AN ASSESSMENT OF POST-DIVORCE CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIPS IN ENSURING CHILDREN’S WELL-BEING. A CASE OF MBARE, WARD 19.

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

A dissertation submitted to Bindura University of Science Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Social Work, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Science Honours in Social Work.

Supervised by: Dr Nyoni

May 2018
APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and commended to Bindura University of Science Education for acceptance of a research project entitled “An assessment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19. Submitted by Prosper Zivengwa in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work (HBScSW)

Supervisor

I confirm that I have supervised Prosper Zivengwa for this research project entitled, “An assessment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19, in partial fulfilment of the Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Work and recommend proceeds for examination.

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Name…………………………Signature………………………Date………………

Chairperson and the Board of Examiners

The department Board of Examiners is satisfied that this dissertation meets the examination requirements. I therefore recommend Bindura University to accept a research project by Prosper Zivengwa entitled “An assessment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work.

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I Prosper Zivengwa, studying for the Bachelor of Social Work Honours Degree, is conscious of the fact that plagiarism is a serious academic offence and that fabricating information is a breach of ethics in Social Work, truthfully declare that:

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2. I have followed the research ethics required in Social Work research.

3. I grant permission to the University to use this dissertation for academic purposes.

Student’s Name..............................................

Signature...........................Date..................

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Harare
DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my loving mother, Miss E. Mateko for the unwavering support throughout this research. I also dedicate this work to all my helpers of destiny. Your love will always be cherished.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank the Almighty God for guiding me throughout the research project. May his name be glorified forever. I would also want to appreciate the willingness of all the respondents who participated in the study as well as the stakeholders that granted me permission to collect data in their respective areas. They made a great contribution in making the project a success. Special thanks to my supervisor Dr Nyoni for the continued support throughout the research project. Without his guidance, expertise and patience this project could have been a failure.

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ABSTRACT

The study explored post-divorce co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses in a bid to ensure their children’s well-being. The relationships are marked by cooperation, conflict and disengagement in the different co-parenting arrangements on custody, communication and meetings. The aim of the study was to assess the post-divorce co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses in Mbare in order to ensure their children’s well-being. The research was qualitative in nature and it employed in-depth interviews and focus group discussions for data collection. An explanatory research design was used in the study. The research employed the principle of data saturation to sample 16 divorced co-parents who participated in the study. The family development theory underpinned the study. The study findings reflected that divorced ex-spouses with children establish different co-parenting relationships after divorce as they want to ensure the well-being of their children. The study also revealed that the quality of the post-divorce co-parenting relationships are a result of factors which include the causes of divorce, remarriage by either or both spouses as well as financial constraints. The study found out that the nature of the post-divorce co-parenting relationships by the parents had implications on the well-being of their children. Strict law enforcement, counselling and education were identified as solutions for maintaining working co-parenting relationships by divorced parents to ensure their children’s well-being. The study recommends family programs to be run after divorce including educative positive parenting programs and counselling for divorced parents and their children. There should be strict law enforcement aimed at the enhancement of the well-being of children in divorced families.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MoHCC</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Child Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONS</td>
<td>Office for National Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCRC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFU</td>
<td>Victim Friendly Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZRP</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Republic Police</td>
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<td>ZIMSTAT</td>
<td>Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Divorce in families with children is alarming pronounced worldwide, Zimbabwe is no exception. Marital breakdown subsequently changes the lives of children of the divorced parents and compromise their well-being. Normally this is a result of negligence by ex-spouses to take care of their children after separation. There is need for the ex-spouses to establish co-parenting relationships with the aim of enhancing their children’s well-being in the aftermath of divorce. This chapter presents the background of the study on the assessment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being in Mbare, statement of the research problem, aim of the research and its objectives. Research questions, assumptions, significance of the study, justification, the definition of key terms and a summary are presented.

1.1 Background of the study

Divorce in families that have been blessed with children has become a common phenomenon in contemporary societies worldwide. It has been fraught with problems since the divorced partners still have to honour their parenting roles in order to ensure their children’s well-being. This brings the aspect of co-parenting which is essential in safeguarding and ensuring the well-being of the children of the separated parents. McHale and Lindahl (2011) posit that co-parenting entails the engagement of two or more adults in the sharing of activities, roles and responsibilities of a parent in raising a child or children. It is characterised by mutual involvements of both parents in all decisions regarding their children’ welfare and both parents
play an active role in their children’s day to day lives. Lack of physical presence of both parents in a divorced family system requires that parents make an exceptional effort to coordinate child-rearing, thus the need for parents to establish cooperative and constructive relationships with their former partners and prioritize their children’s welfare over their own discord. The well-being of the children of divorced parents manifests in their academic, behavioural, material, health and psychological and emotional (Pollet and Lombreglia, 2008).

Children of divorced parents living apart are considered at risk for multiple health and other well-being issues throughout their lifespan (Sacks, Murphy and Moore, 2014). Most co-parents live apart but jointly providing for their children’s welfare needs. Some co-parents are single parents and some have remarried. Subsequently, co-parents should develop cooperative parental alliances and establish newly defined co-parenting relationships in order to ensure their children’s well-being (Emery, 2011). They should come up with strategies that aim at adequately providing their children’s needs which include regular meetings and communication where they discuss their child welfare related issues as well coming up the best possible decisions from the contributions of both co-parents in ensuring the well-being of children. (Jamison, Coleman, Ganong, and Feistman, 2014). The decisions relate to the social, economic, physical, psychological and emotional needs of the children including issues of discipline and behaviour problems, medical, academic consultations, religion and custody.

McCann, Lee and Powell (2014) categorised the co-parenting relationships into three that is cooperative, conflict and disengaged. Cooperative co-parents communicate about their children regularly, have minimal levels of conflict, and praise rather than undermine their co-parent's
child rearing decisions. It entails the level of a co-parent’s willingness to work with and positively engage with the other parent. Adding on, conflicted co-parenting entails co-parents communicating about their children’s welfare, but have high levels of conflict, disrespect, and criticism marking this communication. It entails the level of co-parents’ disagreement with the other parent and the degree to which it is openly displayed. Post-divorce inter-parental conflict decreases children's well-being. (Amato and Keith, 1991). Lastly disengaged co-parenting involves the involvement of the divorced spouses in their children's lives but practice parallel parenting whereby they do not communicate, positively or negatively, about their children; they merely stay out of each other's way.

In Zimbabwe, divorce is on an upward trend and the well-being of children is now at risk as a result of poor co-parenting relationships after divorce between the ex-spouses Thus there is need for the divorced partners to come up with co-parenting strategies and establish relationships that help to maintain regular contact between them and with their children in-order to discuss issues pertaining their well-being through meeting their needs and ensure overall wellness. Statistics on divorce rates worldwide are very high and over one million divorces occur in the United States each year, and statistics have further indicated that 50% of all children born to married parents will experience divorce (Lansford, 2009). The Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2009) in the UK shows that 45 out of 100 married couples divorced in 2008 and in 1978 4,5 million children lived with a divorced parent in the USA. (Cantor and Drake, 1983). In Zimbabwe, divorce is on the rise. According to Dube-Noko (2016) there has been escalating divorce rates in Zimbabwe where 1102 couples filed for divorce in Bulawayo and Harare between January and July 2015 and 129 cases were approved in Harare while 44 were granted in Bulawayo. Nemukuyu (2018)
posits that at least 120 couples filed for divorce at the high court in Harare from January to February 2018, there was a total of 1417 filed applications for divorce on 28 February which showed an increase from 1297 that were recorded by the end of 2017.

Post-divorce co-parenting involves issues of custody which can be classified into sole, joint and split custody. In sole custody children stays with one parent who have sole responsibility of physical raising the child and making decisions regarding their upbringing. Joint custody is categorized into joint legal custody and joint physical custody where children primarily live with one parent and both share jointly in decisions about the children’s education, religious training and general upbringing. As well the children can live with both parents, dividing time between the two households respectively and this provides a rationale for mother-father involvement and it gives children the chance for a more normal and realistic relationships with each parent. Lastly split custody involve the division of children between the two parents and the mother usually takes the girls and the father takes the boys.

There are dimensions of co-parenting which include conflict, cooperation and respect, communication and triangulation. (Baum, 2004). Other dimensions are traditionally understood as warmth, monitoring, discipline, communication, and encouraging age appropriate autonomy. Negative co-parenting aspects include inter-parental conflict and triangulation and have been linked to child well-being particularly with negative results on it while positive co-parenting dimensions like respect, involvement, communication, and cooperation are demonstrated protective factors within divorced families. (Richardson and McCabe, 2001). Thus post-divorce
co-parenting relationships can be co-operative and/or conflictual depending on a number of factors that include pre-divorce issues as well as the need to enhance children’s well-being.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Divorce is a serious problem that has put the well-being of children in post-divorce families at risk. The alarming rate of divorce cases in Mbare has been attributed to marital infidelity, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, financial crisis, early marriages and religious and cultural differences among other factors. This is because the high density suburb of Mbare is overcrowded and activities such as prostitution, drug abuse, early marriages and cohabitation are rife. Consequently, divorce has become the order of the day and a lot of a children in Mbare are increasingly growing up in divorced family systems and under the parentage of one parent with the other one providing support in a co-parenting relationship. In Zimbabwe, divorce rates are on the rise and statistics from the population census of 2012 by ZIMSTAT shows that Mbare has a total of 3588 divorced men and women. Most marriage unions that are being dissolved could have been blessed with children. Couples of different ages and with different years of marriage experience marital dissolution. While the people have acknowledged the fact that divorce is on the rise, no research has been done to establish the reasons of the resultant co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses that aim at enhancing their children’s well-being. Thus, there is need for ex-spouses to establish post-divorce co-parenting relationships characterised by cooperation, communication and respect for the sake of ensuring their children’s well-being. This research then seeks to explore on the co-parenting relationships that are established by ex-spouses in Mbare in a bid to enhance their children’s well-being. The ongoing exploration also adds to some previous studies that have been carried out across the globe for instance on divorce and its effects
on children’s well-being since the same cannot be said about on studies on co-parenting in Zimbabwe. Hence it will fills the gap that need to be filled in the world of co-parenting research through exploring the post- divorce co-parenting relationships between the ex-spouses in order to ensure their children’s well-being.

1.3 Justification
The study is of paramount importance since it fills the gap in family research particularly in divorced families with children. It complements previous studies which were carried out on the causes of divorce and its effects on children’s well-being. The study is also importance to the social work profession as it expand on its knowledge base especially in family social work. To add on, social workers and stakeholders that work with families and those that are concerned with the welfare of children also benefit from the study. The study area that is Mbare is a highly populated area in which activities such as prostitution, early marriages, cohabitation, drug abuse, child abuse, commercial and sexual exploitation are rife. At the end of the day divorce become the norm and it puts the well-being of children at risk. Therefore, the study puts the area at the spotlight as it exhibits the social problems there in which lead to a number of programs to be done by organisations that work with families and children to be carried out in the area. These include awareness campaigns, and exhibition occasions where different organisations offer services such as counselling and education on different issues related to family welfare to people in the area for free. Hence the study is essential as it explore on the solutions to social problems such as divorce and separation and the data is useful to different individuals, professionals and stakeholders working towards enhancing children’s well-being.
1.4 Aim

The study seeks to explore the post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in order to contribute and ensure their children’s well-being.

1.5 Research Objectives

i) To explore the nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in Mbare in a bid to contribute and ensure their children’s well-being.

ii) To explore on the implications of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between former spouses on their children’s well-being.

iii) To explore the factors that influence the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in order to enhance their children’s well-being.

1.6 Research questions

i) What is the nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in Mbare in a bid to ensure their children’s well-being?

ii) What are the implications of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between former spouses on their children’s well-being?

iii) What are the factors that influence the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in order to enhance their children’s well-being?
1.7 Assumptions

i) The nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships is either characterised by cooperation or conflict and it affects the enhancement of their children’s well-being in a positive and negative manner respectively.

ii) The co-parenting relationships between the ex-spouses subsequently affect children’s well-being.

iii) There are several factors that influence the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between divorced parents.

1.8 Significance of the study

1.8.1 Academics

Academics are considered to be the chief beneficiaries of this research. There have been focus on previous research studies that include on the impacts of divorce on children’s well-being. However there is a gap that need to be filled in family research in order to enhance the well-being of children particularly in post-divorce families. Hence this study will help academics world over including those at Bindura University of Science Education who might carry out related research relating in family welfare.

1.8.2 Social work

This study increases the knowledge base of social work practice with families particularly with parents and children. Social workers will be acquainted with information that will help them to provide informative counselling to ex-spouses on the strategies that help to enhance of the well-being of children in the post-divorce families. These include the establishment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships. They will be able to provide counselling, and education to divorced parents on positive parenting after divorce to ensure their children’s welfare. Such education
helps them to be aware of the benefits of co-operation in co-parenting to their children’s well-being as well as the effects of conflictual relationships. Social workers also know some of the causes of juvenile delinquency such as parental divorce or conflicts and the best ways of helping the clients to solve the problems. For instance some adolescent children who tend to have behavioral problems due to parents’ divorce and witnessing quarrels, therefore social workers will be in a position to understand the causes of such behaviour and best ways of helping the clients. The study also helps social workers to comprehend and evaluate behaviours of co-parents upon which interventions are based. They can also advocate for policies that encourage effective co-parenting alliances that aim for the betterment of the well-being of children from divorced families.

1.8.3 Child Protection organisations

This study is useful to several organisations both government and non-governmental in Zimbabwe and the world over that specialise in child welfare. For instance those that uphold children’s rights including the right to family or parental care, education, health care services, nutrition and shelter, right to be given a name and a family name, to be protected from economic and sexual exploitation, maltreatment, neglect or any form of abuse as according to the UNCRC and section 81 of the Zimbabwean Constitution (2013). Hence this study help to uphold children’s rights and enhance the welfare of children particularly from divorced families since theirs are the most susceptible to violation after their parents’ separation. The organisations include the MoHCC, the Department of Social Services and Child Line among others.
1.9 Definition of key terms

1.9.1 Divorce.
Refers to a legal or a socially sanctioned termination of a marriage (Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee, 2000). It is not an event, but it is a process. (Richards and Dyson, 1982).

1.9.2 Child.
According to the Constitution of Zimbabwe of 2013, section 81, a child is every boy and girl under the age of eighteen years. The UNCRC defines a child as any person under the age of eighteen.

1.9.3 Co-parenting.
Co-parenting entails the engagement of two or more adults in the sharing of activities, roles and responsibilities of a parent in raising a child or children. (McHale and Lindahl, 2011).

1.9.4 Well-being.
Ryff and Keyes (1995) define well-being as a dynamic concept that includes subjective, social and psychological dimensions as well as health-related behaviours.

The United Kingdom Department for Environmental and Rural Affairs in Skilton (2009) defines well-being as a positive, social, mental state. It is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity and arises not only from action of individuals, but from a host of collective goods and relationships with other people. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose and that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by conditions that include supportive personal relationships, involvement in empowered communities, good health, financial security, rewarding employment and a healthy and attractive environment.
1.9.5 Child well-being.

A United Kingdom report of the OECD (2009) defined child well-being in terms of six main domains that are material well-being, education, health, risk behaviours, housing and environment and the quality of school life. Hence if a child have full access to the aforementioned necessities, his/her well-being is considered to be secure.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has given an overview of the study that is its aim, objectives, background and significance. It also presented the statement of the research problem, justification, questions, and assumptions of the study and definition of key terms. The chapter basically gives light on what the research is all about. The next chapter reviews related literature to the study.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction
This chapter focuses on the theoretical underpinnings underlying the study on the post-divorce co-parenting relationships in Mbare, Ward 19. It explores the literature on co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses after divorce in order to ensure their children’s well-being as well as the gaps that exist in the literature to this date. A literature review is a systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesising the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners. (Fink, 2013). The literature is reviewed on a global, regional and level. Strategies employed to reduce the problems brought about by divorce on family well-being are also presented. A case study of USA was used to explain the strategies used to reduce the effects of divorce on children through parental education.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Family development theory
The research is based on the family development theory. The theory was propounded by Rueben Hill and Evelyn Duvall in the 1940s after World War 2 with regards to family welfare. (White and Klein, 2000). It is an exclusive approach in family studies as it explain the patterned changes that occur in families through stages across time. The theory explains family development in a set number of changes or stages that families pass through as they are formed; from growth with the birth of children, change during raising the children, contract as children leave and divorce or death of spouses. These stages create the ‘family life cycle or course’ which have been used in
family studies to examine the dynamic nature of family experiences. From this viewpoint, the theory helps to explain the changes that occur in families as they raise children, in particular co-parenting relationships or alliances formed after divorce by ex-spouses in order to raise children well and enhance their well-being.

The family life course consists of all events or stages within certain periods of time traversed by a family. (White and Klein, 2002). The life course consist of eight stages that have specification based on several factors including family economics, size and developmental tasks that families encounter at different phases of life. The stages starts from the beginning family, child bearing family, families with pre-school children, with school children, with teenagers or adolescents, family as a launching centre, family in the middle years and aging family. Each stage pairs with certain tasks or responsibilities which parents are mandated to take in raising their children. Hence the theory is relevant to the study since it explains the changes that occur in families across life in which divorce is no exception as well as the parental roles and responsibilities taken after the separation. These include taking care of their children at infancy, pre-school age, school-going age and at adolescence and it is on these childhood stages when the divorced parents establish co-parenting relationships with the aim of providing for their children’s needs and ensure their well-being.

The family life cycle model gives insights into the complexities of family life, the different tasks that families perform and the changing roles through time. It also describes the interacting influences of the changing roles and circumstances through time and the way the changes produce corresponding changes in family responsibilities and needs. Therefore this explains the parental roles and responsibilities of providing their children’s needs after undergoing different life complexities such as divorce. Hence the divorced parents establish post-divorce co-parenting
relationships in order to fulfil their parental roles and to ensure their children’s well-being after experiencing such complexities like divorce that changes family life.

However, the family development theory is criticised on assuming that families go through the same processes of change across time. The theory downplays the diversity of family experiences such as experiences of those who marry and remain childless ending up in divorce or those that bear children whilst cohabitating and never got married officially. (Winton, 1995). It also ignores the experiences of gay and lesbian marriages as well as those of stepfamilies. Other family scholars argue that the family life cycle varies due to issues such as social class. Hence the sequence of stage in the family development theory seem to reflect a middle to upper class reality yet in lower class families they do not have lengthy periods of early childless marriages. Lastly, the transitions to marriage and parenthood maybe encountered simultaneously or in reverse of what the stages in the theory specify therefore a weakness.

2.2 Reasons for divorce among couples in Mbare

2.2.1 Marital Infidelity

Marriages are dissolved for a number of reasons among which marital infidelity is one of the common cause for divorce among couples in Mbare. Cheating in marriages is mainly a result of alcohol and drug abuse and sexual dissatisfaction. According to Aghajanian (1986) marital infidelity is a result of drug abuse, pre-marital sex and early marriages. Atkins, Donald and Neil (2001) posit that adultery by one of the ex-spouses in a marriage is one of the causes of divorce. Amato and Previti (2003) are in agreement with the aforementioned findings and they argue that marital infidelity is the most common commonly reported cause of divorce among couples. Hence divorce is a complex issue which can be viewed from multiple perspectives which include sociological and psychological. Sociological perspectives focus primarily on structural and life
course predictors of marital disruption such as race, social class and age at the time of marriage while psychological focus on issues such as personality characteristics and poor conflict management skills.

2.2.2 Domestic violence
Domestic violence is one of the causes of divorce among couples in Mbare. It stems from issues such as jealousy, alcohol and drug abuse and it manifests as physical, sexual and verbal abuse. Rohling (2005) argued that domestic and/or intimate partner violence was mostly a result of drunkenness and possessive love. Tegbar, Anwar and Yigaw (2004) posit that domestic violence is a leading factor to divorce especially inform of physical and sexual violence. These scholars presented the statistical findings on physical violence in Gondar showing 32.2%, while that of forced sex and physical intimidation amounted to 19.2% and 35.7%, respectively. Therefore domestic violence in its different forms is a factor that leads to marital dissolution.

2.2.3 Cultural and Religious Differences
Cultural and religious differences between spouses are a cause of divorce. This is because the spouses find their beliefs incompatible and hard to accommodate and they end up in conflict. Umoh and Adeyemi (1990) posits that the differences in cultural and religious beliefs lead to divorce as couples fail to reach a consensus especially when they choose to abandon beliefs of either spouse and follow the ones of the other spouse.

2.3 Effects of divorce on the spouses

2.3.1 Negative
Divorce have negative consequences on the psychological, economic and social functioning of the individuals experiencing it. The ex-spouses experience depression, mental and emotional
stress, unhappiness, sleeping problems and engage in drug abuse. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found out that men and women that experience divorce undergo stress, depression, engage in alcohol and drug abuse as well as smoking and loneliness. Marital separation in most men is accompanied by heavy drinking and smoking as those who use to be seasonal alcoholics drink and smoke more. (Power and Rodgers, 2000). Women are most likely to experience loneliness and separation distress in which some end up longing for revenge and end up exhibiting promiscuous behaviour. (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989). The findings of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) are supported by those of Amato (2000) which shows that physical separation mostly affect women psychologically as evidenced in psychological distress have low levels of psychological well-being. These can lead to the high prevalence of mental health problems for the ex-spouses. (Wade and Pevalin, 2004). Hence divorce have negative effects on the well-being of divorcing spouses.

2.3.2 Positive

Divorce have positive effects on the well-being of the separating spouses. This is because marital dissolution is viewed as a solution to some of the problems experienced marriages. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) posits that divorce is differently experienced by spouses as one of the divorcing spouses welcome divorce as an escape from an unpleasant or unfulfilling relationship. Some divorces have proved to have positive outcomes on the well-being of the spouses. (Amato, 2004) is in support of this and he posits that divorce comes with higher levels of personal growth and satisfaction, improvement in career opportunities and self-confidence as well as independence and freedom on the separating partners. The aforementioned positive outcomes of divorce explain the reasons why most divorced spouses remain single and others remarry. According to Hawkins and Booth (2015) people choose to divorce than staying in an
unhappy marriage and such people have high overall health, self-esteem and satisfaction as compared to those who remain unhappily married. Henceforth divorce is associated with positive outcomes.

2.4 Effects of divorce and the post-divorce co-parenting relationships on children’s well-being.

2.4.1 Negative

Divorce have negative consequences on the well-being of the divorced spouses’ children. The childhood stages from infancy, pre-school age, school going and adolescence are affected by divorce differently. The effects are categorised into developmental, psychological, behavioural and educational among others. According to Amato (2004) divorce of parents is recognised as one of the most traumatic events in the children’s lives. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) in support of this argue that the pre-school-going children between 3-5 years exhibit behaviour changes that include acute regressions in toilet training, whining and tearfulness, aggressive play, moodiness and temper tantrums. In addition, divorce affects the school-going children as they blame themselves for the absence of one parent in the house. They have feelings of shame, anger directed at the resident parent and poor performance in school.

Adolescent children are negatively affected by divorce as they experience stress, have suicidal tendencies, exhibit behavioural problems linked to substance abuse as well as promiscuous behaviour which are difficult to manage. Sun (2001) in support of Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) posits that adolescents are affected by divorce and its proceedings as they exhibit poor academic performance, poor psychological well-being, behavioural problems and suicidal attempts. However some scholars like Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) argue that some adolescents have developmental challenges influenced by their parents’ divorce and they feel a lack of love and
intimacy and intense fear on a moral heterosexual relationship. The aforementioned findings concur with those of Rashke (1987) which shows that most children who experienced their parents’ divorce also have high chances of marriages that end in divorce in future, referred to as intergenerational transmission of divorce. This also explains why some children who their parents’ divorce to have homosexual relationships as they have intense fear on the moral of heterosexual relationship.

In addition, divorce have negative outcomes on the well-being of children as some start a new life with step parents, half siblings, new relatives and friends after remarriage by parents and the subsequent co-parenting arrangements on custody arrangements such as split custody. Most children especially early adolescents have difficulties adjusting to the new family environment and some become victims of abuse such as sexual abuse by the stepfather and other older siblings. The younger children can be victims of physical, emotional and neglect from the stepmother as a result of favoritism, divided loyalties and diverting anger from the conflicts with the husband.

2.4.2 Positive

Divorce have positive outcomes on the well-being of children from divorced families. This is because some children who used to witness their parents’ conflicts and quarrels before divorce can experience divorce as a relief. Booth and Amato (2001) posits that divorce have positive effects on the well-being of the children of the spouses experiencing divorce as it comes as a relief to the nasty experiences of witnessing their parental conflict. They further argued that divorce can lead to a change from delinquent behaviour to good behaviour in those children who were once witnesses of parental conflict. Strohschein (2005) in support of this argue that argues that children who used to have anti-social behaviours such as bullying and lying were reduced
after the divorce of parents who have been experiencing high levels of dysfunction. Children who are under custody of remarried parent in a blended family benefit on different issues such as gaining more experience in interaction and play, learning and settling disputes with peers. (Amato, 2004). Thus divorce and its proceeding that include co-parenting relationships can present benefits to the children’s well-being.

2.3 Strategies used to reduce the effects of divorce on children’s well-being

2.3.1 Phone calling and messaging

Phone calling and messaging have been cited as a strategy used by ex-spouses to reduce the effects of divorce on the children’s well-being. Divorced parents establish co-parenting relationships after divorce so as to communicate through the phone with their ex-spouses and inform each other on the needs of children as well as their welfare. (Browning, 2010) is of the contention that there is need for frequent communication between divorced parents and their children which goes a long way to show love. He further posits that phone calling and messaging is a critical communication strategy that bridges the gap between parents and children who stay separately as it strengthens the attachment between them. The children who regularly communicate with non-resident parents have better adjustments to divorce. (Ricci and Lansky, 2010). In support of Browning (2010) they argue that children who do not regularly communicate with their parents think that they are unlovable and their well-being is at stake. Therefore regular communication between parents to communicate about the welfare of their children helps to maintain the well-being of the children.

2.3.2 Parental Education

Parental education on positive parenting skills is one of the strategies to reduce the effects of divorce on the children’s well-being. Divorced parents should be educated on the need to
continue taking care of their children after divorce or separation and its benefit to their children’s well-being. (Kelly (2007) argue that there is need to educate parents who have experienced divorce parents on the benefits of meeting their children’s needs despite the fact that they have divorced. Amato and Rivera (2009) in support of Kelly (2007) states that the type of education given to parents increases the probability of those educated parents to sensitively respond to the needs of their far away children. Other researchers like Whiteside and Becker (2000) support the idea of parent education as they argue that there is need to teach parents about child development and the needs critical at each level of development so that they understand their children’s needs and try to provide for these despite the fact that they stay separately. Hence this shows that parental education is a useful co-parenting strategy to divorced parents staying separately in order to ensure the children’s well-being.

2.3.3 Communication with children.

Communication is one of the strategies that are put in place to deal with the negative effects of divorce. Parents should communicate in age appropriate ways with their children concerning their separation. Raschke (1987) posits that divorced parents should help their children to adjust to divorce through open discussion in time for instance when it is forthcoming so that they can easily adjust and expect certain complexities associated with it. Hence the discussion should clear so that the children do not get confused and stressed so as to maintain their well-being.

2.3.3 Frequent Visits

Frequent visits to the home of the resident parent to see the children is a strategy that can be used to reduce the effects of divorce on children. The resident parents should not restrict the other parent access to the children. According to Raschske (1987) continued involvement of the non-custodial parent in the children’s lives through frequent visits is an important strategy to help
children adjust to their parents’ separation. This is important as the children do not feel torn between parents and the visits help them to feel loved by both parents despite their divorce. (Holcomb, Edin, Max, Friend and Dion, 2015).

2.3.4 Strict Law enforcement

Strict law enforcement is a strategy of reducing the effects of divorce on children. A study by Nemukuyu (2018) shows that laws that support child support in form of maintenance fees should be enforced so that non-resident fathers take care of their children after divorce. The fees should be paid considering the income levels of the non-resident parent. Huang, Mincy and Garfinkel (2005) in support, argued that alimony should be made compulsory so as to make the former spouse economically and mentally stable and be able to take care of the children well. The payment of alimony after divorce should not be punitive, instead it is meant to address the possible vulnerabilities that the ex-spouse might face which can affect the welfare of the children.

2.4 Case study

2.4.1 Programmes for reducing the effects of divorce on children through parental education in the USA.

Programmes for responsible fatherhood by the Parents and Children Together (PACT) were established in 2011. They were meant to strengthen the involvement of fathers with their children as well as co-parenting relationships with the mothers of their children to ensure the children’s well-being. (Holcomb, Edin, Max, Friend and Dion, 2015). The responsible fatherhood programs were funded and overseen by the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the administration for Children and families (AFA) in US department of Health and Human Services. The programs were carried out for four years since 2011 as grants were offered
to non-resident low-income African American fathers to take care of their children. A longitudinal program evaluation study was carried out and the findings from the follow-up interviews showed that the first years the co-parenting relationships were conflictual especially as a result of tensions caused by the divorce. However the co-parenting relationships later proved to be working as the fathers provided regular financial support as well established arrangements on custody and visitation times to see the children.

2.5 Gaps left by existing research

The review of literature identified several gaps in the literature of divorce and co-parenting to ensure children’s well-being. A study by the McAnn, Olson and Hall (2015) on the emotional well-being of female adolescents from divorced families sought to investigate the effects of divorce in line with the children’s mental well-being. There is however need to carry out comparative research studies with both adolescent girls and boys so as to know how divorce affects them differently. In addition there is need to expand the research on other facets of children’s well-being which include behavioural and educational apart from the psychological. There is limited information on single fathers parenting after divorce as previous research studies has focused more on single mothers. This is because mothers are perceived to take the caring roles of children after divorce. (Melko and Cargan, 1987). Therefore the unequal representation of fathers in post-divorce co-parenting who have sole custody presents a gap in family research on gender-based selection bias in the field of divorce research that need to be addressed.

To add on, there is limited information available on the changing and emerging family structures established after divorce such as the blended families. Despite the existing contemporary family structures world over, little has been done in terms of research explore on the welfare of children in such families. Another issue of apprehension is the scarcity of information on divorced parents
who enter into homosexual remarriages. There is need for research on how the co-parenting experiences of such parents remarry and their impact on the well-being of their children. A study by…sought to investigate on the co-parenting experiences of couples who were in official marriages before. However there is need to expand research so as to explore on the co-parenting experiences after divorce involving those who never married officially but have children. Therefore the aforementioned data represents the critical gaps that are left in the literature pertaining divorce and family well-being in its aftermath.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented on the theoretical framework which underpinned the study. The chapter reviewed literature on divorce and co-parenting by ex-spouses to ensure their children’s well-being. Literature on the causes and effects of divorce as well as the strategies employed to reduce the effects of divorce on former spouses and their children were reviewed. The chapter also reviewed the multiple publications by various researchers on a global, regional and national level, noting the gaps in the literature in relation to the topic under study. The next chapter will focuses on the research methodology.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of research methodology that was employed in understanding the post-divorce co-parenting relationships in a bid to ensure children’s well-being in Mbare. It described the way this research was carried out. The research design, population, sampling and data collection methods and tools are addressed. The chapter also discussed data presentation and analysis and it also highlighted the research ethics which were observed by the researcher during the research.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a case study research design to assess the post-divorce co-parenting relationships to ensure children’s well-being in Mbare. Yin, (2009) defines a case study as a concept which deals with the study of a case within real life, existing context or setting. The study was conducted in Mbare National. The study employed a case study approach because it enabled the researcher to explore in-depth data on the concept of divorce. To add on, a case study approach was employed as it gave the researcher green light to analyze persons, decisions, events, projects, periods, policies, institutions or other systems that are studied holistically using different methods, (Thomas, 2011). In this case, there is therefore need to analyze persons,
decisions, institutions and policies that are pertinent to the post-divorce co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses in Mbare with the aim of ensuring their children’s well-being.

The research design was deemed critical since it pours over and examines a specific community of Mbare in its natural setting and the participants give in-depth qualitative data based on experiences. Black (2014), describe a case as an in-depth study of people, events and relationships, bounded by a unifying factor. Hence in this case the design helped to explore in-depth data from co-parents in Mbare National who have established co-parenting relationships after divorce with their former spouses so as to contribute to the enhancement of their children’s well-being.

According to Cresswell, (2013) a case study is an exposition of a case over time through collection of data involving multiple data sources of information. Hence the design help the researcher to collect rich, valid and reliable data on divorce and co-parenting for children’s well-being from key informants such as social workers and police who are knowledgeable on divorce and strategies put in place by co-parents in Mbare to ensure the well-being of children in post-divorce life.

3.2 Study Population

Population entails the exact group that is relevant to a research project, (Zickmund, 2003). As such the target population of this study were all divorced parents in Mbare. Particularly, in Ward 19 who have established post-divorce co-parenting relationships with their former spouses in a bid to provide for their children’s needs. According to the statistics from the population census of 2012 by ZIMSTAT, the total population of divorced or separated men and women in Mbare is 3588. Hence the study population was 16 which was drawn from the population, particularly
divorced with children. The key informants were in the study were social workers, case care workers, police officers and religious leaders.

3.3 Study Area

This study was carried out in Mbare. The area was chosen for the research because it is a highly populated area where a lot of activities such as prostitution, co-habitation, drug abuse and child abuse are rife. As a result, the activities trigger child bearing outside official marriages leading to a myriad divorce cases which leave a lot of children susceptible to child neglect as their divorced parents tend to ignore their parental responsibilities. Hence this study is of great importance as it seeks to come up with ways to deal with the problems arising from divorce especially on the well-being of children in the divorced families.

3.4 Sample size

A total number of 20 respondents were interviewed under this study. It comprised of 16 divorced co-parents drawn from a target population of 3588 divorced or separated men and women in Mbare. 4 key informants were also part of the sample with the assumption that all the respondents will provide adequate and justifiable data needed regarding divorced families with children. The sample size of this study was brought about by employing the principle of data saturation in qualitative research. Saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion for discontinuing data collection and/or analysis. (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartla, Burroughs and Jinks, 2017). Therefore the researcher considered data collection as saturated when she conducted sequential interviews with divorced parents with children and key informants until a point where no new elements or data pertinent to the research were found. This was in line with the argument by Legard, Keegan and Ward (2004) that probing needs to continue until the researcher feels they have reached saturation and a full understanding of the
participant’s perspective. The use of saturation was advantageous and helped to bring about rich data. Fusch and Ness (2015) posits that failure to reach data saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted. They complement the use of the principle of data saturation in qualitative research. Hence the sample size was manageable to the researcher taking into consideration the time needed to carry out the research as well as financial constraints and not working with Mbare wholly.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure in this study was done through identifying few divorced parents with children with the help of a case care worker who works with child protection organisations in Mbare, particularly ChildLine. The initial group further referred the researcher to other fellow parents who were in post-divorce co-parenting relationships. 20 participants for the study were identified, however only 16 were willing to participate. The researcher then conducted one on one interviews with the co-parents as they shared their co-parenting experiences and relationships with their ex-spouses as well as two focus discussions were conducted each with 8 members, 5 mothers and 3 fathers. The study also involved 4 key informants and these were conveniently chosen from the case care workers, social workers, religious leaders and the police working with the Mbare community.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

3.6.1 Snowball sampling

This study employed snowball sampling technique with divorced parents with children in Mbare. Bryman and Bell, (2011) define snowball sampling as a form of convenience sample where the researcher first contact a small group of people readily available and relevant to the research topic and later helped by those people to contact other relevant respondents. Hence the first few
divorced parents with children which the researcher initially came across referred her to other fellow parents who then participated in the interviews. This technique was advantageous since there was trust and mutuality and there was easy accessibility to participants and it saved time and resources.

3.6.2 Judgmental sampling

This research employed judgmental sampling in gathering the relevant data on the post-divorce co-parenting relationships established to ensure children’s well-being from key informants working with Mbare community members. Zickmund (2003) defines judgmental sampling as a non-probability sampling technique where a researcher selects a sample on the condition of personal judgment about some suitable characteristics of the sample members. It was used with key informants such as social workers, case care workers, police officers and religious leaders knowledgeable about the issue under study. Thus, judgmental sampling was applicable through the use of key informant interviews. It was advantageous since data was gathered from participants who had specialist knowledge on the research issue and willing to participate in the study. (Oliver, 2010).

3.7 Data collection methods

This section of the study addresses data collection methods employed during the study. These include both primary and the secondary data such as interviews, focus group discussions and academic journals respectively.

3.7.1 Interviews

This study employed semi-structured interviews with divorced co-parents providing for their children through co-parenting relationships with ex-spouses. As well, key informant interviews were used to gather information from professionals working with the Mbare community who
were knowledgeable on the research issue. The USAID Centre for Development and Information Evaluation (1996) denotes that key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who know what is going on in a specific community. Key-informant interviews were advantageous since data was gathered from specialist professionals who were well-versed with the topic under study hence the researcher gathered qualitative data.

To add on, semi-structured interviews were of paramount importance since they were done face to face and the researcher established rapport with the interviewees hence obtained quality and rich data on the research topic. They also consists of open ended questions which allowed the researcher to gather more qualitative data from respondents as they shared their co-parenting experiences. Silverman, (2004) posits that interviews allows the researcher to adapt the questions as necessary, clarify doubt and ensure that the responses are properly understood by repeating or rephrasing questions. Hence interviews greatly helped to collect qualitative data required in the study.

3.7.2 Focus Group discussions

Focus group discussions were used to gather qualitative data from co-parents who are in co-parenting relationships with ex-spouses in order to provide for their children’s needs. The discussions helped to gather data on different co-parenting experiences, relationships of participants aimed at ensuring their children’s well-being. This method was advantageous since participants often expressed, shared and discussed experiences in the group haven as they had a sense of belonging. (Sherraden, 2001) supported this and argue that social interaction within a group can yield freer and more complex responses, when there is interactive synergy, spontaneity and security of participants within the group. Hence the researcher gathered qualitative data that was required for the study.
3.7.3 Secondary data

This study made use of published literature such as text books, academic journals and newspaper articles among others that were relevant to this research. Secondary data entails data which has been collected for other purposes but relevant to a current study. (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Therefore it was useful to the researcher as she obtained data on several previous studies that were carried out on divorce and its aftermath. The secondary data was complementary to primary data collection and it saved time and resources.

3.8 Data Collection Tools

3.8.1 Interview guide

This research also used interview guides as primary data collection tools. They were used for all respondents, divorce co-parents and the key informants. The guide comprised of a series of interlinking written questions on the topic under study. The researcher provided a copy of the interview guide which clarified the role of respondents in the study as well as the reasons why the research was being undertaken. Also a convenient time for the interviews was arranged and the guide was designed in the language which is appropriate to the respondents. The researcher then recorded the gathered data.

3.8.2 Focus group guide

The researcher used focus group guides to collect primary data for the study. The data was collected collectively as the group members (co-parents) shared ideas and experiences of their post-divorce co-parenting relationships with their ex-spouses aimed at enhancing their children’s well-being. The researcher manually recorded the data presented during the group discussions as well jotting down some notes in a note book and on the focus group guide. She made sure that
every question on the guide was copiously answered. Hence she collected qualitative and rich
data needed in the study.

3.8.3 Cell phone

The researcher used her cell-phone for recording purposes during the interviews and the focus
group discussions with the respondents.

3.9 Data collection procedure

The researcher initially obtained a consent to conduct a research with co-parents in Mbare from
different stakeholders including the ZRP and Child Line. This granted the researcher permission
to work with its staff that include police officers specifically from the Police VFU, social
workers and case care workers. The case care workers helped to mobilise parents from Mbare
National who usually attend organizational positive parenting workshops. Thereafter, informed
consent was observed and the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants in
order to create rapport, as well as ground rules including confidentiality were discussed. After
obtaining consent, the researcher had one on one interviews with the respondents as she jotted
down notes. Also a focus group was carried out as she recorded the discussions with her
smartphone.

3.10 Data presentation

The researcher presented the data collected in tabular form in order to ensure visibility of the
overall results. Some information was presented in narrative form depending on the suitability of
the available data to be presented. This also helped to make clear the information brought up by
the respondents.
3.10.1 Data Analysis

The data that was collected through interviews and focus group discussions was analysed using thematic analysis. This was done in order to bring together relevant and appropriate information needed in the study since qualitative research usually results in obtaining too much data which some may not be relevant in the study. According to Yin (2009) data analysis consists of examining, categorizing or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study. Thematic analysis was employed in this study to analyse the qualitative data and the researcher initially first step being coded the data collected and developing a set of themes. Braum and Clarke, (2006) define thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method used to identify, analyze and report data using the main themes of the study. The researcher also used direct interview quotes to endorse on the real co-parenting experiences by divorced spouses. Hence the researcher picked out themes on child well-being that include material, psychological, emotional, educational and behavioral and analysed the data using these themes.

3.11 Ethical Issues

There was need to uphold research ethics in this research. Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, (2011) define ethics as the decent principles, norms or standards of human behaviour that guide moral choices about human behaviour and their relationships with others. The following research ethics were upheld in this study on post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in order to ensure their children’s well-being:

3.11.1 Informed Consent

In this research every participant took part willingly, without being coerced or unfairly pressurised. (Blumberg et al, 2011) argue that securing informed consent from participants is a matter of fully disclosing the procedures of the research design before requesting for permission
to carry out the study. Participants were well informed about what participation in the research entailed and the nature of the study, they were allowed to decline participation whenever they wanted.

3.11.2 Confidentiality
The researcher upheld confidentiality of the participants’ identities. These included key informants and co-parents who participated in interviews under the study. In focus group discussions, confidentiality was upheld as there were ground rules set which emphasized confidentiality of the discussed issues and no group members were allowed to discuss outside the group environment. Thus the researcher ensured that the participants’ identities and views divulged during the study were kept confidential and protected.

3.12 Feasibility
According to Engel and Schutt (2013), feasibility is the capability to conduct a research in time and with the available resources. In this study, respondents were mobilized and selected by case care workers working for organisations in Mbare such as ChildLine using the registers of monthly positive parenting workshops which they attend. Key informants were readily available at their workplaces in Mbare hence it saved time and transport costs for the researcher. However some respondents were unwilling to participate especially in focus group discussions.

3.13 Limitations of the study
This study is limited since only 20 participants were interviewed. It was carried out within a short period of time and financial constraints for transport where the researcher had to travel to Mbare and stationery. Some of the respondents were not willingly to be recorded while interviewed.
3.14 Delimitation of the study

This study only covered Ward 19 of Mbare and not the whole of Mbare. It confines itself to co-parents in the respective area who are in co-parenting relationships with ex-spouses in order to ensure their children’s well-being. This is because of limited time needed to carry out the research. Mbare is considered to be the most densely populated high density suburb in Zimbabwe and is characterized by a lot of activities that include child abuse, prostitution, early marriages, cohabitation and drug abuse. To add on Ward 19 of Mbare which covers Mbare National is characterized by a lot of activities and the aforementioned ones are inevitable to be left behind. However the activities are a result of step and blended families, overcrowding in the core houses including lodgers, several drinking pubs and illegal shebeens selling beer and drugs. Thus at the end of the day children’s well-being is at risk as their parents are substance abusers which lead them to be irresponsible in providing for their children’s needs. Hence divorce is rife in the area and parents struggle and others fail to take their parenting responsibilities putting their children’s well-being at risk.

3.15 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed on the research design, population, the study area, sample size, sampling techniques and procedures. The data collection methods and tools as well as the ethical issues that needed to be observed under the study were presented. It also highlighted data presentation and analysis, the feasibility, limitations and delimitations of the study. The next chapter focuses on data presentation, interpretation and analysis.
CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the findings in the study on post-divorce co-parenting relationships to ensure children’s well-being in Mbare. The study was carried out in Ward 19, Mbare. Data was gathered from 20 respondents comprising 16 divorced co-parents and 4 key informants chosen on the strength of their knowledge on family welfare issues. The data was collected through in-depth interviews of approximately 30-40 minutes and a focus group discussion was also employed. The objectives of the study were to explore the nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses as well as the factors that influence the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in order to contribute and ensure their children’s well-being and also exploring the implications of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between former spouses on their children’s well-being. The data was presented in tabular and in narrative form evident in the relevant discussions made. It was analysed using thematic content analysis. The research findings were integrated in light of the
previous studies as highlighted in the literature review of this study in order to indicate the gaps left out as well as to show how this research fills in the gaps.

4.1 Demographic Profile of the population

The demographic profile of respondents was explored. The demographic information of respondents provided the research with characteristics and variables that were used to evaluate knowledge, experiences and behaviours of respondents. The main variables to distinguish respondents were sex, age at the time of divorce, number of children, causes of divorce, employment status as well as marital status at present. The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in table 1 below.
Table 1. Demographic profile of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age at divorce</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25-40 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-55 years</td>
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<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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<td>Males</td>
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<tr>
<td>Females</td>
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<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>100</td>
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4.1.1 Distribution of respondents by sex

The distribution of respondents by sex was explored. Of the 16 respondents in this study, 10 were females while 6 were males. The high number of women participants than their male counterparts can be attributed to the factors of availability since most women have flexible daily schedules as compared to men. This is because most men are in formal employment and have tight schedules, as a result they are rarely available at social gatherings whereas most women are informally employed and others and unemployed housewives. These findings are in line with those of Ndinda (2004) whose finding showed that more men in Africa are employed in the formal sector than women. As such, more women comprised the majority of the unemployed and in the informal sector employment.

4.1.2 Distribution of respondents by age at the time of divorce

Respondents were asked about their age at the time of divorce. 4 respondents indicated that they were between 18-25 years at the time of divorce, 8 respondents were between the age of 25-40 years and the other 4 were between the 40-55 years. The study findings shows that divorce was mostly experienced by the respondents between 25-40 years. These findings correlates with those
of Gapare (2014) which show that couples of different ages experience divorce. This can be explained by the fact that people tend to marry for the wrong reasons and have certain expectations in marriages and if they are not met they lead to divorce. This correlates with the findings of Schonfeld (2011) which shows that unrealistic expectations in marriages is the major cause for the high rates of divorce among young couples. Henceforth, the age at the time of divorce of the respondents was important to consider in order to see how the variable relates to the establishment of the post-divorce co-parenting relationships.

4.1.3 Distribution of respondents by the causes of divorce
Respondents were asked why they divorced the fathers and mothers of their children. 4 co-parenting fathers revealed that they divorced as their wives realised that they had extra marital affairs. The other 2 reported that they were cheated on by their wives. Out of the 10 co-parenting mothers, 4 pointed that they ended up divorcing as they were victims of domestic violence. They revealed that they suffered mostly from physical and sexual violence from their husbands. 5 testified that they divorced after realising that their husbands had extra marital affairs and they were co-habiting often with the women. 1 revealed that they divorced as a result of incompatible cultural and religious beliefs as they discovered after some years that their husbands were in the ‘gure or nyau’ culture whilst they were Christians. The findings shows that marital infidelity and domestic violence were the main reasons for divorce amongst respondents. The findings on the causes of divorce are in line with the findings of Gapare (2014) which shows that the main causes of divorce in Zimbabwe are marital infidelity and domestic violence. Henceforth, the findings show that marital infidelity was the major cause of divorce for the respondents. However the findings are in contrast to the findings by Nemukuyu (2015) who attributed marital dissolution to the eroded family advisory systems for instance aunts and uncles as advisors.
4.1.4 Distribution of respondents by the number of children

Respondents were asked about the number of children they had at the time of divorce. 8 respondents reported that each 3 children of mixed sexes, 6 had 2 children of the same sex, both single and twins and 2 parents had each a single child. Amongst the 8 respondents who had 3 children, 5 were females and they pointed that they had more children due to cultural beliefs that having the highest number of children was an assurance for safeguarding their marriages. To add on, the high number of children was a result of early marriages and co-habitation. Therefore the highest number of children among the female respondents was at an assurance for safeguarding their marriages. The findings of the study on the high number of children contrast sharply with the findings by Emery (2014) which attribute the number of children that parents may have to the source of income. For example income to cater for the children’s education and other basic needs including food. Henceforth the research findings fills the gap that was left by previous research as there was exploration on other factors that determine the number of children of couples apart from income such as culture.

4.1.5 Distribution of respondents by marital status at present

Respondents were asked about their marital status at present. Out of the 10 co-parenting mothers, 6 revealed that they were single and 4 have remarried. 4 fathers have remarried while 2 were single. The findings show that women from the study stay longer unmarried after divorce than men as they are economically stable. This is attributed to the increased participation of women in the job market hence the economically stable women choose to be single after divorce. The findings correlate with the World Bank development report (2003) which shows that economically stable women opt to be solo mothers after divorce.
4.1.6 Distribution of respondents by employment status

The distribution of respondents by employment status was explored. When asked about their employment status, 4 respondents revealed that they were in the formal sector employment, 9 informal sector and 3 were unemployed. Out of the 10 co-parenting mothers, 6 were vendors, cross border traders and undertaking poultry projects. 2 were formally employed and the rest were unemployed. Amongst the 6 co-parenting fathers, 2 were formally employed, 3 were informal workers and 1 was unemployed. The employment status of the respondents was a clear manifestation of the high unemployment rates in Zimbabwe since the majority were informal sector workers, earning a living through self-help initiatives and others unemployed. The high unemployment rates are in line with the statistics by the World Bank (2017) which shows that unemployment rates in Zimbabwe are on the rise from 5.4% in 2012 to 11.3% in 2014. To add on, the high rates of women in the informal sector shows the effectiveness of the gender and women empowerment initiatives by organisations such as Musasa Project that aims at enhancing the livelihoods among women.

4.2 Reasons for divorce in Mbare

The reasons for divorce among the respondents were explored. These include marital infidelity, domestic violence and different cultural and religious beliefs.

4.2.1 Marital infidelity

Marital infidelity was highlighted as one of the major causes of divorce in Mbare. Out of the 11 respondents who revealed that they divorced their ex-spouses as a result of cheating. One co-parenting father aged 35 had this to say:
“Ndakabatwa ndiri kumba kwegirlfriend nemukadzi wangu akabva andiramba
akadzokera kumba kwake nemwanasikana mudiki akange achiri kuyamwa akandisiya
nemajaya maviri mapatya”. (My wife caught me right handed at my girlfriend’s house,

she divorced me and went back to her parents’ home together with the youngest daughter

on breastfeeding and she left me with the two teenage twin brothers).

One co-parenting mother aged 29 said that:

“Ndakabatwa nemurume wangu ndine chikomba kushow yaJah Prayzah mushure
mekunge abata chat paWhatsapp mufoni yangu vhiki yakanga yapfuura akaona
zvataironga zvekuenda kushow, akabva andidzinga ndichisvika pamba Kubva kushow
akanditi siya vana vangu”. (I was caught right handed by my husband with a boyfriend at
Jah Prayzah’s album launch concert after he had secretly discovered a WhatsApp chat

on my phone the previous week which had plans for the show. He chased me out of the

house and he ordered me to leave the children).

The findings shows that marital infidelity is one of the major cause of divorce among couples.

They are in line with those of Gapare (2014) which shows that marital infidelity is one of the

major causes of divorce among couples. To add on, the findings resonates well with the findings

of Atkins, Donald and Neil (2001) which show that marital infidelity is a major cause of divorce.

However the findings contrast with those of Bourdillon (2000) with the traditional Shona

people in Zimbabwe which shows that only men were caught in marital infidelity cases and

there used to be no cases of women cheating in marriages since it was considered taboo and a

disgrace to her family. Therefore the findings of this study fills in the gaps left by previous

research on divorce.
4.2.2 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence was highlighted as one of the major causes of divorce in Mbare. 4 co-parenting mothers revealed that they ended up divorcing their husbands as they were victims of physical and sexual violence for quite a long time. They attributed the violence to drug abuse especially those with husbands who came home drunk after taking beer and other substances like marijuana (mbanje), musombodhiya and mangemba. The respondents pointed that the husbands were aggressive and could beat them up sometimes in front of the children. One co-parenting mother said that:

“Ndairohwa chaizvo nemurume wangu mushuremekunge adzoka kumba akadhakwa kubva kubhawa, ndakapedzisira ndaenda kumusha kwangu ndikamusiya. Ndakatora vana vangu vese tikabva pamba paiva kubasa”. (My husband used to beat me each time he came home drunk. I later decided to leave him and live a happy and a safe life without him and I left with my two children while he was at work).

The findings are in line with those of Rohling (2005) which shows that domestic violence in marriages particularly physical violence were as a result of alcohol and drug abuse. The findings also exhibits the acts by empowered and economically stable women who make decisions to walk away from abusive marriages. These acts can be attributed to the of empowerment programs by civil society organisations such as Musasa Project for women victims of domestic violence. For example women are empowered to initiate self-help projects which make them to be independent and not rely on their husbands as breadwinners since such issues have led to them enduring abuse in marriages. The findings are in line with those of Hein (2005) which shows that the increased participation of women in the job market have granted freedom of choices to walk away in the cases of marriages failing to work as they hoped for. The study
findings shows that only women were victims of domestic violence. However this can be a result of cultural beliefs which make men not to express their abuse, yet they will be victims of domestic violence.

A key informant from the Police VFU alluded that:

“Cases of domestic violence especially against women are often received at the police station. However most of the victims choose to keep silent for a long time and suffer from the abuse as they will be dependent on the abusers for a living and they reveal the abuse at later times. However there are rare cases of men reporting as victims of domestic violence but we have to bear in mind that there are a lot of male victims of domestic violence which are not reported for several reasons especially those that are cultural.

The findings shows women are regarded to be the most victims of domestic violence than men since they report their cases often, though some choose to keep their abuse a secret due to dependency on the abusers for a living. The findings are in line with those of Musanhi (2013) which reveals that most women in Zimbabwe are victims of domestic violence from husbands especially of physical and sexual violence. However the study findings show that some women are now empowered and have the knowledge to stand against domestic violence. As a result the escalating divorce cases are attributed to empowerment projects facilitated by Musasa Project which give woman opportunities to speak out their experiences of domestic violence as well as income generating projects to sustain themselves. Thus in such cases, empowered women use divorce as an alternative to escape violence.
4.2.3 Cultural and religious beliefs

Differences in cultural and religious beliefs were found to be one of the major causes of divorce in Mbare. A respondent revealed that she divorced with her husband after realizing that he was a nyau dancer or (chigure). He had kept that a secret to her since she was Christian and did not belief in such cultural practices.

“Murume wangu aitamba zvigure achindivanzira pamakore ose atakanga takaroorana, aiziva kuti ndiri muKirisitu saka handaikwanisa kuzvigamuchira, pandakazviziva ndakabva ndamuramba nekuti ndakanga ndisingakwanisis kugara nemunhu anoita zvegure”. (My former husband was a ‘nyau’ dancer for all the years of our marriage and he kept it a secret from me until a time I realized it and we divorced because I could not continue to live with someone who have such different beliefs from mine).

The findings shows that the incompatibility of the different cultural and religious beliefs among spouses was a factor that led to divorce amongst the respondents. The findings are in line with the findings of Umoh and Adeyemi (1990) which show that the differences in cultural and religious beliefs among couples is one of the causes of divorce.

4.3 The nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in Mbare

The nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships was explored. Respondents were asked about the nature of co-parenting relationships which they had with their ex-spouses after divorce in order to ensure their children’s well-being. The nature of the relationships were evident in the different co-parenting arrangements on custody, communication and meeting arrangements.
4.3.1 Custody Arrangements

7 respondents revealed that they had established joint and split custody with their ex-spouses. This entails children living with both parents dividing time between the 2 households and dividing children to live with the same sex parent respectively. Two co-parenting mothers respectively said that:

“Vana vanoenda kumba kwababa vavo chishanu choga choga mushure mekunge vabva kuchikoro vozodzoka neSvondo” (I sent the children to their father’s home every Friday after school to spend the weekend there and they will be back on Sunday).

“Ini ndinogara nevana mazuva avanenge vachienda kuchikoro, pazororo vanoenda kunogara kumba kwababa vavo” (I only stay with the children during the school days and they spent the holidays at their father’s place).

One co-parenting father had this to say:

“Ini ndinogara nemwanakomana, iye anogara nevanasikana”. (I stay with our only boy whilst my ex-wife stays with the two girls).

From the above findings, the researcher had to conclude that the respondents had cooperative co-parenting relationships through joint and split custody for the children. These findings mirrors the typologies of the nature of co-parenting relationships by Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) which describes the relationship as cooperative. However, the respondent with joint custody revealed that there are sometimes where the children do not go to their other parent’s place due
to financial constraints for transport despite their willingness to send the children. This is in line with the findings by Kelly (2007) which shows that some parents do not meet with their children regularly due to financial challenges.

### 4.3.2 Communication

14 respondents revealed that they communicate with their ex-spouses through text messages, WhatsApp and phone calling in order to inquire about the welfare of their children. For instance health issues that is when a child is sick, educational issues such as academic meetings to be attended at the child’s school by the parent or guardian, academic trips, ceremonies at the school such as price giving days and as issues of discipline as well as religious matters. One female respondent said that:

“Ndinotaura nababa vevana vangu paWhatsApp nemamessage uye kufona kuti ndinzwe maererano nehutano hwevana uye kana pane zvimwe zvandingada kunzwa maererano nechikore kana hunhu” (I communicate with my ex-spouse through messaging and phone calls in order to inquire on the children’s welfare and in situations when there are notifications concerning their educational, behavioural and health well-being).

Based on the above findings, conclusions were made that the respondents had cooperative post-divorce co-parenting relationships. The findings are in line with those of Browning (2010) which shows that parents living away from their children resort to phone calling and messaging in order to be aware on the welfare of the children.
4.3.4 Meeting Arrangements

5 respondents revealed that they preferred to meet face to face and discuss issues of concern for their children. The meetings were complementary especially in situations when phone calling and messaging appeared to be less effective in a bid to ensure children’s well-being. The respondents revealed that the meetings were arranged on the time suitable for both of them and the remarried co-parents pointed that they usually bring some trusted relatives to be part of the meeting especially uncles, aunts and friends. This is also done to avoid tension and suspicions from the second spouses left at home. One respondent aged fifty said that:

“We meet whenever there are issues to be addressed particularly pertaining to the well-being of our children. At times we choose to include our close and trusted relatives and/or friends to be part of the meetings in order safeguard the well-being of our second spouses back home who might feel uncomfortable with such meetings with the ex-spouses”.

From the findings above, the researcher concluded that the respondents had cooperative co-parenting relationships with their ex-spouses in order to ensure their children’s well-being. Hence the description above mirrors the typologies of the nature of post-co-parenting relationships by McCann, Lee and Powell (2014) which describes the relationships as cooperative.

4.4 Factors affecting the nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships

Respondents were asked on the factors affecting the nature of their post-divorce co-parenting relationships with their ex-spouses. They revealed that several factors that had a bearing on the quality of their co-parenting relationships with their ex-spouses such as the causes of divorce,
remarriage by either or both of the co-parents, substance abuse, financial constraints and communication. These factors affected issues of access to children, parenting styles and financial support.

4.4.1 Causes of divorce

The causes of divorce between ex-spouses were highlighted as one of the factors affecting the nature or quality of co-parenting relationships so as to ensure their children’s well-being. These include marital infidelity and domestic violence. One male respondent revealed that he was bitter about the way he was cheated on by the ex-wife. He said that:

“Handikwanisi kuronga zvinhu kana kupa mari kuhure rakandihurira nekuda kwekukara mari ndichiti rinobhadhara fees kana kunotengera vana vangu zvavanoda. Ko kana akanodya mari yangu nezikomba zvake” (I am not comfortable to arrange or give my ex-wife money for my kids’ fees and their other needs since her love for money is too much and that is why she cheated on me. What if she misuses my money, and spend it with her boyfriends).

Amongst the co-parenting mothers who divorced as they were cheated by their husbands denied their ex-husband access to the children. One respondent said that:

“Munhu akandihurira akandiratidza kuti haandide ini nevana vandakabereka, saka handimubvumidzi kuona vana vandakazvara”. (I will never allow my ex-husband to see my children since he cheated on me and its clear evidence that he does not care about nor the children that I the kids that I gave birth to).

Based on the above findings, conclusions were made that the causes of divorce might have caused tension and acrimony which undermines the ability for the divorced parents to engage in
cooperative co-parenting. Therefore the findings mirrors the typologies on the nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships by Mc Cann, Lee and Powell (2014) that the relationships can be conflictual. The findings of this study on conflictual co-parenting relationships are in line with those of Holcomb, Edin, Max, Friend, Dion (2015) which showed that most-co-parenting fathers were in conflictual relationships with the mothers of their children after divorce as they were denied access to their children due to bitterness linked to cheating which had caused divorce. (Holcomb etal, 2015) referred this as maternal gatekeeping which entails the mothers’ efforts to limit the fathers’ access to their children.

4.4.2 Substance Abuse

Substance abuse proved to be one of the factors affecting the quality of co-parenting relationships after divorce among respondents. Respondents revealed that sometimes when they try to communicate with their ex-spouses about parenting the children, nothing fruitful comes out of the conversations as the other parent will be drunk. One respondent said that:

“The mambo poucha chako vano, vano vanzvionega vako dzakakwira nekuburikwanira vana venumwe, dzimwe nguva vanenge vaka ‘sticka’ vachiita kunge pfungwa dzavo dzisingatori zvakanaka”.

A key informant who is a case care worker in Mbare pointed that:

“Drug abuse in Mbare has been a culture among people of different age-groups especially adolescent boys and girls and adult men and women. We often come across cases of substance abuse especially marijuana (mbanje), broncleer, mangemba and musombodhiya which are the most common drugs in the area. In
several circumstances the adult drug addicts have families, wives and ex-wives whom they have children with and these often come to report cases of child neglect by the fathers to us and organisations such as ChildLine as they are reluctant to take their responsibility on their children’s welfare”.

The findings above correlates with those of Hoel (2015) which shows that the well-being of children whose parents are substance abusers is at stake as they do not prioritise their children’s needs and often fail to take care of them.

4.4.3 Financial Constraints

Financial constraints and unwillingness to offer financial support by the ex-spouses was highlighted as one of the factors affecting the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships. The majority of the resident co-parenting mothers related this issue to maintenance. The respondents revealed that despite the fact that her ex-husbands have well-paying jobs, they not pay the monthly maintenance fees regularly as articulated by the civil court to cater for the children’s needs. One mother said that:

“Murume wangu anoenda kubasa rinobhadharwa chaizvo asi haabhadhari maintenance mwedzi wega wega kuti tibatsire kuriritira vana zvakafanira” (My ex-husband have a better paying job but he does not pay even a cent to contribute towards the maintenance of our children’s well-being).

However, some male respondents pointed that they fail to cater for their children’s needs for genuine financial constraints. They pointed that sometimes things will be tough at work and not paid that they could not manage to provide money to cater for the children’s needs despite their wish to provide for them as a father. They however pointed out that the mothers of their children
do not understand such situations and they think that they are just unwilling to take care of their children. One co-parenting father who a commuter omnibus driver was revealed said that:

“Zvinhu zvinombooma kubasa zvekuti mari yekuti vana variritirwe zvakanaka haiwanikwe tisingabhadharwi nemurungu, asi mai vevana vangu haazvinzwisisi anofunga kuti ndinopedza mari kubhawa kudoro nekumahure.. (Sometimes things will be tough at work and we will not be paid for several months by our employers. However my ex-wife do not understand and she think that I spent the money drinking beer and with girlfriends).

Based on the findings above, conclusions were made that respondents had conflictual co-parenting relationships with their ex-spouses in as much as they wanted to ensure their children’s well-being. The findings of the study correlates with the study by Lewis and Lamb (2007) which shows that the conflictual parenting relationships between divorced parents have been associated with lower rates of father involvement in child care especially among non-resident fathers.

4.4.4 Remarriage

Remarriage by either or both ex-spouses has proved to be one of the factors affecting the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships among respondents. This was explained as the second spouses were often insecure and jealousy especially on issues of financial support given to cater for the ex-spouses’ children, communication as well as meetings by ex-spouses meant to discuss children’s welfare. One male respondent jokingly said that:

“Kuriritira vana vangu vanogara nemudzimai wangu wekutanga inotova hondo chaiyo nekuti amai vechipiri vandinogara navo havazvinzwisisi, vanofunga kuti zvimwe tichiri kudanana nyamba kwete nyaya iripo ndeyekuti tibatsirane
kuchengeta vana vedu zvakanaka. Vana vanombouya kuzogara kumba kwangu dzimwe dzenguva kuti tipedze kunetsana uku”. (My remarriage makes it difficult for me to co-parent since my second wife is insecure about the finances I provide to my ex-wife to cater for our children’s needs as well as communication and meetings that we have with my ex-wife. I have decided that sometimes, my children from my first marriage come to stay with my second family in order to get rid of such inconveniences).

Therefore based on the above findings, conclusions were made that the co-parenting relationships after divorce by ex-spouses were conflictual for those who had remarried after divorce.

4.4.5 Triangulation

Triangulation has been highlighted as one of the factors that affect the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses. This is explained by a situation where divorced parents do not communicate directly either with each other positively or negatively due to several reasons that may include their tension rooted in their causes of divorce or on circumstances that either or both of them have remarried. The parents then resort to use children as messengers to pass messages to each other. However triangulation is detrimental to the well-being of the children especially when the co-parents are not in good books. One female respondent said that:

“Murume wandakarambana naye haatauri neni asi anotuma vana kuti vazondiudza zvaanenge achida kuti ndizive. Dzimwe dzenguva anoudza vana zvinhu zvakaipa pamusoro pangu achida kuti vandivenge kuti vagofarira iye”.
From the above findings, conclusions were made that respondents were in disengaged co-parenting relationships with their former spouses in line with ensuring their children’s well-being. The findings of this study are in line with those of McCann, Lee and Powell (2014) which shows that the use of children as spies by divorced parents is detrimental to their well-being as they undergo stress and are caught between parents. Adding the findings are in line with those of Amato and Afifi (2006) which proves that children with parents in post-divorce triangulation have low levels of adjustment to divorce. Therefore the parallel parenting by divorced parents negatively affect the children’s well-being mostly psychologically.

To sum up, the study findings mirrors the typologies on the nature of co-parenting relationships by McCann, Lee and Powell (2014) and Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) are categorised as cooperative, conflictual and disengaged. These findings on the nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships correlate with those of Ahrons (1981) which proved that 50% of the sample perceived their co-parenting relationships as conflictual. Another study findings by Lau (2017) shows that inter-parental conflict and triangulation of children in post-divorce families adversely affected children’s well-being whereas inter-parental support fostered the children’s well-being.

4.5 Benefits of positive post- divorce co-parenting relationships to children’s well-being

4.5.1 High Self-esteem

Respondents were asked on the benefits of their co-parenting relationships to their children’s well-being. They pointed that cooperative relationships were associated with high self-esteem amongst their children as they feel loved by both parents despite their separation.
A key informant from the Evangelical Lutheran Church alluded that:

“Children whose parents are in cooperative parental alliances have high self-esteem. Most of them do not perceive themselves as children from torn families. They participate equally in the church programs for children with their counterparts from intact families”.

The findings of the study are in line with those of Browning (2010) which proved that children whose parents are in cooperative co-parental alliance feel loved and have high self-esteem.

4.6 Effects of negative co-parenting relationships to children’s well-being

4.6.1 Mental Stress

When asked about the negative effects of their co-parenting relationships on children’s well-being, respondents pointed that their children experience mental stress, engage in risky behaviour and they report poor performance at school. They revealed that their children undergo mental stress and depression as they think too much about their welfare since the separation of their parents and as they witness some altercations between their parents regarding their welfare. One co-parenting mother said that:

“My adolescent child used to lock herself up in her room after she witnesses me quarrelling with her father and when I went to check her up I find her with wet eyes which is clear evidence of trauma”. (Ndakambowana mwanasikana wangu akazyivharirira mumba make achichema mushure mekunge anzwa tichinetsana nababa vake maererano nekuriritira iye nehanzyadzi yake).

The findings correlates with the study by Ahrons (1981) which indicates that inter-parental conflict after divorce is strongly associated with children’s psychological stress.
4.6.2 Engagement into risky Behaviour

Engagement into risky behaviour was highlighted as one of the negative effects of dysfunctional co-parenting relationships on children’s well-being. Respondents revealed their children engaged in risky behaviour as a coping mechanism of stress relief after witnessing their parents quarrelling over issues pertaining to their upbringing. For example quarrels over unpaid maintenance fees by non-resident to cover for the children’s needs. Respondents revealed that the children tend to undergo stress and feel that they are a burden and they cause of such quarrels. Henceforth they end up engaging themselves into risky behaviours such as drug abuse like takin dagga, especially adolescent boys to relief their stress. One respondent said that

“Mwanakomana wangu akange ave kuputa mbanje ndisingazive achida kubvisa stress mushure mekunge anzwa ndichinetsana nababa vake ndsichida mari yekutenga chikafu chekut vadye”.

Other respondents revealed that their adolescent daughters were secretly engaging themselves into prostitution so as to get money to buy their needs and not necessarily pestering their parents for them. One respondent who was a single mother said that:

“Mwanasikana wangu akanga avakuita zvekudana nevarume vakuru ndisingazvizivi achida kuwana mari yekutenga zvaanoshuvira kuva nazvo, akanga asingakumbiri mari kwandiri kana baba vake”.

These findings are in line with the findings of Heath (2009) who posited that divorce affect the children’s behaviour patterns. To add on the findings co-relates with those of Tijani and Ogunbawo (2008) which shows that children staying with single mothers are prone to delinquent behaviour.
4.6.3 Poor Educational Performance

When asked about the negative effects of their co-parenting relationships, respondents who had conflictual co-parenting relationships revealed that their children’s performance at school declined from the time of divorce. They attributed the poor educational performance especially on issues of unpaid school fees by parents and the children feel unworthy to be in school. One respondent said that:

“Mwana wangu aigona chikoro chaizvo tisati tarambana nababa vake, asi kubva patakarambana akatanga kudzikira chaizvo muzvidzidzo zvake kunyanya term yatinenge tisina kubhadhara school fees yake.”

The findings correlates with those of Bradshaw and Richardson (2009) which shows that conflictual co-parenting relationships have a negative bearing on the educational well-being of children.

4.7 Suggested solutions to deal with the negative effects of divorce and negative co-parenting relationships on children’s well-being.

4.7.1 Counselling

When asked about what can be done to deal with the negative effects of divorce and conflictual co-parenting relationships, respondents suggested that the children need counselling pertaining to the seperation of their parents and their well-being. They revealed that counselling will help them to adjust from the effects of divorce that include stress and engagement into risky behaviour.

A social worker at Mbare Drop-in Centre pointed that:
“There is need to offer counselling to the children from divorced families as a strategy to reduce the effects of divorce and conflictual co-parenting relationships by their parents after divorce”. Through several counselling sessions with the children, their well-being will be restored and they live happy lives.

Therefore from the above findings, counselling can be used as a strategy to reduce the effects of divorce on children and ensure their well-being.

4.7.2 Strict Law Enforcement

When asked about what can be done to improve cooperation in co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses in order to ensure their children’s well-being of children, respondents pointed that there was need for strict law enforcement. For example on maintenance laws where there should be stiff penalties associated with failure by parents to pay the monthly amount required to cater for the children’s needs. Key informants were of the view that the laws relating to the welfare of children in divorced families should be stiffened. A Police Officer at a station in Mbare alluded that:

“The government should revise the maintenance laws and stiffen the penalties in line with the failure to pay the monthly fees. This will make parents prioritise their children’s well-being”.

To add on, male co-parents pointed that mothers should also be involved in the maintenance of their children’s welfare and not only fathers. One co-parenting father said that:

“Vana amai vasingagari nevana vavo vanofanirawo kubadhara mari yemaintanence mwedzi wega wega kwete kuti vana baba voga ndovanobhadhara”. (Maintenance should not only be paid by non-resident
fathers. Non-resident mothers should also be involved in providing for their children’s needs).

Based on the above the findings, the study fills the gaps in previous research as it requires amendments in legislation to enable the maintenance of children by both non-resident mothers and fathers since only fathers were the only ones entitled to pay maintenance fees.

4.7.3 Education

Parental education was cited as one of the strategies that can be employed to reduce the effects of divorce and the negative post-divorce co-parenting relationships. Key informants pointed that divorced parents need to be educated on positive parenting skills so as to prioritise their children’s well-being after separation. A Case Care worker at Mbare Drop-in Centre alluded that:

“Education is one of the strategies that can be used to reduce the effects of divorce as well as the negative co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses aimed to ensure their children’s well-being”.

These findings are in line with the findings of Kelly (2007) which show that educational efforts for parents who have experienced divorce are important in ensuring the well-being of their children.

4.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented the findings of the co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses in Mbare to ensure their children’s well-being. The presentation of the findings was based on the data gathered in the respective study area and discussions were aligned to the research aim and objectives using thematic content analysis. The next chapter will focus on the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the study’s summary, conclusions and recommendations drawn from the findings of the study contained in the previous chapter. The research objectives for the study included to explore:
The nature of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in Mbare in a bid to contribute and ensure their children’s well-being.

The implications of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between former spouses on their children’s well-being.

The factors that influence the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships between ex-spouses in order to enhance their children’s well-being.

5.1 Summary

The aim of the study was to assess the post-divorce co-parenting relationships by divorced parents in order to ensure their children’s well-being. The study targeted divorced ex-spouses with children who are in co-parenting relationships so as to meet their parental responsibilities and take care of their children and provide their needs. It was carried out in Mbare National with 16 co-parents through in depth interviews and focus group discussions. 4 key informants who had experience and knowledge on the welfare of families that have experienced divorce provided more information needed required in the study. The study explored the nature of co-parenting relationships between divorced parents in a bid to ensure their children’s well-being despite their divorce. The research findings include the fact that most co-parenting relationships after divorce were characterised by cooperation, conflict and sometimes either or both parents were disengaged in matters concerning their children’s welfare. The research gathered that the quality of co-parenting relationships were influenced by a number of factors such as financial constraints, substance abuse, remarriage and the causes of divorce which might have caused tension such that they undermine the parents’ ability to engage in positive co-parenting after divorce.
To add on, when either or both of the ex-spouses have remarried, problems for co-parenting with the previous spouses may arise. As such, the factors had a bearing on the co-parenting arrangements on custody, communication and meetings to discuss about their children’s day to day welfare. The findings of the study revealed that the quality of the co-parenting relationships had implications on the well-being of the children, that is cooperative relationships enhance the well-being whereas conflictual and disengaged are detrimental to the children’s well-being. The nature of the relationships manifest in high self-esteem, poor educational performance, mental stress and engagement into risky behaviour by the children from the divorced families respectively. However there were challenges that were encountered during the study which included some respondents that were unwilling to be recorded during interviews and financial constraints faced by the researcher particularly for transport to and from Mbare to facilitate interviews and focus group discussions.

5.2 Conclusions

The majority of divorced parents in Mbare are in cooperative co-parenting relationships as they aim to enhance the well-being of their children after their separation. These were brought about by the co-parenting arrangements they have established on custody, communication and meetings meant to discuss issues pertaining their children’s welfare. Few ex-spouses had conflictual co-parenting relationships as a result of factors such as remarriage by either or both parents, financial constraints and the causes of divorce which had caused tension such that they undermine the parents’ ability to engage in positive co-parenting. Most co-parenting relationships after divorce are of good quality as they are cooperative henceforth ensuring the well-being of their children. Few relationships are of poor quality as they are characterised by conflict and disengagement in matters of concern in the well-being of children. Negative co-
parenting relationships by parents after divorce were detrimental to the children’s well-being while positive co-parenting relationships implied enhanced children’s well-being. Therefore there is need to educate divorced parents on the need for positive parenting after divorce and the benefits of prioritising their children’s well-being over their marital discord. There is also need for strict law enforcement on the existing policies and laws pertaining the welfare of families that have experienced divorce since they only target non-resident fathers to take their parental responsibilities with the exception of non-resident mothers. Hence need for the government to enforce and draft new laws particularly maintenance laws that make fathers regularly pay the maintenance fees as well making mothers to pay the fees. Counselling should be offered to children from divorced families who have been negatively affected by their parents’ divorce so as to ensure their well-being.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the study recommends as follows:

5.3.1 To the government

Strict law enforcement and enactment

The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) should ensure enforcement of policies and laws on family welfare such as the maintenance laws. The laws should be binding and with stiff penalties which make parents to prioritise their children’s well-being after divorce. The government should formulate policies as well gazette laws that specifically targets the welfare of children from divorced families. It should draft laws that involve non-resident mothers in the payment of maintenance fees to cater for their children’s other than targeting non-resident fathers only.
5.3.2 To Social Work

Counselling

There is need for relevant professions such as social work and its professionals to help in the enhancement of the welfare of families that have experienced divorce through counselling. They should offer counselling services for free to divorced ex-spouses on positive parenting skills and the need to prioritise their parental responsibilities after divorce despite their divorce. To add on, social workers should offer counselling to the children from divorced families who have been by their parents’ divorce in order to ensure their well-being.

5.3.3 To Humanitarian Organisations

Education

Humanitarian organisations both governmental and non-governmental organisations should hold educative programs on positive parenting to parents in intact as well as divorced families so as to ensure the well-being of the children. These can be done through awareness campaigns, were the parents will be taught on parenting issues such as providing basic needs like food and the balanced diet, education, discipline and openness and communication with children on different issues affecting their well-being.

5.3.4 Recommendations for further research

The study recommends that future research should focus on other strategies that should be put in place by divorced parents in order to ensure their children’s well-being.
REFERENCES:

American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. 51(1), 415-428.

National Council on Relations.


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Approval letter

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
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BINDURA, Zimbabwe
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Social Work Department
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BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

13/04/15

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE : REQUEST TO UNDER TAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR AREA

This serves to introduce the bearer, Prosper Zvengwa, who is an HBSc SOCIAL WORK student in the Department of SOCIAL WORK, Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area.

Your usual co-operation and assistance is therefore being sought.

Thank you for the continued support.

Yours faithfully,

DR. C. NYONI
CHAIRPERSON – SOCIAL WORK

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

DATE

73
Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form

My name is Prosper Zivengwa. I am a fourth year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying for a Social Work Honours Degree. I am conducting a research entitled “An assessment on post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are allowed to withdraw at any moment. You are encouraged to seek clarification on issues that you do not understand. The information you provide will be strictly used for academic purposes and kept confidential.

Terms and Conditions

1. Voluntary participation is encouraged and participants will not be forced to participate.
2. Participants are encouraged to seek clarification on issues they do not understand.
3. Appointments will be made by the researcher to meet the participants on the best time suitable for them.
4. Research proceedings will be recorded and written down. Anonymity will be upheld through the use of pseudonyms instead of the participants’ real names.
5. All the data gathered will be kept confidential and will be strictly used for academic purposes.
6. Participants are allowed to withdraw from the research anytime.

I………………………………………. (The pseudonym of the respondent), have read and fully understood the terms and conditions of participation in this research study carried out for the Bindura University of Science Education.
Appendix 3: Interview guide and focus group for divorced co-parents

Introduction

My name is Prosper Zivengwa, I am a fourth year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying for a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree of Social Work. As part of my degree studies, I am expected to do a practical research project of any topic of interest related to social work. Therefore I am conducting a research titled ‘An assessment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19’. I am kindly asking you to take part as one of the co-parents in Mbare National who is providing for their children’s needs after divorce. This will help me to have a deep understanding on divorced families with children and their post-divorce co-parenting experiences.

The information gathered from interviews is used solely for scholastic purposes and will be kept confidential and no name of respondents will be published or shared. Interviews will be conducted approximately 30 to 40 minutes depending on your willingness to continue or decline.

Thank you in advance.

NB. Please note that there are no benefits and/or incentives offered as an appreciation of participation in the interview now or in the near future.

SECTION A: Personal Information of Respondents:

Age…………..

Sex…….. Male   Female

Occupation……..
1. When did you marry?

2. How old were you when you got married?

3. When did you divorce?

4. For how long have you been married at the time of divorce?

5. What were the circumstances that led to your divorce?

6. How old were you when you divorced?

7. How many children do you have? (specify boys and/or girls).

8. How old were your children at the time of divorce?

SECTION B: Knowledge on divorce and co-parenting

9. What is your understanding of co-parenting?

10. What are the co-parenting arrangements between you and your former spouse?

11. Do you consider having access to the children important?

12. How often do you have access to the children since the divorce?

13. What are the responsibilities that each of you is entitled to do?

14. What are the challenges that you are facing in co-parenting with your ex-spouse in a bid to ensure your children’s well-being?

15. What do you think should be done to improve your co-parenting relationship with your ex-spouse for the best welfare of your children?
Appendix 4: Interview guide for Case Care Workers

Introduction

My name is Prosper Zivengwa, I am a fourth year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying for a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree of Social Work. As part of my degree studies, I am expected to do a practical research project of any topic of interest related to social work. Therefore I am conducting a research titled ‘An assessment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19’. I am kindly asking you to take part as one of the key informants working with the Mbare community in order to have a deep understanding on divorced families with children and their post-divorce co-parenting experiences.

The information gathered from interviews is used solely for scholastic purposes and will be kept confidential and no name of respondents will be published or shared. Interviews will be conducted approximately 30 to 40 minutes depending on your willingness to continue or decline.

Thank you in advance.

NB. Please note that there are no benefits and/or incentives offered as an appreciation of participation in the interview now or in the future.

SECTION A: Personal Information of respondents

Name......................

Sex....... Male  Female

Age......................

Organisation..........

Marital status..........

1. What are your duties?
2. For how long have you been working as a case worker in Mbare?
SECTION B: Knowledge on divorce and co-parenting:

3. How prevalent is divorce in Mbare, Ward 19?

4. What are the causes of divorce in Mbare?

5. What are the effects of divorce?

6. Are there any child protection organisations in Mbare National that work with families that have experienced divorce?

7. What is your understanding of the concept of co-parenting?

8. How often do you receive and attend to cases related to post-divorce co-parenting in-order to enhance the well-being of children?

9. Are there any awareness raising programs carried out in Mbare on positive parenting in all types of families to ensure children’s well-being?

Thank you very much for your assistance

(End of Interview)

Other observations about/on the Interview

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Appendix 5: Interview guide for Social Workers

Introduction

My name is Prosper Zivengwa, I am a fourth year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying for a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree of Social Work. As part of my degree studies, I am expected to do a practical research project of any topic of interest related to social work. Therefore I am conducting a research titled ‘An assessment of post- divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19’. I am kindly asking you to take part as one of the key informants working with the Mbare community in order to have a deep understanding on divorced families with children and the way they are co-parenting after divorce.

The information gathered from interviews is used solely for scholastic purposes and will be kept confidential and no name of respondents will be published or shared. Interviews will be conducted approximately 30 to 40 minutes depending on your willingness to continue or decline.

Thank you in advance.

NB. Please note that there are no benefits and/or incentives offered as an appreciation of participation in the interview now or in the future.

SECTION A: Personal Information of respondents

Name…………………

Sex……. Male    Female

Age…………………..
Marital status……………………..

1. What are your duties?
2. How long have you been working as a social worker in Mbare?
3. Which organisation are you engaged with or employed?

SECTION B: Knowledge on divorce and co-parenting:

4. How prevalent is divorce in Mbare, Ward 19?
5. What are the causes of divorce in Mbare?
6. What are the effects of divorce?
7. What is your understanding of the concept of co-parenting?
8. How do you handle cases related to parenting and child well-being?
9. Do you receive cases of established co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses in Mbare in a bid to enhance children’s well-being?

7. Are there any child protection organisations in Mbare National that work with families that have experienced divorce?

10. Are there any educational parenting programmes done with parents in Mbare aimed at ensuring children’s well-being?

9. How does dysfunctioning co-parenting relationships affect children’s well-being?

10. Do you face any challenges in handling cases involving ex-spouses and their children’s well-being?

11. What do you think should be done to improve co-parenting relationships by ex-spouses
in order to ensure children’s well-being?

Thank you very much for your assistance

(End of Interview)

Other observations about/on the Interview

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…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………….
Introduction

My name is Prosper Zivengwa, I am a fourth year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying for a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree of Social Work. As part of my degree studies, I am expected to do a practical research project of any topic of interest related to social work. Therefore I am conducting a research titled ‘An assessment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19’. I am kindly asking you to take part as one of the key informants working with the Mbare community in order to have a deep understanding on divorced families with children and the way they are co-parenting after divorce.

The information gathered from interviews is used solely for scholastic purposes and will be kept confidential and no name of respondents will be published or shared. Interviews will be conducted approximately 30 to 40 minutes depending on your willingness to continue or decline.

Thank you in advance.

NB. Please note that there are no benefits and/or incentives offered as an appreciation of participation in the interview now or in the future.

SECTION A: Personal Information of respondents

Name…………………

Sex……. Male    Female

Age…………………

Proffessional Rank…………
1. What are your duties?
2. How long have you been working as a police officer?
3. Which police station do you work at?

SECTION B: Knowledge on divorce and co-parenting

4. How prevalent is divorce in Mbare, Ward 19?
5. What are the causes of divorce in Mbare?
6. What are the effects of divorce?
7. What do you understand by divorce and child rearing after divorce?
8. How often do you receive cases of ex-spouses reporting on problematic co-parenting relationships after divorce?
9. How do you handle cases of conflicting co-parents in Mbare National having problems in co-parenting with their ex-spouses in order to ensure their children’s well-being?
10. What are the main issues that are reported by the divorced co-parents that lead to problematic co-parenting relationships?
11. What do you think can be done to improve the quality of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in order to ensure children’s well-being?

Thank you so much for your assistance.

(End of Interview)

Other observations about/on the Interview
Appendix 6: Interview guide for religious leaders

Introduction
My name is Prosper Zivengwa, I am a fourth year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying for a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree of Social Work. As part of my degree studies, I am expected to do a practical research project of any topic of interest related to social work. Therefore I am conducting a research titled ‘An assessment of post-divorce co-parenting relationships in ensuring children’s well-being. A case of Mbare, Ward 19’. I am kindly asking you to take part as one of the key informants who interact with the Mbare community in order to have a deep understanding on divorced families with children and the way they are co-parenting after divorce.

The information gathered from interviews is used solely for scholastic purposes and will be kept confidential and no name of respondents will be published or shared. Interviews will be conducted approximately 30 to 40 minutes depending on your willingness to continue or decline.

Thank you in advance.

**NB. Please note that there are no benefits and/or incentives offered as an appreciation of participation in the interview now or in the future.**

**SECTION A: Personal Information of respondents**

Name....................

Sex........ Male    Female

Age....................

Marital status..........

Religion..................
SECTION B: Knowledge on divorce and co-parenting

1. How prevalent is divorce in Mbare, Ward 19?

2. What are the causes of divorce in Mbare?

3. What are the effects of divorce?

4. What do you understand about divorce and parenting in its aftermath?

5. Do you have some religious or church doctrines that emphasize on family life including raising children to ensure their well-being?

6. Are there specific programs held within the church that are educative to parents specifically on issues of parenting?

7. Do you help families with children that have undergone divorce in line with co-parenting from a religious point of view?

Thank you so much for your assistance.

(End of Interview)