that was being looked into.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

- i. Confidentiality: Before the study commenced, participants were guaranteed that all the data that they were to provide was to be kept confidential. After the study was completed, the information provided during the course of the study was disposed. The participants will then be informed on the purpose the study served.
- ii. Debriefing: after the completion of the study, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the used methods. The researcher made sure every participant was debriefed. This the researcher achieved by writing a report that was printed and distributed to all participants.
- iii. Informed Consent: All participants knew what their participation involved and what risks might develop. The researcher therefore made sure that participants were fully informed about the research study before undergoing the research. This the researcher achieved by having a discussion with the participants a platform that also gave the participants a chance to ask questions before they engaged in the research.
- iv. Deception: Deception requires the researcher to tell the participants before the start of the research what the research is all about. This however may alter the participant's behavior and may invalidate the researcher's data. The researcher therefore, achieved this by making sure that, participants fully understood the purpose of this research. Loop holes and suggestions that the participants raised, the researcher tried to explain those to the participants before the start of the research thus the researcher hoped that this will help reduce the chances of participants distorting the results and conclusions that this research is aimed at achieving.

### **3.11 Chapter summary**

Chapter three provides the research methods used to conduct the research. It looks at the research approach, the research design, the targeted population, the sample and the sampling techniques used in conducting the research. It also looks at the research instrument that was used in the research. Basically, this chapter provides the research methodology of the study. Chapter 4 will look at Data analysis, data presentation and data interpretation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed account of the key findings of research attained from participants during data collection process collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview sought to explore on the effects of family structures and family processes on the psychological well-being of children.

## 4.2 Characteristics of participants

The research was carried out in Shurugwi District in a small location called Dark City. Participants were carefully selected ranging from ages 14 to 18 years. The study was carried out in a day. Eight (9) participants (6 females and 3 males) were interviewed with each member having a different view of his or her family structure. From the carefully chosen participants, (3) participants reported to be living with both biological parents and were still in school and the other 2 reported to be living outside the biological parent family structure whilst the rest were from single parent family structures. Names of participants will be withheld for confidentiality.

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LEVEL OF EDUCATION</b>	<b>PARENT/GUARDIAN</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>L6</b>	<b>Biological parents</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>School dropout</b>	<b>Single mother</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>F 4</b>	<b>Single mother</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>F 2</b>	<b>Biological parents</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>L 6</b>	<b>Extended family</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>School dropout</b>	<b>Single father</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>F 3</b>	<b>Biological mother and step father</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>L6</b>	<b>Single mother</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>F 4</b>	<b>Extended family</b>

## 4.3 Main themes and sub-themes

<b>MAIN THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>
Impact of family structures on children's psychological well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effects of death on children's psychological well-being</li> <li>- Effects of single-parenting</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty</li> <li>- Effects of family structures on educational outcome</li> </ul>
Effects of background differences and social environment on the psychological well-being of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited financial resources</li> <li>- Self-alienation</li> <li>- Poor education outcome</li> <li>- Poor social interactions</li> <li>- Negative influence of neighborhoods</li> </ul>
Impact of family processes on the psychological well-being of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor communication patterns</li> <li>- Poor parent-child relationships</li> <li>- Parental conflict</li> <li>- Family economic pressure</li> </ul>
Impact of socio-economic status and sources of income on the psychological well-being of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor parental education</li> <li>- Low parental occupation</li> <li>- Income poverty</li> </ul>

#### **4.4 Main theme: impact of family structures on children’s psychological well-being.**

The creation and recreation of different family structures from the study carried out was due to high death rates due to HIV. Poverty and single parenting dominated many families that were visited and this adversely affected psychological well-being who in turn reported to be displaying antisocial behaviors. The details on sub-themes will be discussed below.

##### **4.4.1 Sub-theme: effects of death on children’s psychological well-being**

Many participants claimed that death was the reason for the path they were living. Some participants even showed hatred for HIV as some clearly mentioned how the virus had disrupted their lives by taking their beloved ones.

*“...my parent’s death was due to HIV. I know that if they were there I would have been somewhere in life. Right now I am staying with my aunt and her children who do not even care about me or my education. She claims to have exhausted her finances when she was taking care of my father and my mother. It hurts me a lot and the more I think about it makes me just want to cry. I have lost all hope when it comes to my life...” (participant 5)*

*“I grew up with no father or mother. I learned about their death after my uncle told me that if only your mother had not died I don’t think I would be staying with you. I am sure anytime from now he can chase me and that makes me sad. I am so stressed about it. Where will I go...?” (participant 9)*

Death have impacted on the changes of family structures. HIV pandemic has contributed to the increase of number of orphans and the majority are taken care of by extended family members. This long term care causes economic difficulty as financial resources are strained. The child become deprived of care, guidance and protection and social problems pile up. The child finds herself prematurely out of school and this affects their cognitive development. Such affects are more pronounced after the death of both parents.

#### **4.4.2 Sub-theme: single-parenting**

Most participants reported to be living with their mothers without a father figure like in the family. Single-parent families dominated most structures in Dark City area in Shurugwi because some women have never been married, some have been divorced and others are widows. Many participants claimed that their mothers were their all and that they struggled in order for them to get anything.

*“... I was impregnated when I was 15. The father of my child told me clearly that he could not have me as his wife since he has his own family. So I then returned home to live with my mother since my dad died. Life is so difficult but my mother is so involved in my life. The father of my child hardly visits and to be honest he is so violent. He is a miner maybe that is the reason...” (participant 2)*

*“I stay with my mother and I don’t know my father. My mother struggles so that we can eat. She works at Wamderer and she tries by all means to provide for us. We are happy and I like it though I desire a figure like father in my life” (participant 6)*

*“Living with a single-mother without a father is more of a curse. You receive all kind of names from the society and it affects my relations with my neighbors. I was told this recent that my mother is a husband snatcher...” (participant 8)*

*“...my dad died when I was starting my form one at Shurugwi No.2 and from then I have been living with my mother and my 3 brothers. My mother struggles a lot so that I can go to school and she is so concerned about the people I interact with...” (participant 3)*

Single-parents have dominated most of the family structures and the family structures have both positive and negative effects on the outcome of a child. From the study, children of single parents fare well though there are struggles here and there. From the findings, single mothers are more involved and friendlier to their children which promotes their psychological well-being.

#### **4.4.3 Sub-theme: poverty**

A host of candidates reported that the structure of their families were characterized by poverty. Since a lot of family structures are headed by single-parents, poverty remains the dominating factor in most families. This is because children lack dual support from both parents.

*“...my mother works as a maid and she comes home late every day and finds me asleep. She hardly gets involved in my school life and she is always shouting. Sometimes she is so quiet and it stresses me a lot. As am talking now my school uniform is horrible and my shoes are torn. I am not good when it comes to education. I don’t like these struggles we face. It makes me lose confidence especially when am among my friends” (participant 4)*

*“...we are so many in our family. Life is so difficult. We struggle to eat, we struggle to get clothed. My father and his brothers are miners and coming out easy from that life is so unpredictable...” (participant 6)*

*“I really know well about failures of acquiring what you really want because of poor finances. I joined hairdressing after I failed my o’level not because I wanted but that was*

*there for a take. My mother told me that she cannot afford to send me to school again since I have other siblings who also want to go to school.” (participant 2)*

Poverty has detrimental impacts on child’s cognitive development. There is a significant association between child’s development and child’s cognitive development, educational attainment, future employment prospect. The evidence is strong that growing in poverty has detrimental impacts on the development of children.

#### **4.4.4 Sub-theme: effects of family structures on educational outcome**

Participants from the study reported that they were having difficulties in trying to adjust to the family changes following the death of their parents hence being affected academic wise

*“the death of my parents affected me that I did not produce good results in the end of term. I had to repeat form 3” (participant 5)*

*“I stay with my aunt who hardly gives me time to study. I always go to school tired and I am having hard times in trying to concentrate such that I always come last in the end of the term” (participant 9)*

Family structural changes have had negative impacts on the psychological well-being of children. Participants showed that they were having problems in trying to adapt to change.

#### **4.5 Effects of background differences, family structural changes and social environment on the psychological well-being of children.**

Reports from a host of candidates attribute the low levels of psychological well-being to the surrounding physical environment. From the research, children experience multiple transitions in family structure face worse developmental outcomes than children raised in a stable-two parent families and perhaps even children raised in stable two-parent family

##### **4.5.1 Sub-theme: limited financial resources**

Research indicates that most families are dominated by limited financial resources especially the single-parent family structure. Participants reported that their families were characterized by financial strains which affected their self-esteem and their self-confidence among other peers.

*“lack of enough finances leads to a situation that hinders me from attending school trips which benefits my learning experience” (participant 7)*

*“I don’t tell my mother things that include money because she always tells me that she don’t have it so it’s a waste of time. At one time she busted with anger after I told her that I needed money for my stockings ...” (participant 3)*

*“...ever since my father died, we have never been financially stable and this has affected me in many areas like my school life, social life with peers and my esteem at large...” (Participant 8)*

Poor background has negative impacts on the child’s outcome since most children rate themselves with their parents finances, many children have been subjected to low self-esteem because of their backgrounds

#### **4.5.2 Self-alienation**

Reports from participants indicate that background differences affects the kind of people one interacts with. Some participants reported that they only interact with people like them and avoid rich kids and some reported to be having few friends.

*“...I don’t mingle with rich kids it makes me feel out of place especially when they talk about their parents’ occupations and the amount of money they hold when we go for sports or V-shows. I don’t want to embarrass myself because I feel like I don’t belong to be part of them. They dress to kill especially on civic day” (participant 9)*

*“I always feel like I am alone in my small world where no one can hardly catch a glimpse of my existence. Sometimes I feel like I am separating because of stress especially when am at school” (participant 5)*

*“...separating yourself from other peers is the only solution I found to avoid embarrassing myself. I only go to them only when I need assistance with few school equipment like a pen or pencil. I don’t cross my boundaries...” (Participant 7)*

*“Those rich kids show off. I don’t like it. It’s best I interact with those people of my class than having those other kids showing off their wealth to my face” (participant 6)*

Self-alienation accompanies disorders like phobias and personality disorders. When parents become less involved in their children’s lives in the context of divorce, self-alienation is

inevitable and this results in poor psychological well-being of children as they grow to isolate themselves from parents and peers.

#### **4.5.3 Sub-theme: poor peer relationships**

Many participants from the study claimed that their background affected their relationships with other peers.

*“...my friends look down on me and that makes me lose hope in almost all areas of life. They don't tell it to my face but you can see that they hardly involve me in most of the activities like contribution for a friend's birthday present. They are familiar with my background because we live in the same area. Sometimes I avoid them to avoid that situation because it disturbs me a lot...” (Participant 9)*

*“.. I feel out of place when I am around my friends. You find that I am the only one with shoes with no polish and at break time I am the only one not eating. They end up contributing so that I can also eat. It's not very good. It hurts me to be honest how other parents can afford for their children and others do not. I end up thinking that my mother do not care...” (participant5)*

*“...sometimes I become very harsh to them and in the end I am left alone. I will have to go to them and ask for forgiveness all the times...” (Participants 5)*

*“I have low self-esteem and I sometimes run away from my friends because I think they discuss about me and my background especially when I am not around...”(participant 6)*

Children's development is influenced by wider networks of social support which include family first and then the community. These networks provide an opportunity for them to develop their social awareness skills as they relate with different people and experience a range of roles and expectations. The ideas, beliefs and knowledge that children have about who they are, what they can do to fit which is influenced by the background helps to shape their understanding of themselves. From the research children base their concepts on feedback they receive from others as their own judgements.

#### **4.5.4 Sub-theme: poor educational outcomes**

Many participants claimed that their background differences had a lot to do with their educational outcomes. Some participants reported on how disrupted families had inconvenienced them when it comes to academics.

*“In as much as I want to pursue with my education i get to a point where all hope gets lost. I don’t have time to read because I am always busy with housework. Since my mother is not always at home, no one really monitors or supervises me when it comes to school work” (participant 3)*

*“Last year I had to repeat my form 3 which was the most terrible thing because my friends had to continue to form 4 whilst I am left behind. I had to learn to cope but it was hard honestly” (participant 9)*

*“...life is a horror. I dropped school because nothing was coming out from it. I was always the last in a class of 44 students. My father is a miner but he has too many wives. No one would care about my academics, my homework per se. no school fees, no uniform, no books it was failure after failure. I then realized I was not going anywhere so I joined mining...” (Participant 6)*

*“Sometimes my parents fail to pay my school fees then I will be sent home and lose some lessons and that leads me to fail” (participant 7)*

There is a direct link between family background and the child’s educational outcome. Living in a good environment has the ability to improve on a child’s cognitive development which facilitates better school performance. Children from poor families also have more chronic physiological stress and more deficits in short-term spatial memory.

#### **4.5.4 Sub-theme: Negative influence of neighborhoods**

Participants reported that Dark City was a neighborhood that was not a good place to grow up in as their backgrounds limited them to such an area. They described the area as backward and limited to basic resources that one needed like clean tap water and electricity thus they associated the area with violence.

*“this area is so limited to many things. You can tell from the name that there is nothing good that can come out from the place. If we are not at the shops we are watching people fighting. This place is full of amakorokozas. It affects us because people are labelling us and this affects our well-being” (participant 9)*

*“... given an opportunity to change any one thing in my life right now, I would want to move from this place to ZBS because there is nothing you can learn from here. If only our families would manage...” (Participant 5)*

*“not straying from the truth, this area has an impact on the kind of men who will marry us because you find that almost three quarters of the man are violent”(participant 2)*

Another possible pathway through which family income operates has to do with the neighborhoods which poor families reside and this affects children’s self-esteem.

#### **4.6 Impact of family processes on the psychological well-being of children**

Family processes include communication pattern, parent-child relationships and parental conflicts. Since most families in Shurugwi are dominated at large by single parents, research findings indicate that pressure of single-mothers rather than dual income expose parents to harsh punitive treatments of children followed by uninvolved and less caring thus affecting child’s psychological well-being

##### **4.6.1 Sub-theme: poor parent-child relationships**

A host of participants reported to be spending less time with their parents which resulted in poor communication patterns and poor parenting styles.

*“I hardly spend time with my mother because she is always at work. She do not get involved much in my social life. She was mad when I told her I was pregnant...” (Participant 2)*

*“my mother sometimes speak to me in a harsh way because of stress from work and sometimes she will be tired. It bothers me to a point that I end up being harsh to my friends and it affects my relationship with them” (participant 7)*

Poor parent child relationships affect child outcome behavior, which in turn predicts children's well-being. Poor parent relationships is associated with poor monitoring and supervision as well as poor communication patterns.

#### **4.6.2 Sub-theme: poor communication patterns**

The quality of communication among families contribute to child's behavior with friends or in the society. A host of participants reported on how poor communication patterns have affected their self-esteem as well as self-confidence. Many participants during the interview even displayed symptoms of depression and fatigue.

*"I am not familiar with many things in life because my mother never took time to talk to me about them. Even the importance of virginity was never a lesson that I was exposed to that is why I missed life that much" (participant 2)*

*"Whenever my mother presents anything to me she shouts our neighbors know it too. It has affected me greatly. Despite what people think about me, I am always shutdown because of loud shouting especially when ends fail to meet..." (Participant 3)*

*"my mum never ceases to shout especially when the school term is about to open. She will be screaming and shouting everywhere. I remember at one time my friend asked if it was my mother I was living with." (Participant 8)*

Participants showed to be disturbed by the way their parents talked to them which cause some to be fearful during the interview.

#### **4.6.3 Sub-theme: Parental conflict**

Participants reported that conflicts between their parents or with their partners affected them emotionally which resulted in poor relationships with the society or peers. Participants in the study claimed how sometimes they would lash out their friends as a result of stress.

*"whenever my parents engage in a fight I feel so low. It affects me to a point that I end up thinking that its better they separate because the level of conflict in our house is too much" (participant 4)*

*"I feel so embarrassed when ever my mother and my stepfather quarrel. I will be thinking of how I will face the neighbors. It's so embarrassing honestly" (participant 7)*

*“I have never heard my parents quarrelling but there is this tense atmosphere that is in our home especially if its month end. I hate that atmosphere.no one is talking to the other for unknown reason. It bothers me a lot. (participant 1)*

How parents relate to each other promote children’s psychological well-being.

#### **4.6.4 Sub-theme: Family economic pressure**

Participants reported that family economic pressure was associated with delays in going to school, poor educational outcome, low self-esteem, aggression and anger.

*“I started my form one a bit late because my mother was still trying to source funds for my school fees. By the time I went to school the class had moved with the syllabus. I was disturbed for a moment and thought of quitting so that I would start next year...” (Participant 4)*

*“I would love to further my education, but i have doubts at this point that where I am someone will help me.” (Participant 2)*

*“...my father used to pay my fees late every term to an extent that every assembly my name would be called out. It was so embarrassing that when my friends would laugh at me I would feel so mortified and angry. I decided to quit school...” (participant 6)*

Good education is assisted by good financial support from the family. From the research, most children did not receive dual financial support since many families are dominated by single-parents.

#### **4.7 Impact of socioeconomic differences on children’s psychological wellbeing**

Participants’ reports indicated that socioeconomic status of the family as well as sources of income influence their well-being. Most participants highlighted the common and visible relationship between their well-being and the economic status of their families.

##### **4.7.1 Sub-theme: poor parental education**

Most participants claimed that most of their parents were not well educated whilst others reported that they were not sure about their parents’ education. From the participants. Only one claimed that her parents had excelled better in education and the rest reported the opposite.

*“my mother cooks sadza at Wanderer for miners. I believe that if she had done well in school she would have found a better job.. I don’t talk about my mother’s job when I am at around my friends. It’s a bit embarrassing. I feel like it affects my self-esteem”*  
(participant 2)

*“...my mother is always at home. She does not work. She said that she did not do well in school* (participant 8)

Parental level of education affects the kind of jobs they engage in and children’s self-esteem

#### **4.7.2 Sub-theme: low parental occupation**

Reports from participants indicate that low levels of education of their parents affected the kind of jobs they were exposed thus there was no stability of resources in the families that were studied and this exposed children to psychological distress.

*“...at first you will be having hope but then you realize that it seems you are stuck in one place as there will be no change taking place... you can actually tell that you are going nowhere with what will be surrounding you”* (participant 9)

*“...my father works at Vhondo mine. I don’t think he is being paid so well because calls come in from his wives everyday saying that there is no food in the house. Maybe if he had done well in school he would be occupying a better position at the mine”*  
(participant 6)

*“My mother is a maid at her age. Rumors was saying she had snatched the husband of the lady she was working for and she got fired. I have to be honest, it affected me a lot. I was so disturbed not because of the rumor but because she got fired.”* (participant 3)

Low parental occupation expose families to persistent economic hardships that affects children’s perception of life as reported by the participants.

#### **4.7.3 Sub-theme: Income poverty**

Income plays a fundamental role on the child’s outcome in all settings as it determines the kind of school a child should learn, the kind of leisure facilities they should visit and their health in general. Low income predispose children to low levels of psychological well-being as it contribute to low self-esteem, depression and chronic stress. From the participants one reported

to be satisfied with her parent's income and showed that she was happy. The rest explained how income in their families had hindered them to fulfill what they wanted

*“money answers all things. The amount of income my mother gets limits me to access material resources needed by any girl child and other social activities which any girl can attend. I always feel limited and backward when it comes to life because of lack of enough finances. I did not come out well last year and my mother can't afford to raise money for me to write this year. This means all my dreams are in the drain. It stresses me a lot” (participant 3)*

*“I failed to collect my report book last term because I still owe some money to the school. My friends have been asking me how well I have performed and I just say I don't know I misplaced the school textbook. It's a bit embarrassing though” (participant 2)*

*“I didn't go for school trip to Great Zimbabwe because my mother failed to raise trip fee. All my friends went for the trip and I was the only one who remained. I was really hurt to be honest” (participant 3)*

*“...Shurugwi No.2 is just a school I wouldn't wish my child to attend. It has low pass rate every year and it's terrible that I am still attending that school. If I had enough money, I would go to Pakame High School but then the money is not enough” (participant 4)*

Income differs with the family structure as well as the family processes. Children who reported to be having poor social interactions reported that their parents' income sets boundaries for them as to who they should interact with and who they should not. From the research, low income directly affects the mother's psychological well-being and indirectly affect the child's psychological well-being.

#### **4.8 Chapter summary**

Chapter 4 was any analysis of response given by participants in view of their family structures and the family processes. A host of participants showed low levels of psychological well-being in almost all settings. Some participants showed symptoms of depression, chronic stress and fatigue. Some participants showed much hatred for the location of Dark City and wished they could move but financial strains limited them. Participants showed much love for the interview and hoped for change from many of the policies that dominate the constitution of the country.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter displays the final tone of the study as it launches whether the data collected addressed the objectives as well as the research questions. This chapter also discusses the findings, concludes the study and gives recommendations to be adopted.

## **5.2 Impact of family structures on the psychological well-being of children.**

Changes in the family structures due to high death rates, which has led to single parenting and poverty have formed the basis of children's psychological development. These changes have been associated with poor child's cognitive development which affects child's school performance as well as their self-esteem. Most families in Shurugwi are dominated by single mothers and a few by both biological two-parents.

### **5.2.1 Family structure changes and child's psychological well-being.**

The study shows that every child who was exposed to single parenting or extended family had first been in an intact family structure. The study indicates that high death rates due to HIV pandemic has affected the well-being of children. From the results obtained, disrupted family structures face much greater life materials than intact family structures. Due to transition of family structures due to marriage and remarriage of parents, many children are predisposed to much greater life materials like poverty, aggression, depression, early teen pregnancies and this has had negative consequences on the outcomes of children especially in their academics. However, not all researchers agree to this notion, contrary to this MC Neil (2014) advocate that school performance, aggression, and self-esteem have nothing to do with family structures but rather innate abilities. Thus children are born with natural intelligence, vocal abilities and chromosomes which predispose aggressive behavior than the structure of the family.

Results from the study carried out showed that parental death has contributed to partnering and re-partnering of families and this has disrupted most of the path of the participants who claimed that losing their beloved ones has had adverse impacts on their education as well as career choices. Death has contributed to the increase of number of orphans and the majority are taken care of by extended family members. The child becomes deprived of guidance, care and protection as a result of financial strains and social problems pile up. The child finds herself prematurely out of school and this affects their cognitive development. Such effects are more pronounced after the death of both parents. In support of this view, Davison and McEwen (2012) indicated that death of parents expose most children to depression as well as chronic stress. This shows the importance of an intact family structure in the psychological well-being of a child as supported by the family structure perspective.

### **5.2.2 Effects of single-parenting**

The results from the study indicated that single mothers lived happily with their children and they try to be involved in their lives as much as possible. From the findings, single mothers are more involved and friendlier to their children which promotes their psychological well-being. The family is the first socializing agent the child comes into contact with. It has a great influence on the child's physical, mental and moral development. The family lays the foundation of education before the child goes to school and the personality that the child takes to school is determined by the home. Amato (2005) supports this notion by declaring that single-parents involve themselves in their children's lives and they care more and this contributes to the development of self-esteem and self-confidence. Gorman-Smith and colleagues who in their study on the influence of the family structures on child's psychological well-being found no association between single parenthood and poor outcome behaviors (Gorman-Smith, 2007). Single-parents involve themselves in their children's lives and they care more and this contributes to the development of self-esteem and self-confidence. These results contradict with results found by Brown (2004) who supports that in general, single mothers have a harder time making ends meet. As a result of the financial strain experienced by many single mothers, they tend to be more anxious, depressed and over whelmed with parenting issues. These contribute to low mother's psychological well-being which affects children's psychological well-being.

### **5.2.3 Poverty**

Results from the study indicates that most families are dominated by poverty and this adversely affects children's psychological development. In support of this, Just et al (2002) notes that poor children suffer emotional and behavioral problems more frequently. He further asserts that emotional outcomes are often grouped along two dimensions: externalizing behaviors including aggression, fighting and acting out and internalizing behaviors such as anxiety, social withdrawal, and depression and internalizing behaviors such as anxiety, social withdrawal, and depression which affects their relationships with peers and the society as discussed in the study. This shows a connection that exists between family financial stability and child's psychological development.

#### **5.2.4 Effects of family structures on child's educational outcome**

Results from the study show that disrupted family structures are associated with poor educational outcome. This correlates with the results that were shown in the previous study carried by Armstrong (2006) who indicated that poor family structures were associated with conflicts, financial strains which affected child's cognitive development. However, previous results on impact of family structures on child's well-being have been found to be the main contributor to child's psychological well-being hence poor family structures contribute to poor educational outcome.

### **5.3 Impact of background differences, family structural change and social environment on the psychological well-being of children**

Background differences, family structural changes and social environment have an impact on children's psychological development. Poor family background affect the social environment of a child which leads to poor behavior outcomes.

#### **5.3.1 Poor family background**

The study finds that poor background and family structure changes and disrupted social environment negatively affects the child's psychological well-being. Past research studies indicate that children rate themselves with financial mobility in the families (McLyold, 2006). The poor the background status, the low the child's confidence (Prakash; et al, 2011). Contrary, Gross and John, (2004) propounded that background differences have little impact on psychological well-being of children but rather the current social environment context. High self-esteem, education performance and carrier choices cannot be predicted by child's family background but rather by the current environment context and innate abilities. One participant from the study reported that she would not have her background affecting her education therefore she separated school life from personal life thus supporting the findings of Gross and John (2004) that family background do not affect child's educational outcome.

#### **5.3.2 Poor peer relationships**

Results from the study indicates that children who come from poor family background have fewer friends and have poor peer relationships. In support of this finding, Asare et.al (2015) posits that children having difficulty in accessing material resources and social services, in the previous study reported to be avoiding to make friends with children from high-income families

and feeling inferior due to their financial situation. Further findings to support the results from the study from Hjalmarsson & Mood, (2015) indicate that lowest family outcomes often comes with missing out on activities due to lack of economic resources thus they receive fewer friendship nominations and are more likely to experience social isolations in the school class which is supported by the study at hand. Amato and Afifi (2006) notes that poor family setup hinders personal space and this affects child's mental health and psychological wellbeing. Access to an own room is of greater importance for the number of friends (Karsten, 2005). These results point towards the importance for children's social relations of having the economic and material possibilities to participate in the social life and in activities undertaken by peers. The estimated effects of household income and of students' own economic situation are largely independent of each other, suggesting that the common practice of assessing child economic conditions through parental income gives an incomplete picture.

### **5.3.3 Self-alienation**

From the study carried out in the previous chapter, it is shown that self-alienation is associated with poor income background and family structural change. This is supported by MECE (2015) who posits that children have to adjust to family structural change and it is not that simple. Moreover, poor background affects a child's self-esteem which when a child comes from a poor family have problems in suiting with the environment. Children with poor family background reported greater unhappiness, less satisfaction with life, a weaker sense of personal control, more symptoms of anxiety and depression. These family structures have limited financial resources which affect children's well-being (Dingwall, 2012). However, Sulloway (2007) notes that self-alienation is concerned with birth order and background differences have nothing to do with the ill psychological outcome of children's well-being.

### **5.3.4 Poor social environment**

Results obtained from the study reveal that the social environment to which the child is exposed to contribute to poor educational outcomes. Thompson (2007) notes that family comes first before anything else as it determines the kind of safe haven the child receives during early socialization which facilitates child's emotional and mental wellbeing. Poor family relations predispose a child to poor cognitive development since the early formative years to which the child is exposed to have a long term impact on the psychological well-being of a child which in

turn affect the child's educational outcome. Moreover, poor background is associated with poor income which contributes to low school performance due to low self-esteem and poor self-confidence. However, Patel et al (2002) tend to disagree with this notion. He attributes poor educational outcomes to gender. He notes that boys are more intelligent and perform well in education as compared to girls thus family background and social environment has no effect on a child's educational outcome.

### **5.3.5 Neighborhood influence**

The study has shown that neighborhood conditions affect children's psychological well-being. A pathway through which poor family income operates has to do with the neighborhood. Research results indicate that poor parents are constrained in their choice of neighborhood and school. Sampson et al (2002) asserts that low income leads to residence in extremely poor neighborhoods characterized by social disorganization like crime many unemployed adults, neighbors not monitoring the behavior of children and few resources for child development like after school programs as shown in the research.

## **5.4 The influence of family processes on the psychological well-being if children**

Family processes have been found to be associated with the psychological well-being of children. Theorists who support the family process perspective claim that families characterized by good relationships between the parents and the child and low parental discord have high levels of psychological well-being despite the structure of the family. However, the study results have found high parental discord in almost all families that were understudy and this promoted poor child's psychological well-being.

### **5.4.1 Parent-child relationships**

The study has shown that the home environment has an impact on child's well-being. This is supported by a number of studies that have gone beyond documentation of activities and materials in the home to capture the effects of parent-child interaction on child's psychological well-being. Young (2006) supports that child adjustment and achievement are facilitated by certain parental practices as shown in the study. More so, the study shows that poverty is linked to lower-quality of parent-child interaction and to increased use of punishment. Researchers who have looked into this study supports that poor mothers spank their children more often than non-

poor mothers and that harsh behavior was an important component of the effects of poverty on children's well-being.

#### **5.4.2 Poor family communication patterns**

The study shows that family poor communication styles negatively affects children's outcome behavior. In support of the study carried out, Bowlby (2006) support that children tend to display what they observe from their parents and generate it into a behavior. The results from the study also supports the study which was carried out by Crouter and Head (2002) which supports that poor parenting styles contribute to violent behaviors and at most poor educational outcome. However, as it may be Tivren (2014) notes that behavior is a combination of both environmental factor and innate factors. Thus over emplacing the role of family might be problematic since in some instance child's wellbeing is determined by his or her peer age group. Young (2006) proposed that it is not only the family relationship and family communication patterns that contribute to a child self-esteem, level of depression, drug use and school behavior but rather contextual environment.

#### **5.4.3 Parental conflict**

Results from the study indicate that parental conflicts cause emotional and physical distress on children and that conflict-oriented children display low levels of well-being (Kelly, 2007). This is supported by Davis; et al, 2007 who supports that experiential overt conflict is a direct stressor for children. Parents who fight frequently tend to display less warmth towards children and discipline them more harshly (Amato, 2001). Presumably, children in high conflict households are at increased risks of depression, anxiety, and have difficulties in concentrating in all areas. Hoffman, et al, (2013) notes that parental conflict has shown in several times that it influences the psychological well-being of children. It is dangerous to children. Children desire to see their parents getting along so well (Amato, et al 2001. Particular findings however support the notion that parental conflicts have more influence on the psychological well-being of children than family structures. Parental conflicts have had effects that directly affect the psychological well-being of children (Amato, 2005).

#### **5.4.4 Family economic pressure**

Results from the study show that family economic pressure leads to conflict with parents, resulting in lower school grades, reduced emotional health, and impaired social relationships.

Other work suggests that it may be income loss or economic uncertainty due to unemployment, underemployment, and unstable work conditions, rather than family processes or low income per se, that is a source for conflict between parents and teens leading to emotional and school problems.

## **5.5 The impact of socioeconomic status on the child's psychological well-being**

Family socioeconomic status plays an important role on promoting children psychological wellbeing. Davis-Kean (2005) notes that socioeconomic status, specifically income and parent's education, meanderingly relates to children's academic achievement through parent's belief and behaviors.

### **5.5.1 Low parental education**

Reports from children show that parents' level of education affects the kind of jobs that come along their way which affects the amount of income generated in the family. This has an indirect influence on the child but however affecting the kind of school, people to interact with, the kind of neighborhood where they reside and having adverse impacts on the psychological well-being of the child. Results from the study indicate that low income is associated with poverty. This is supported by Yoshikwa (2012) who asserts that poverty affects children's psychological and mental well-being. Li et.al (2016) asserts that there is common and visible relationship between family economic status and child's psychological wellbeing. A growing body of evidence exhibits that children from low income families are twice likely to be associated with depression, low self-esteem, substance use, misbehaving, and physical health. In general, children from low income have problems in as much as school is concerned which affects their psychological wellbeing.

### **5.5.2 Income poverty**

Results from the study indicated that income has an effect on the child's psychological well-being. As noted by Ho et.al (2015), children are driven in making comparisons with other members basing on their financial status. Children that consider themselves to be in a better financial position obtain a sense of superiority that helps them in building their self-esteem. Results obtained from the study indicate that being excluded from services create a sense of inadequacy, thereby lowering a child's self-esteem. Reports from previous studies support that economic status also affect the child's social relationships and hinders them from having open

interaction with peers. Contrary to this, Thompson (2014) asserts that socioeconomic status do not have an impact on child's self-esteem. If there is, over emphasizing the influence of economic status on child's self-esteem will be unfair. He asserts that not all children from low income families have low self-esteem. Even children from high income families have low psychological outcomes. In support of Thompson's view, factors like attachment, parental psychological wellness have been found to be associated with low psychological well-being of children.

### **5.5.3 Low generating income occupation**

The study finds that persistent economic hardships are at large influenced by low income occupation which is associated with poor parental education. This has a negative impact on the life outcomes of many children. A research that was carried out on the Ontario Child Health Study in the mid-1980s reported noteworthy associations between low income and academic functioning, and chronic physical health problems thus bringing to light the association between economic stability and child's outcome.

### **5.5.4 Poor behavioral outcome**

Results from the study indicate that low SES and child behavioral problems are linked. The study shows that child's home environment and their diet has been associated with poor behavioral outcomes. Walsh (2015) supports this by declaring that chronic under nutrition can deplete the energy resources of both the child and the parent, making the child more sluggish and less able to elicit attention from the parent and the parent less sensitive and supportive of the child. Opposing outcome behaviors include increased likelihood of insecure attachment and limited motivation.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The study was carried out so as to find the effects that different family structures and family processes have on the psychological well-being of children. The results from the study showed that from the 9 participants who were interviewed, only 3 children came from a two biological intact family structure whilst the other 6 came from families outside the biological family structure as well as single parent family structure. This enabled the researcher to get a clear and more visible picture of the associations that family structures and family processes have on children's psychological well-being. The family structure theorists support that the two intact family structure is the best family structure for a child's psychological development. They

support that the child has to access dual support both financially and emotionally which aids her or his well-being. However, from the study carried out two intact family structures did not assure a stable and dual support for the child since one participant reported to be affected by his father's behavior especially in the month end.

The study also concluded that poor background differences have a negative outcome on the child's psychological well-being. The researches from the previous studies support this hence a relationship between children's background and their psychological well-being. Basing on parental income the study finds that most families in Dark city were associated with poor income which affected the child's choice of friends as well as the social activities they indulged in. The study also supports that poor family background affects child's relationship with peers. Previous study shows that children from poor family background had difficulties in making friends with children from rich families because of low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Results from the study at hand supports this notion thus bringing to light the relationship between family background and child's well-being.

The study indicated that family processes, if not properly handled, affected the child's emotional development. It's also supported in the study that children from families characterized by high parental conflicts had character problems revolving around mood swings and violent behaviors like bullying at school. Moreover, poor parent-child relationship exposed children to early teen pregnancies since the parents never had enough time with their children as a result of pressure from work.

Findings from the study shows that children from poor family background performed poorly in school because of delays in going to school due to income poverty, stress they carried from home to school thus performing poorly. However a previous research study dismisses this finding indicating that background differences have nothing to do with children's performance thus living the impact of background differences on children's psychological well-being not fully assessed. More so, it is shown in the study that children rated themselves with their family income hence children from poor families suffered low self-esteem in almost all settings

Overall, the study finds out that disrupted family structures like those dominated by single-parents were characterized by poverty which affected the kind of jobs they secured thus affecting the income that was generated. Moreover, the amount of income generated in the family was

found to be having negative effects on the child specifically in school as well as poor peer relationships which was reported to be exposing children to low self-esteem, depression, poor self-confidence and anxiety.

### **5.6 Recommendations**

- Support intervention programs that aim to provide academic, social and community support to raise the success of the disadvantaged, and support schools that strive to achieve equity of outcomes in all settings.
- Support changes within schools so as to maximize educational achievement for instance shorter summer vacations and longer school days and supporting quality early education and care to minimize differences between children's readiness before entering school
- Observe and encourage good parenting- mutual attention contingency of interaction, verbal behavior (amount of talking and quality), sensitivity and responsiveness (awareness to signs of boredom and providing appropriate response)
- Encourage parents to increase their knowledge of child development especially appropriate needs of and activities of their children.
- Social policy should help families make transitions from one structure to the next, with a concentration on helping parents develop and maintain good relations with their children.
- Education and counseling should be provided to all parents about family processes that are most important for their children's development. The family processes that are most important for a child probably depends on what family structure the child lives in.
- Public policy should attempt to focus on family change or perfect its expected effects should take three broad approaches: (1) promoting father; (2) promoting marriage involvement; and (3) reducing economic strain among single-parent families

### **5.7 Recommendations for future research**

- There is need to quantify the research since qualitative research focuses on a small sample size thereby affecting generalization of data.

- Future research studies should try to point at the differential needs of children within each family structure by determining the unique socioeconomic advantages or disadvantages, individual characteristics and family processes within each family structure.

### **5.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter gave concluding remarks to the findings of the research and the recommendations which might help parents improve their knowledge on the child's development and also for creation of sound intervention strategies and rehabilitation strategies as well as identification of social problems pertaining the psychological well-being of children.

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## APPENDIX A

### RESEARCH INSTRUMENT



MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

### RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

My name is Shantel Vandirayi studying psychology at Midlands State University. I am carrying out a study on “**effects of family structures and family processes on the psychological well-being of children.**” The aim of this study is to know that family structures and family processes do have an impact on the behavior outcome of children in different settings. This study explores on different family structures and family processes on the well-being of children. Please be advised that the information you provide will be held confidential and will be used for the purpose of the research only. Therefore, I kindly request you to feel free to provide your responses with morality.

### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA/BACKGROUND

AGE.....

GENDER.....

WHOM DO YOU LIVE WITH.....

**SECTION B: HOW DO FAMILY STRUCTURES IMPACT ON A CHILD'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?**

1. Can you describe the structure of your family in a few words  
.....  
.....
2. How has the structure of your family affected your perception of life?  
.....  
.....
3. What can you say about your family's structure on your educational outcome in terms of monitoring, supervision and involvement in your school life  
.....  
.....

**SECTION C: WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF BACKGROUND DIFFERENCES, FAMILY STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN**

1. What can you say about your family background?  
.....  
.....
2. What effect does your background have on your relationship with other peers?  
.....  
.....
3. Can your comment on the income of your family  
.....  
.....
4. How has the level of income in your family affected you in general?  
.....  
.....
5. Can you describe your neighborhood in a few words  
.....  
.....

**SECTION D: WHAT ARE THE INFLUENCES OF FAMILY PROCESSES ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN?**

1. How much time do you spend with your parents?

.....  
.....

2. How would you describe your relationship with your parents?

.....  
.....

3. What is your comment on the relationship of your parents?

.....  
.....

4. Can you comment on your family economic status?

.....  
.....

**SECTION E: HOW DO SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AFFECT CHILDREN'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?**

1. What is your mother's level of education

.....  
.....

2. How does that affect you in general?

.....  
.....

3. What is your parent's occupation?

.....  
.....

4. How does your parent's occupation affect your behavior?

.....  
.....

**APPENDIX B**  
**LETTER FROM THE ORGANIZATION**

# Midlands State University

Established 2000



P BAG 9055  
GWERU

Telephone: (263) 54 260404 ext 2156  
Fax: (263) 54 260233/260311

---

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

---

Date: 27 March

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WITH DISSERTATION INFORMATION

FOR Shantel Nandirayi

BACHELOR OF PSYCHOLOGY HONOURS DEGREE

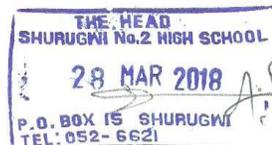
This letter serves to introduce to you the above-named student, who is studying for a Psychology Honours Degree and is in his/her 4<sup>th</sup> year. All Midlands State University students are required to do research in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of study. We therefore, kindly request your organisation to assist him/her with any information that she/he requires.

Topic: The Effects of family structures and family processes on the psychological well-being of children. A qualitative study

For more information regarding the above, feel free to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

pp E.  
.....  
N. Neube  
A/Chairperson



**APPENDIX C**

**AUDIT SHEET**

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

SUPERVISOR- STUDENT AUDIT SHEET

SHANTEL VANDIRAYI R144085E

Date	Activity	Lecturer's signature	Student's signature
	Topic discussion		
	Proposal approval		
	Chapter 1-3 submission		
	Chapter 1-3 corrections		
	Chapter 1-4 submission		
	Chapter 1-4 corrections		
	Chapter 1-5 submission		
	Chapter 1-5 corrections		
	First		

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE .....

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE .....

**APPENDIX D**

**TURNITIN REPORT**

Shantel Vandirayi | Dissertation

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

**1.1 INTRODUCTION**  
This chapter delivers a passing summary of the research literature in this field. The chapter looks into the background of the study, problem study and the purpose behind the research, the objectives and research questions, significance of the study, delimitations and limitations as well as the definition of key terms.

**1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**  
It is well agreed that the living arrangement of children is diverse (Krcmar & Ellis, 2015). With the continuous changing of the demographics of families, underpinning relationships are also changing. (Charles, et al, 2008). Divorce, marriage, cohabitation and births outside marriages have created and recreated two structure families and single structure. A large number of children resides with two cohabiting stepparents, unmarried parents, a mother or a father, and a very little number of children are raised from a two biological parent structure (Wadlogel, 2010). Past researches on family structures pinpoint that family structures and family processes have implications on the child's well-being (Carr & Springer, 2010). Children from intact biological families have high levels of psychological well-being and those that are raised outside families of intact biological parents tend to do less well on average (Amato, 2005). There is relatively a small difference that exists between children from different family structures and this arrangement embraces numerous spheres of children's outcomes including behavioral, cognitive, mental health and physical health (Mancos et al, 2012).  
Parent-child relationships are captured to a greater degree by measures of family structures (Vidova, 2007). This clearly shows that the most significant factors of the family environment are parents who direct resources that include money and time which however molds the growth of the

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3	"Handbook of Child We... Publication	1%	>
4	ijmhs.biomedcentral.c... Internet Source	1%	>
5	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	1%	>
6	www.sciencedirect.com	1%	>

## APPENDIX E: MARKING GUIDE

NAME: SHANTEL VANDIRAYI    REG NUMBER: R144085E

	ITEM	POSSIBLE SCORE	ACTUAL SCORE	COMMENTS
A	RESEARCH TOPIC AND ABSTRACT Clear and concise	5		
B	PRELIMINARY PAGES Title page, approval form, release form, dedications, acknowledgement, appendices, table of contents	5		
C	AUDIT SHEET/PROGRESSION Clearly shown on the audit sheet	5		
D	CHAPTER 1 Background, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, objectives, hypothesis, assumptions, purpose of the study, delimitations, limitations, definition of terms	10		
E	CHAPTER 2 Addresses major issues and concepts of the study, findings from previous work, relevance of literature to the study, identifies knowledge gap and subtopics	15		
F	CHAPTER 3 Appropriateness of design, target population, population sample, research tools, data collection procedures, presentation and analysis	15		
G	CHAPTER 4 Findings presented in a logical manner, tabular data properly summarised and not repeated in the text	15		
H	CHAPTER 5 Discussion (10) Must be a presentation of generalizations shown by results; how results and interpretations agree with existing and published literature, relates theory to practical implications. Conclusions (5) Ability to use findings to draw conclusions Recommendations (5)	20		
F	Overall presentation of dissertation	5		
G	References	5		
	Total	100		

MARKER:.....SIGNATURE:.....DATE:.....

MODERATOR:.....SIGNATURE:.....DATE:.....

