

Exploring socio-economic challenges faced by female headed households in rural districts: The case of Manama village, Matebeleland South Province in Zimbabwe

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my unborn child, Kimberly, Nisha, Mickaylah, Hailey, Violetta and all of their generation whose future requires that we find solutions to our current socio-economic challenges.

Declaration

I Abigail Nkazimulo Nyathi declare that this research proposal is my original work and has not been submitted for any degree at any other university or institution. The proposal does not contain other persons' writings unless specifically acknowledged and referenced accordingly.

Signed (Student).....Date.....

Abstract

In most developing countries, poverty is concentrated in female headed households especially in rural areas. Notably, these rural areas are fast becoming female spaces, as most men migrate to urban areas and neighbouring countries. The critical role of rural women in eradicating poverty through agricultural labour force, subsistence farming and rural development in sub-Saharan Africa, has been recognised by scholars yet they are the poorest and their contribution has not been fully acknowledged by the community or governments. To understand this phenomenon this study investigated the socio-economic challenges faced by female headed households, causes of high vulnerability and their coping strategies in Manama village, Matabeleland South province, Zimbabwe. This study was informed by feminist theoretical approaches of conducting research as it employed several qualitative research methods, namely key participant individual in-depth interviews; Focus group discussions; field participatory observation and documentary reviews to collect data. The findings of the study were that, due to the country's economic situation, constrained mobility and lack of collateral security to secure credit, women have a double burden of responsibility with numerous challenges such as unequal wages in hired labourer work, inadequate food for the family, financial burdens. However they have their own coping strategies such as voluntary community networks. This study concludes by making recommendations, for gender mainstreaming in policy, agricultural extension services for Female headed households, creation of markets, counselling and psychosocial support. This research contends that although these women find themselves in a patriarchal frame they have decided to outgrow it and be autonomous as they fight the socio-economic challenges they face. They have numerous socio-economic challenges but the participants themselves are self-asserted. They are not stopped by patriarchy and are exemplary as they work hard and venture outside the domestic space to engage in honest work to take care of their households.

Key words: challenges, female-headed households, feminisation of poverty, strategies, vulnerable

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List of Acronyms

AIDS - Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

FHHs – Female headed households

GOZ – Government of Zimbabwe

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

MWAGD – Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and development

MDGs - Millennium Development Goals

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SRHR – Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

UNGA –United Nations General Assembly

CHAPTER 1

1.0 Background and introduction

1.1 Background

In many countries, female headed households are rising and experience numerous challenges related to poverty. Feminisation of poverty has become a critical global issue, largely as a result of the Fourth Women's World Conference in Beijing where alarm about rising female headed households was raised. It was pointed out that 70% of the world's poor are females (Chant S. , 2011).

In the United States of America, women are over represented among the elderly poor. This is due to the fact that women tend to live longer and because they have higher poverty rates compared to men. In most European countries, more women than men work in vulnerable employment with very low or no cash returns. For the formally employed women, a significant proportion has no say in how their earnings are spent within the home (FAO, 2015). Moreover, most women spend a lot of time on unpaid domestic tasks.

In the developing countries, female headship is very high in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, with 50-54% of the poor being female headed households (UN, 2009). Rural women in female headed households throughout Asia make critical contributions to household production yet they are poorer than male headed households. These women taking care of families single handedly own less land, houses and livestock than men (UN, 2009).

In Africa, existing customary and statutory laws limit women's access to land and other types of property, this leads to vulnerability and poverty. As a result, female headed households have a high incidence of poverty. Poverty experienced by these female headed households manifests itself in ill health, hunger, malnutrition, limited or lack of access to education, inadequate housing, homelessness and lack of participation in decision making (UN, 2009) as shown by the table below.

Table 1. Countries with more than 50% of their poor classified as Female headed households

COUNTRIES WHERE 50 – 54 % OF THE POOR ARE FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS			
AFRICA	ASIA	LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN	DEVELOPED REGION
Burkina Faso	Bhutan	Mexico	Bulgaria
Zimbabwe	Bangladesh	Colombia	Belgium

Kenya		Haiti	Spain
Guinea		Jamaica	Hungary

*Source: United Nations Statistics Division % Eurostat. The World Bank, Socio-economic Database for Latin America and the Caribbean (SEDLAC) (2009) Chapter 1, Section B. 2010.

Women's poverty levels are at the centre of political discussion around the world as governments put in place poverty alleviation plans. However, most of these plans fail to take into account the complex relationship between gender and poverty (Chant S. , 2011). A renewed focus on the time and labour that rural women invest in bearing the burden of dealing with poverty is now needed. Many women empowerment campaigns focus on offering younger women education and job opportunities. Only a few campaigns focus on women whose lives are rooted in the rural areas and with family responsibilities weighing heavily on their shoulders (Gaidzanwa, 2011). These campaigns usually focus on food hand-outs only and this does not solve the root causes of their poverty.

Many rural women in Manama village, a rural district under Matebeleland South province in Zimbabwe, are very poor and depend on humanitarian aid for assistance. They face water, healthcare and food shortages. However, since 2000, the poverty in this rural community has worsened largely because of the on-going political and economic crises in Zimbabwe (UNDP, 2011). While the whole country has suffered as a result of the collapsed Zimbabwean economy, the rural communities have suffered the most because of the subsistence nature of their economic activities. The situation has been exacerbated by natural disasters such as droughts and floods which have led to a persistent reduced food output in Zimbabwe (ECHO, 2015).

Studies on the challenges within female headed households are important in the poverty eradication agenda. Traditionally, Zimbabwe's economy is agro-based and dualistic in nature. On one hand, there is the commercial sub-sector; on the other hand, there are small scale farmers who grow food crops such as maize. The bulk of these small scale farmers are women who engage in agriculture more than men thus playing a crucial role of ensuring food security at household level. However, they live in abject poverty (UNDP, 2012).

Female headed households in rural areas in most developing countries have a higher poverty rate compared to male headed households. The post-independent Zimbabwean government did not consider gender perspectives in its drive to provide infrastructure such as construction of irrigation schemes, expanding the existing ones, roads, clinics and schools to impoverished rural communities. This was caused by the fact that women are culturally and socially excluded in most decision making forums. As a result, the views and opinions of women were not captured as the government researched on what these rural communities needed regardless of them constituting more than 52% of the rural population (UNDP, 2012).

Deindustrialisation has put immense pressure on female headed households in Manama village as retrenched urban workers; mostly men, have migrated back to their rural homes as dependents. Due to the economic recession since the year 2000 which has continued sixteen years on unabated, Matebeleland's main city Bulawayo has been deindustrialising (NSSA, 2015). Bulawayo has been traditionally the economic hub of Matebeleland provinces and most men from Gwanda were employed there leaving women back in the rural areas to take care of children and the homesteads. After retrenchment, these men go back to their rural homes only to become dependents since women are the ones familiar with the means of survival in rural areas. Thus they become an added burden to women since they need to be fed and need financial assistance to move to other areas in search for employment.

Separation of spouses has led to the feminisation of rural areas and poverty, since it is mostly women who are left in charge of homes, children and the elderly. Poverty has led to the separation of spouses in the sense that retrenched workers from Bulawayo industries, especially men, have gone to neighbouring countries in search of jobs. Women engage in petty trading, poultry keeping and subsistence agriculture, which is becoming increasingly difficult due to recurrent droughts, especially in the Matebeleland region (UNFPA, 2015). Moreover, the separation of spouses has resulted in problems such as, the risk of contracting the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) by spouses living in forced separation, the problem of xenophobia and deportations of men due to lack of work permits from such countries as South Africa and Botswana.

Zimbabwe, like most African countries is a patriarchal society where women carry a significantly heavier burden within households. In the rural areas, women provide most of the agricultural labour and the securing of food at household level but are rarely included in decision making about what better farming strategies to adopt, land allocation, how to dispose of surplus produce and how the money is spent within the home (Essof S. , 2005). They constitute the marginalised group in human society. Moreover, aid distribution literature and research is silent on gender issues and it is not clear whether women get first preference when it comes to aid distribution. This suggests that desired outcomes in humanitarian aid can only be achieved through mainstreaming gender with interventionist strategies considering that women are the most affected victims (Musekiwa P. , 2013).

Women and men often highlight different concerns and perceptions regarding poverty alleviation strategies. Women prefer receiving financial aid to start irrigation gardens to produce vegetables for sale, poultry keeping, materials for sewing clothes and selling, whereas men prefer livestock rearing and cultivating maize (Milazzo A, 2015). Due to climatic change affecting rainfall patterns, it is no longer viable to invest in livestock since animals die because of lack of water and grazing lands. Maize also does not grow well with little rainfall. The shift by women to vegetable gardening and projects like sewing is an appropriate response to the climatic changes. Thus women are more in touch with subsistence farming realities than men (Pettengell C. , 2010).

Aid has not eliminated the root causes of the feminisation of poverty and the vulnerability of women. Over the years, most Zimbabwean rural communities have developed an aid dependency syndrome (Zimstats, 2003). Most international aid in the country has been humanitarian rather than developmental in nature. As a result, this aid has not addressed the complex relationship between gender, sustainable livelihoods and poverty. Therefore, instead of empowering rural women with skills and resources that would eliminate the needs to depend on aid, non-governmental organisations have been accused of nurturing dependency. This assertion needs further investigation because although Zimbabwe has received billions of dollars in aid money, the majority of its rural women still live in abject poverty. This then calls for a serious reflection on the role of aid in the poverty eradication agenda of the country.

Therefore, it is important to explore the challenges faced by rural women and their coping strategies. Ways in which aid of different forms could empower women especially in rural communities in significantly lasting ways should also be investigated. It is important to find out what poverty alleviation strategies are in place and their impact on the lives of rural women. An impartial examination of facts surrounding the complex interplay of female rural poverty is necessary. A number of players in this poverty matrix would need to be examined such as the role poor women have played and can play the actions and responses of the men in their community as husbands and fathers, and the Zimbabwean government's response to the economic challenges faced by women in the Gwanda rural district.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Preliminary research showed that Manama village has a lot of female headed households living in abject poverty. They face difficulties in generating income, child-rearing and vulnerability to economic, political, social and environmental crises. These female headed households are on the rise and have a higher incidence of poverty. This worsening status of female headed households has created the concept known as the “feminization of poverty,” which needs to be addressed (Milazzo A, 2015). The female headed households in this district are experiencing higher incidences of malnutrition, economic marginalization and rejection more than their male counterparts. Thus rural female headed households are often the poorest and they carry a disproportionate burden of poverty compared to male headed households.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to assess the prevalence of poverty in female headed households in Manama village and the socio-economic challenges of dealing with it. The research will also explore the reasons and consequences of this state of affairs. Furthermore, it also aims to identify ways rural women can be uplifted from their poverty.

1.4 Objectives of the study:

- To explore the challenges faced by females within female headed households in Gwanda village.
- To examine causes of the higher prevalence of poverty amongst female headed households in the village.
- To investigate the coping strategies that female headed households are employing for survival.

1.5 Research questions:

- What are the challenges faced by female headed households in Gwanda and what is the extent of their poverty and suffering?
- What are the causes of the higher prevalence of poverty amongst female headed households in the Gwanda rural district?
- What are the coping strategies that female headed households in Gwanda use in order to survive?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study will contribute to the economic improvement of rural women since it seeks to find out gender disparities in poverty levels and whether aid givers have been sensitive to gender differentials. The causes and outcomes of poverty are heavily engendered. Therefore, a gender sensitive approach to poverty alleviation strategies is essential in the design and implementation of strategies that will be effective in helping females who head households in rural areas. Disaggregated data is needed to direct intervention to those who need it the most (Assembly U. G., 2016).

This study also raises awareness that poverty is evolving. Poverty must be understood not only as income poverty but as a massive restriction of choices and options. This understanding of poverty would improve the lives of women in Manama village, in

Zimbabwe and in the southern region and in the continent as a whole. Gender gaps are evolving over time. Poverty is not just a lack of basics needed for human survival but also a deprivation of rights. It is a deprivation of essential assets, opportunities and rights. Therefore, any effective strategy to reduce poverty must empower disadvantaged women to exercise their rights and participate more actively in decisions that affect them (Chant S. , 2011). This is the angle that gender and poverty in this study will be investigated.

This study will also help in the fulfilment of regional initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs, 2015) which is committed to ensuring that no one is left behind, especially focusing on the emancipation of rural women. In addition, this study is in line with the African Union Agenda 2063 which also focuses on gender parity and financing women's empowerment in the eradication of gendered poverty (Assembly U. G., 2016). For sustainable development goals to be met, research on feminisation of poverty is essential.

1.7 Definitions of key concepts

Female headed households –Fafchamps (1999) refers to a female head as a woman who is raising a child on her own without a husband or partner. Meanwhile, Chant (2011) refers to a female head as – situations where an adult woman, usually with children or dependents resides without a male presence in the form of a husband, father or brother. This study will adopt the definition by Chant which is supported by the UN; which states that female heads mean females aged between 15-65 years who have the burden of taking care of themselves, their families or other dependents (Assembly U. G., 2016). Therefore, in the context of this study, female headed households entail those families that survive on an income provided by a female or a woman who happens to be the breadwinner.

Feminisation of poverty – is a higher concentration, incidence and vulnerability of poverty among women as compared to men. This is a concept that indicates the prevalence of poverty among women as compared to men. Feminisation of poverty means three distinct things: those women have a higher incidence of poverty, a more severe form of poverty and more permanent form of poverty (Gaidzanwa, 2011). The burden of poverty is disproportionate and rising in female headed households. In this study, feminisation of poverty will be used to refer to the situation whereby females experience more socio-economic hardships when compared to men.

Abject poverty – is destitution, which refers to the deprivation of basic human needs, which commonly include food, water, sanitation, clothing, shelter, healthcare and human rights. This concept of absolute poverty is not concerned with broader quality of life issues or the overall inequality in society (ECHO, 2015). In the context of this study, poverty will also mean the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development to lead a

long and healthy life, and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-respect and earn the respect of others.

Challenges – Chant (2006) states that challenges are burdens or problems that make life unpleasant, unbearable and difficult to carry on. In this study, challenges will also mean the social and economic crises that female heads, be it in community structures and economic policies that discriminate against them or have left them worse off (Essof S. , 2005).

Strategies – According to Gaidzanwa, strategies are specific efforts and actions that women employ to reduce or minimise the effects of poverty (Gaidzanwa, 2011). These survival strategies help women to cope with the socio-economic challenges they face. In the context of this study, strategies will also mean the diversification of income sources by female heads in order to surmount their economic challenges and crises of their everyday life.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to evaluate previous studies and the literature related to the challenges faced by female headed households (FHHs), especially female rural households in Zimbabwe and how they adapt in order to survive. It evaluates and relates the information to the main objective of the study which is to explore the socio-economic challenges faced by Female headed households. The supporting objectives are assessing causes, prevalence and solutions to poverty. The section also describes the theoretical framework used in this study.

2.1 Literature review

The World Bank Group (2007) says: “Poverty is multifaceted and is evolving. Poverty is hunger, poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is lack of access to a school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, fear of the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is lack of representation and freedom”. This is the state in which most Female headed households find themselves in.

This definition in context with this research links with the real lived experience of Female household heads in Gwanda rural district that have low paying jobs, low income retail business and cannot access education or healthcare easily. In rural Zimbabwe a low economic status is associated with lower education, fewer opportunities, lack of access to essential resources such as water, food insufficiency and anxiety disorders (Pascoe, 2015). Women in rural areas are therefore more vulnerable to poverty than men.

Indicators of poverty, according to a study conducted in Umtata in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, are a lack of access to land; limited access to basics like water and electricity; dependency on others; often exploitable; living with no hope or vision for the future; inability to have more than one basic daily meal; children not in school; isolated, sometimes living alone and female headed households (Everatt JD, 2008). Umtata’s case study is relevant to this research because of its rural context. Another South African rural province with similar indicators is Vhembe district under Limpopo (Kyei, 2011). Limpopo is the 2nd poorest province in South Africa with a poverty rate of 59.1% of the total population.

Predominantly rural with poverty level differing from one district to another the poverty indicators are similar. Of the 3 290 households covered in a survey of one district, Mtale, 27.4% are Female headed households with limited access to healthcare, antenatal care and education (Kyei, 2011). These low socio-economic status indicators or themes stand out in most rural communities of Southern African countries such as Botswana; Lesotho and Zimbabwe too.

2.1.1 Feminisation of poverty in Southern Africa

Gender relations have gone through significant transitions in the past decades; from being predominantly rural, to colonial economies based on male migration, to separation of spouses and women increasingly engaging in agricultural production for subsistence (Inge, 2008). This has created a high prevalence of Female headed households. South Africa has the highest percentage with 42%; Zimbabwe with 33%; Malawi with 27%; Mozambique and Swaziland at 26% and Tanzania at 25% (Bank, 2014). The result has been the increasing of the burden of responsibility for Southern African women.

Chant talks about a feminisation of responsibility and obligation (Chant S, 2007). This is because of women in Female headed households engaging more than men in agriculture and domestic duties within the home. Female headed households have a stronger tendency to allocate resources towards food; health; education and other necessities within the home (Chant S. , 2011). With a strong correlation between poverty and Female headed households, understanding the process that produces and sustains Female headed households should be a research priority area towards the efforts of reducing poverty. This is the main focus of this study.

It has been established that in most parts of the world, women are at the centre of poverty. Hunter Gault (2006) point out that “the open secret about poverty in Africa is that it has a woman’s face”. The feminisation of poverty became a critical global issue in the mid-1990s largely as a result of the Fourth Women’s World Conference at Beijing in which alarm about rising female headed households and an alleged 70% of the world’s poor were female (Chant S. , 2011). Female headed households are on the rise and face numerous challenges such as malnutrition, low wages, limited opportunities, and lack of access to resources such as land, among others (Ikwaakam O.T, 2011). On the African continent, sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest region with a large rural population largely being women who are affected by poverty.

In Southern Africa, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (SADC, 2008) has been the main tool for addressing poverty amongst women. Article 18 on the “multiple roles of women”, stipulates: “State parties shall by 2015, review all policies and laws that determine access to, control of and benefit from productive resources by women in order to (a) end all

discrimination against women and girls with regard to water rights and property such as land". As of 2016, Zimbabwe has more than 50% of its population living below USD\$1 per day, the majority of the affected being women (ZimSitRep, 2016). Economic insolvency leads to vulnerability to poverty.

2.2 Socio-economic data and feminisation of poverty in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, according to the Zimbabwe Gender Dimensions of Poverty Thematic Report (ZHDR, 2003), poverty prevalence was highest in de facto Female headed households (56% very poor), followed by de jure Female headed households (53%) then male headed households at 42%. This is because when a woman becomes a family head she has a higher tendency to face financial problems as she has to play a dual role of provider and caregiver. This is in addition to her low earning capacity, lack of knowledge and skills and low job opportunities in an economically depressed area.

As of 2012, Zimbabwe had an estimated population of 13.7million and a life expectancy of 56 years for men and 60 years for women. Approximately 72% households, 34% being female headed were living below the poverty datum line. As of 2014, the total population was at 14.6 million and the population was estimated to be over 15 million in July 2015 by the United Nations (UNFPA, 2015). As the population increases, poverty increases too. As at 2015, about 81% households; 37% being female headed, lived below the poverty datum line (UNFPA, 2015). Although there are still no accurate poverty figures for 2016, best estimates show that the level of poverty among Female headed households is increasing relentlessly, given the country's economic strife.

Poverty in this study is the inability of individuals and households to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. The Zimbabwean constitution guarantees the delivery of socio-economic rights; these include adequate housing, as well as the right of access to healthcare, sufficient food, water and social security (ZLHR, 2010). Thus this places a constitutional obligation on government to take action to ensure access to such social goods.

Rural poverty affecting female headed households is abject poverty, since they lack the basics required for human survival. This type of poverty borders on starvation and is devastating in its totality. Women who head households are triply disadvantaged: they experience the burdens of poverty; they face gender discrimination and endure the absence of support as heads of households. In Manama village under Gwanda rural district, for the majority of women, existing socio-economic rights as guaranteed by the constitution, remain inaccessible resulting in the perpetuation, increase as well as feminization of poverty (Kehler J. , 2001). These socio-economic rights remain theoretical, lacking practical implementation.

2.3 Causes of rise of female headed households in Manama village

Subtle transformations occurring across Africa have led to the breakup of traditional norms. Changes in marriage behaviour, family formation, health and education have put pressure on female headship. Factors that have contributed to the rising trends in female headship in Zimbabwe include erosion of the family, widowhood, separation, labour related migration as men seek work in urban areas and neighbouring countries, leaving behind households headed by women, high divorce rates, desertion by fathers who deny responsibility of unplanned pregnancies and a higher death toll among males due to HIV/AIDS (Milazzo A, 2015). These female heads have a double burden of taking care of families and finding solutions to those challenges.

Migration is on the rise in Manama village and Gwanda rural district as a whole due to lack of economic opportunities in the rural areas and perceived better employment prospects in neighbouring countries. Although trends are not well documented, migration patterns seem to have gender characteristics with men migrating more frequently than women especially regionally and internationally (FAO, 2010). This is because women are more limited by domestic chores and responsibilities. Women are also less worldly wise. The effect migration has on Female Headed Households include reduced crop production which undermines food security; lack of moral or spousal support in making decisions or handling matters and loneliness which leads to extra marital affairs (FAO, 2010). This leads to another challenge, the HIV/AIDS infection of spouses who live in forced separation. When men leave their wives they usually engage in extra marital affairs to deal with loneliness and to satisfy their sexual desires. These multiple partners usually increase vulnerability to the disease and when they get infected, it reduces the household's resilience to other livelihood shocks, such as poverty related malnutrition (UNICEF, 2012). Such situations also add the responsibility of caring for the sick on the duties and roles of female heads.

When HIV/AIDS infects spouses, it devastates the family, drains assets, plays havoc with education, escalates domestic violence and pushes families in a downward spiral towards greater poverty (Urdang.S, 2006). According to a rural based study on infected women in Zimbabwe, even though some women may suspect that they are HIV infected due to some symptoms or being sickly, a confirmed diagnosis throws many into a state of anguish as they see themselves dying because of "a disease they do not deserve" (Gona, 2015). Zimbabwe is affected by this scourge and has an estimated 33% of its 15-49 year old population infected. According to the Zimbabwe demographic profile in 2016, these were about 1,2million people (Assembly U. G., 2016). Once HIV/AIDS affects a member of the household, it is women who overwhelmingly provide the care. This heightens the chances of women being infected through contagion (Kang'ethe S. , 2008). Therefore, Female Headed Households, in rural parts of Zimbabwe such as Manama village are both disproportionately affected and infected by HIV/AIDS.

Divorce is one of the factors leading to an increase in Female Headed Households. However, in Manama village, the manner in which the community understands divorce is somewhat different. Women who have been abandoned may be viewed as divorced in the community, just as women who claim to be divorced may, in fact, legally be just separated. The event of being abandoned is usually preceded by deterioration of the marital arrangement or neglect and is labelled as divorce without the legal procedures of dissolving a marriage since they are mostly customary marriages. Regardless, divorce by their definition of separation is just devastating. The challenge female divorcees face is that society feels less obligated to help abandoned women, since in many rural Zimbabwean communities; it is believed that the abandoned women were in some way at fault or the reason behind the divorce and therefore deserve their suffering. This is done without finding out the reasons behind the family's disintegration. There is considerable evidence that upon divorce, women and children suffer and experience substantial emotional and economic decline (Chant S, 2007). So the female divorcee will focus on dealing with her feelings of pain and rejection rather than building a sustainable livelihood for the family (Ambrosino, 2005). This worsens the situation, as divorce or being abandoned is almost always traumatizing.

Widows are also not immune to stigmatisation within the village. The death of the husband leaves the household headed by a female who is harassed by in laws, often being accused of witchcraft and accused of murdering the husband. Widows are stripped of their inheritance rights, at times even losing farm lands; especially if they have no male child or if the male child is not yet of age (Gaidzanwa P.R, 2011). In most instances, family resources are usually seized by the in laws leaving the Female Headed Household destitute.

The Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan stated that today, as AIDS is eroding the health of Africa's women, it is eroding the skills, experience and networks that keep families going. Even before falling ill, a woman will take care of a sick husband, thereby reducing the time she can devote to planting, harvesting and marketing crops. When her husband dies, she is denied of credit, distribution networks or land rights. When she dies, the household will risk collapsing completely, leaving children to fend for themselves (Mutangadura, 2005). If Africa is to be saved from the two catastrophes of HIV/AIDS and famine, focus should be on saving Africa's women. Sometimes, factors such as the separation of spouses, divorce, a husband's death and being abandoned by irresponsible men, add to the worsening of hardships experienced by female heads. The woman's life then is confronted by various challenges such as rearing children alone, dealing with difficulty, economic challenges, depression and disappointment. Usually, it is the woman in the household who is the most affected (Musekiwa P, 2013). This forces the family into a vicious cycle of poverty.

2.4 Types of female headed households in Manama village

Literature distinguishes two types of female headed households, de facto and de jure (Musekiwa P, 2013). These are the two main types of female headed households in Gwanda that will be examined. These two households differ depending on the role a man plays in the household. De facto female headed households are those whereby the woman is head because the husband is absent temporarily or is present but incapacitated by alcoholism, physical disability, mental illness or unemployment. The man might make major decisions, but the woman ultimately is in control (Milazzo A, 2015). Thus the woman takes charge.

In de jure female headed households, the woman is head because she is single; never married but has children; widowed; divorced or separated and girls who did not marry and take care of the family without a man's assistance. De jure female heads maintain their households alone while de factor female heads have men who are unable or unwilling to work.

2.5 Challenges faced by female headed households in Manama village

The diverse socio-economic problems Female headed households face, are collectively related to survival. Recent labour amendments have led to a reduction in remittances to rural women, exacerbating the plight of poor rural women. Due to industries operating below capacity, the Zimbabwean government passed a bill that allows industries to lay off workers as they deem fit, without advance notice or benefits and with no consequence of facing legal recourse. In 2015, this led to massive retrenchments with best estimates suggesting that 15 000 people lost their jobs in three months. A senior official from the National Social Security Authority (NSSA, 2015) disclosed that at least 8 companies were closing each month in 2015. This directly affected many women in Manama village who had husbands, brothers and fathers who gave them financial assistance because they were employed in urban areas. This meant a reduction in remittances to female heads taking care of families in rural areas and an exodus by retrenched men to rural areas, which directly affected women as they had extra dependents to feed and care for.

Women play a principal role in agriculture, especially due to separation of spouses with most men working far away from home. In addition to farming poor soils, women become the sole farmers but they are without the decision making powers to dispose of the produce and to spend money without consulting their absentee husbands (Zimstats, 2003). These challenges negatively affect their efforts and this separation of spouses has led to the feminisation of rural poverty. Findings show that widow households have a higher incidence of poverty of 86% while divorced and women undergoing separation have a poverty incidence of 75% (Zimstats, 2003).

Women have critical societal contributions but have limited access to necessary resources, decision in allocation, and use of these resources and deriving benefits from such resources (Welch, 1993). Women's access to land is mediated through males rendering women dependent on men regardless of age, marital status, level of education and other attributes. Income based surveys such as the UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP, 2011) have highlighted the feminisation of rural poverty in Matebeleland South Province of Zimbabwe. Factors contributing to higher poverty amongst women than men are lack of education, infection by HIV/AIDS as women deteriorate faster than men due to child bearing, gendered violence, gendered access to land and livelihoods. However, other forms of gendered inequality are not captured, thereby missing dimensions of gender inequality and poverty.

Women continue to face challenges of entitlement to land. Land is an important asset in Zimbabwe since it is an agro-based economy. In most rural districts such as Gwanda, most female heads are subsistence farmers, making agriculture in rural communities a female dominated industry but yet not owning the means of production. With the well-publicised land redistribution in Zimbabwe, one would expect that women would be considered as an integral part of this program in line with their important roles in agriculture. This gendered inequity in land allocation is due to gender biases in the selection structures, lack of information on the process, social practices and traditions (Thobejane T. D., 2015). Unequal and unjust land ownership patterns have led to the feminization of poverty and the disempowerment of women from society to national level.

The feminisation of HIV/AIDS is another major challenge. This is because women are culturally weakened in negotiating safer prevention methods by gender power differences (Kang'ethe, 2008). The majority of the women in Manama do not exercise their sexual, reproductive health rights due to patriarchy and tradition. Therefore because of their conservative nature they expose themselves to contracting the virus because they view talking about sex and better prevention methods as taboo and the male partners prerogative (Kang'ethe S, 2011). Thus women are more susceptible to HIV because of their biological makeup and lack of sexual and reproductive health rights since they let their partners make choices for them.

Female headed households often go without adequate food in Gwanda rural district. A survey by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO, 2015); revealed that poverty is more pronounced in communal farming areas of Matebeleland South province where harvests are low due to incessant droughts and erratic rainfalls. ECHO missions in Zimbabwe in 2015 confirmed the critical food security situation. Villagers in Zimbabwe were skipping meals and foraging for wild fruit as food stocks ran out. Most female headed households had one meal per day and only the children ate twice a day. It is the women who make this painful decision to set aside food for children only. At least 1.5million Zimbabweans are in need of food aid according to the United Nations World Food

Programme (ECHO, 2015). Also it is the burden of the mother to come up with alternatives for survival.

Poverty raises the vulnerability of these women to health problems. It is highly likely that lack of a balanced diet leads to malnutrition which in turn increases the body's susceptibility to debilitating diseases. The allocation of scarce nutrition often favours certain members of the household. For instance, it is customary in many rural societies for male adults to eat first and get the choicest allocations (Fafchamps M. , 1999). Most women suffer from malnutrition because they often go without adequate food and when they get good food, it is often reserved for the males in the family or children. Such culturally determined selfless attitude is to the women's disadvantage (Essof S. , 2005). Thus, ways to help female headed households have adequate food for the whole family is necessary to avoid unequal distribution. Climate change is pushing poor rural women, who are already marginalised, beyond their capacity to respond. Poverty, more than any other factor, determines the vulnerability to climate change. Access to and control of resources; money, credit, information, healthcare, personal mobility, poor education, inability to survive and recover from disasters, combine with poverty to magnify women's vulnerability to climate change and undermine their ability to adapt (Pettengell C. , 2010). Droughts and flash floods force women to rely on short term coping strategies such as taking loans, eating less, breast feeding babies for longer and food aid if available.

Moreover, in some instances, female heads face abuse from spouses. The tradition of patriarchal control within the marriage setup in decision and resources affords men the right to use violence to enact that control. Forms of violence include threatening to beat; slapping; shoving; forcing a woman to have sex; hitting with objects; stabbing with a knife; violent rape and or assaulting with fists (Thobejane T. D., 2014). Domestic violence confirms that women are victims of sexist oppression. According to Hooks (1986), sexism is perpetuated by social structures and by individuals who seek to dominate, especially emasculated males and by the victims themselves who are socialised to act in complicity with the status quo (Thobejane T. D., 2014). Female headed households based in rural communities with a strong patriarchal foundation where men have a lot of control find themselves with this challenge.

Women are faced with the challenge of sourcing clean water for cooking and drinking. In this instance, climate change directly affects rural women due to the contamination of drinking water sources with saline water (Pettengell C. , 2010). Women in Manama village are generally responsible for collecting drinking water to meet household needs. As a result, an increased salinity means women resort to walking very long distances in search of clean water. Other challenges brought about by climate change that affect them are unpredictable rainfall, low rainfall, increasing temperatures and increasing drought conditions.

2.6 Coping strategies

According to the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC 2005), coping strategies or livelihood strategies are a sum of ways in which a household makes ends meet from year to year and how it survives or fails to survive through difficult times. A livelihood can be viewed as sustainable when a household can recover from stresses, shocks and maintains or enhances its capabilities and assets (Serrat, 2008). Identifying the coping strategies that Female headed households in Gwanda employ, is useful in providing the policy framework for improving the livelihood strategies. The women in this village diversify their sources of income in order to cope with their challenges. However, most of these female chosen strategies are only for immediate relief. As a result, poverty levels are reduced temporarily, only to increase later on.

Farming is the main source of food production in Manama village and Gwanda rural district as a whole. Female headed households engage in small scale subsistence agriculture and livestock rearing (ECHO, 2015). Women are significantly attached to the land where they play a key role in the agricultural labor force. Although women are engaged in subsistence farming and rural development through cultivating maize, wheat and vegetables like sugar beans, they are the poorest and their role has been largely ignored in the Gwanda district. The produce is for consumption within the home and surplus is sold to buy clothing and other necessities. These women have to spend long hours in undervalued productive and reproductive based work at home to ensure the wellbeing of their households (Chant S. , 2011). As a result, they face challenges in dealing with rapidly changing climatic conditions, access to land and poor harvests. Women are among the most vulnerable groups in rural areas.

The Zimbabwean Indigenization and Economic Act of 2007 (Chapter14:33) tried to redress the inequities created by the colonial regimes. It became operational in April 2008 and had skills training for women in different farming projects like poultry, piggery, mushroom farming and beekeeping (Essof S. , 2005). However, this was only done in only one province of Zimbabwe, in Mashonaland central. The Female headed households in Manama, under Matebeleland South Province were not involved. Thus the women in this village face multiple disadvantages and have to look for alternatives to cope.

International and regional remittances have been an income source for some women. International remittances by migrant workers represent the second most important source of external funding in developing countries like Zimbabwe after direct foreign investment and are about to double the level of official aid related inflows to developing countries (Page.J., 2005). Remittances were also discovered to be a tool for reducing household poverty and enhancing local development within villages (Horrell S. K., 2007). These remittances help a lot in Female headed households where the father, husband, brother or uncle is working outside the country and sends money regularly to support the household.

Despite these remittances, women still suffer food inadequacies, suggesting that the money is not enough or is used to meet other pressing family needs such as school fees, hospital bills or to hire draught power (FAO, 2010). However it is better than nothing and reduces the family's financial burdens.

Another way some women in this village get income is through sex work. Sex work is a multi-billion-dollar business that employs millions of women worldwide. It has an unusual feature: it is well paid despite being low skilled, labor intensive and female dominated (Edlund L.A, 2001). Sex work in Zimbabwe has been less common as it was largely considered a moral issue by communities. However, due to rising unemployment and economic hardships there has been an increase in prostitution in the country. On 27 May 2016, Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court issued a landmark ruling that made the arrest of suspected sex workers an illegal act (Jera, 2016). Deepening poverty in Manama village is a contributing factor to the rise of sex work which is likely to increase since it is now considered legal.

A cross sectional survey of 18 – 22 year olds was conducted in 30 rural communities in South East Zimbabwe to examine whether the risk of HIV infection among rural women is associated with their socio-economic status. In essence the objective was to assess whether risky sexual behaviour is a direct result of food insufficiency (Pascoe, 2015). According to the findings low socio-economic status is associated with lower education, early marriages, increased risk of depression, increased risky behaviour such as having older sexual partners and transactional sex (Pascoe, 2015). Transactional sex is commercial sex work; where one engages in sexual intimacy in exchange for money or physical comforts such as food; money and accommodation. This study by Pascoe, provided evidence that poverty in most rural communities pushes young women to engage in risky sexual behaviour in order to get basics needed for survival. Pascoe's survey is related to the investigation of the socio-economic challenges faced by Female Headed Households in Manama village since the investigated group of 18-22year olds fits into the target group of women aged 15 to 65 years old in this research. Moreover the rural context, Manama village is also a rural community and from the research findings it was observed that transactional sex is one of the coping strategies used by some female heads to survive. Sadly it provides temporary relief as it leads to other sexually transmitted health problems which create a vicious cycle by increasing the need for medical care.

This is a worrying state of affairs because sex work is one of the biggest factors contributing to the feminization of HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe S. , 2010). There is increased global concern that it is women that are more vulnerable to the virus than men (Kang'ethe S. , 2009). When gender inequality and poverty converge, many women cannot keep seeing their children hungry night after night so they have little option but to engage in survival transactional sex work. Lingam (2005) asserts that with decline in employment opportunities in general, the physical body is becoming the "site of work" for women and young girls. The sex for money

takes place within the township and taverns in the village selected for this study. The reality of feminization of economic survival has still not received much attention in Zimbabwe since it is still regarded a social ill and a symbol of the society's moral degradation. These women are viewed as "vendors of vice" (Fraser, 2008). However, these women who engage in sex work feel justified. They seem not to pay attention to the possibility of getting sick, years down the line at some indeterminate date while their children are starving.

Home gardening is another of their livelihood strategies. This is an important economic unit within the home because it ensures a diverse and stable supply of food and products for consumption or sale. Properly managed, it can improve the livelihood of the family, improve quality of life, reduce poverty and foster economic growth (Maroyi, 2009). Unfortunately, since water is not easily accessible, only Female headed households close to water sources like streams and rivers can do gardening. Manama village is in Matebeleland South which falls under region 5 in Zimbabwe and is characterized by poor rainfall and is mostly dry and arid.

In most rural communities, there are "food for work" programs. Farmers provide food for work such as tomato picking, weeding, harvesting for a day in exchange for a bucket of tomatoes for instance. Food for work programs, although good, discriminate against labor constrained households with the pregnant, elderly, ill or those with disabilities or coping with chronic illnesses (Gumbo, 2009). Generally female laborers are allocated an area to work on and are paid according to the work done. At times they have to go with children as most are nursing mothers and this slows their pace and translates to less pay. Those with older children are forced to work with them in order to increase gains. However, this goes against the rights of children when it comes to international labor laws (UNCRC, 1989).

Conclusively, the nature of coping strategies within Female headed households differs with the economic status of each household. Those that have capital engage in off farm activities like trade while those of less means focus more on hired laborer work and subsistence agriculture.

2.7 Intervention

In Zimbabwe, the Millennium Development Goals were implemented with a view to identifying the nature, extent and complexity of poverty especially in the rural areas (UN Secretariat M. P., 2000). This was apt because the goals were issued in the spirit of reducing extreme poverty by 2015. The Millennium Development Goals have time bound and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These are the challenges commonly faced by rural female headed households. The halving of poverty was the first and overriding objective that was meant to be achieved in 2015.

As a sequel to the MDGs that were not fully achieved, the year 2015 saw the creation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which has policies that cover a wide range of areas from gender equality to participation in the economy. One of the key thematic areas is the empowerment of rural based women (UN, 2016). While 2015 saw states' renewed commitments on the advancement of women through the Sustainable Development Goals, to which Zimbabwe is signatory, these landmark promises must translate into much needed action to protect, promote and advance women's rights. Only by ensuring that Female headed households in Manama village have their socio-economic rights recognised and respected, can their socio-economic challenges be solved or mitigated.

However, Millennium Development Goals were limited in respect of their gender objectives and did not mainstream gender in all areas. Due to lack of funding, the Millennium Development Goals have not halved poverty and have not addressed the shift from general poverty affecting both genders to the feminisation of poverty (UNDP, 2012). Therefore the link between socio-economic challenges; poverty and the rise of Female headed households remains unclear and need to be investigated. This will also assist in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 for a developed Africa leaving no one behind.

The Zimbabwean government has been addressing the feminisation of poverty by drafting an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) guided by the country's national development plan ZimAsset, for the period 2016 to 2018 to enhance its efforts in fighting poverty (ZimStats, 2016). This is because poverty remains one of the biggest challenges in Zimbabwe, more so in Gwanda. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers have been devised by an increasing number of developing countries in order to attain debt relief. In these strategies, gender has been identified as a crosscutting issue requiring that women be a vital constituency in consultation and that all proposals mainstream gender (Chant S, 2007).

In as much as such efforts should be applauded, gender is no longer a crosscutting issue when it comes to poverty. Gender is the main issue because poverty is taking on a female face in the sense that more and more women are affected by poverty. The world's poorest communities are largely constituted by women, women are more vulnerable to poverty and their poverty is more severe and long term (Maroyi, 2009). This study seeks to confirm whether or not poverty is gendered and more of a female problem.

The humanitarian aid provided to Zimbabwe by international organisations lacks information about giving women preference or how aid is distributed in terms of gender. For example, in 2012 alone, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided more than USD 150 million in humanitarian assistance, but women did not get more than men, even though their burden of poverty is higher than that of men (ECHO, 2015). The report indicates the numbers of households in the areas that received the assistance but does not show how many were female headed and how many were male

headed. This shows that gender was not mainstreamed, and women did not get a specialised allocation.

Aid is not the best intervention strategy if it is not developmental or if it fails to empower rural women to become financially independent (Musekiwa P, 2013). Food hand outs breed dependency which is not good since aid can be withdrawn at any time and redirected to other political hotspots or disease outbreaks, for instance countries affected by the Ebola plague needed more assistance in 2014 and most funding shifted towards that direction. Hunger faded in the background since it was no longer important to donors although on closer scrutiny both cases are life threatening. This left the rural women who were dependent on humanitarian assistance back in the vicious cycle of poverty, regardless of having been beneficiaries of aid for several years.

In Matebeleland province, Zimbabwe, there is little gender specific data to substantiate the often quoted figure of 70% poor women globally (Zimstats, 2003). Despite the calls of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for more gender disaggregated statistics, there is still no provincial database in Zimbabwe which provides a comprehensive breakdown of the incidences and extent of women's poverty in comparison with men (ZLHR, 2010). Aside from the problem of scant gender – disaggregated data on poverty, there is no clear information on gender gaps that lead women to being more prone to poverty such as education, literacy, rights and savings among other things.

The study hopes to provide gender disaggregated data on poverty for Manama village.

2.8 Theoretical framework

Feminist theories all over the world are diverse, yet all have a common background which is understanding the situation of women amidst unequal gender relations and identifying efficient strategies to improve the social order in the world.

Feminism is essentially two things namely, a theoretical paradigm in social theory that seeks to advocate and enhance women's emancipation in a predominantly patriarchal world. Secondly, it is a movement that mobilises for gender equality fighting the marginalisation and oppression of women (Adichie CN, 2010). One of the great fallacies is that feminism started in the Global North and found its way to the Global South, from first world countries to third world countries. The reality is that not only do Global South feminisms have their own trajectories, inspirations and demands but they have contributed significantly to today's global understanding of women's rights (Tripp, 2017). As a theoretical approach since the 1960's feminism in the world has been constantly changing, with versions such as radical, liberal, socialist, psychoanalytic, African, womanist to name a few (P.Bruno, 2006).

This work is informed by the African feminist theory, which will guide this study in conjuncture with other theories that apply such as the Liberal feminist theory and Radical feminist theory. The African feminist theory portrays women as capable of setting their own priorities and agenda (Adichie CN, 2010). This is true in Manama village since the women heading households are strong, innovative and make decisions on a daily basis on how to provide for their families. Even though they are in a patriarchal frame which makes them 2nd class citizens, they choose to be assertive as they find ways to take care of their households. The African feminist theory is important in this study because it relates to the issues that these Female headed households face and to their feminist roles. It does so by acknowledging the complexities denoted by being a woman, a feminist and African at the same time.

As Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones (1998) put it: “Feminist theory in general seeks to analyse the conditions which shape women’s lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman”. It is guided by the need to understand women’s subordination and their exclusion from, and marginalisation within a variety of social arenas (McFadden 2011). Feminism seeks to influence, shape and exercise a degree of power over events in order to further the interests of different types of women (Watkins G. , 2000) Feminists refuse to accept that inequalities between women and men are natural and inevitable and insist that they must be questioned.

African feminism is as diverse as the African continent itself but has recurrent themes. Daniel Etonga – Manguelle (ref.) aptly notes that the diversity of vast subcultures in Africa is undeniable. There is a foundation of shared values, attitudes and institutions that bind the nations together (Nnaemeka, 2014). There are two crucial issues in African feminism, which are positionality and intersectionality (Adichie CN, 2010). Positionality is a constant interrogation of one’s position as an active subject where meaning is made or discovered. Intersectionality is the grouping of various oppressions such as race; gender; culture or religion (Adichie CN, 2010). The relevance of these facts is that the researcher established that she is an outsider in this study which assisted her in maintaining objectivity as a neutral observer and collector of data. This does not mean though that an insider in a research, who is going through the same experiences that she or he is researching, cannot maintain objectivity. Moreover on intersectionality this research considered the various forms of oppression besides patriarchy such as gender, cultural traditions and expectations that marginalise women such as mourning rites expected of widows.

There is no concise or all-encompassing definition for African feminism. Critics view this as a weakness. However, this ambiguity within the theory allows for its continuous expansion of its basic tenants (P.Bruno, 2006). Barbara Christian (1995) rightly noted that people of colour theorize differently. Whichever way African women choose to structure their feminism and whatever they choose to call it is their prerogative.

African feminism overcomes challenges through negotiations and compromise. It was born as a critique of Western feminist theory and white feminist hegemony. African feminism portrays the reality that African women are active in their struggles and pushing boundaries in order to provide for their families (Mishra, 2013). As such African women are not victims. African women are willing to negotiate with men. African feminists are more inclined to reach out and work with men in achieving set goals (Adichie CN, 2010). African women want men to be part of their struggle to be with them.

This does not mean that African women are romanticising their situations. African women are the most affected by gender based violence, oppression, patriarchal societies and marginalization (Adichie CN, 2010). Still African women do not view their men as the “other” but part of the human same. Thus the language of feminist engagement in Africa is about collaborating, negotiating or compromise which runs counter to the language of Western feminist engagement of challenging, disrupting and deconstructing social order (Nnaemeka, 2014).

An example of compromise can be noted for example when African women are denied access to land or housing. African feminists do not dwell much or argue on the gender inequality, rather they base their arguments on how discriminatory policy deprives women of benefits needed to provide for the needs of their families and children (Adichie CN, 2010). This is how they negotiate around patriarchy. That is what works in Africa. That is indigenous (Adichie CN, 2010). By so doing they know how to negotiate their cultural spaces, by shifting the argument to how deprivation of their rights affect their family and children’s wellbeing.

There are two main types of African feminism; Intellectual and Popular feminism (Adichie CN, 2010). Intellectual African feminism is usually the urban and educated African women who have gradually lost touch with rural realities. These women have a noble passion to uplift their fellow women who are disadvantaged; however they have a tendency of importing feminist debates from abroad. Just like most Western feminists, they also condemn elements of African culture, such as polygamy and forced or arranged marriages. This attitude echoes Western thinking and alienates African women rooted in culture (P.Bruno, 2006). The main thrust of this feminism is to ensure that women are respected and exercise their full rights which are important as poverty in this study is defined as a lack of rights that constrain women’s access to resources. However it comes down strongly in condemning aspects of culture which African women based in rural communities enjoy. For instance arranged marriages are respected in rural communities as they work well and have a high success rate as compared to marriages based on feelings such as love or attraction which fade over time and circumstances. Therefore certain elements apply in this study especially on advocating for the rights of rural based women to be exercised, recognised and respected.

The second type of African feminism which is Popular feminism caters for the majority, and understands more the needs of rural women and acknowledges the life they are accustomed to and the choices they make in terms of marriage, it also represents even those women who are not literate (Adichie CN, 2010). It rallies for gender equality based on the notion of African women's historically important and influential role in food production; their day to day running of households. It looks for practical solutions in the lived experience of African women (Nnaemeka, 2014). This is the type of African feminism this study will utilise more as it seeks to understand the feminization of poverty in Manama village; the daily socio-economic challenges faced by Female headed households and the coping strategies they use. Both these types of African feminism target African women to uplift them but have different beliefs and inspirations. Intellectual Feminism has a larger Western influence, whereas Popular Feminism has localised influence from African women in African rural communities. However African feminism is a wide variety of feminist strands informed by race, class, age, sexual orientation, culture and other identities, it exists within Africa and outside Africa today (Adichie CN, 2010). Interestingly other feminist theories also point to similar issues and apply in this study.

Feminism in Africa raises issues relating to customs and traditions that undermine African women's land and property rights, violence against women, gender based inequalities in education, health, economic and political power (Gaidzanwa P.R, 2011). It borrows from Western theories such as the Liberal and Radical feminist theories which advocate for equal rights in employment, wages, education, decision making and access to resources in the home. These theories and their applicability in this study are discussed below.

The Liberal feminist theory argues that women's unequal access to legal, social, economic and political institutions causes women's oppression (MacKinnon C, 1999). Liberal feminists advocate for women's equal legal rights and participation in public spheres (MacKinnon C, 1999). Female headed households in Manama village have these exact issues of lack of rights to make decisions that affect their life. Liberal feminism sought to correct male biases and to eradicate sexism. This ground breaking work led to the liberation movements that saw to the recognition of women in Europe in the 1980s. This theory was applied in Africa and assisted African women in articulating issues of oppression. However due to differences in cultural dynamics, for instance African women and European women had different needs, African women suffered intersections of oppression such as race, culture, class and gender while European women were fighting to be liberated to go to work. African women had their own specific needs; black women were already at work as slaves. So their point of contention was different.

From this then developed new sets of feminist epistemologies that addressed African woman's specific needs such as African feminism, popular feminism. However it should be noted that western theories such as the Liberal feminist theory are not static and have evolved over time as well as African feminist theories However main feminist approaches as

found in literature are Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD). Initially the Women in Development (WID) approach prioritised the productive dimensions of women. In this vein, under Liberal feminism, activist feminist writers such as Esther Boserup played a significant role in advancing feminist theory advocating for the acknowledgement of the value of women's work (P. Bruno, 2006) Therefore Liberal feminist theory was part of the foundation that assisted African feminists to articulate their issues as they realised that Western based theory could not fully represent them. It is hoped that African feminism will be more useful in understanding sectionalism of oppression, such as race, class and gender including other situated challenges or forms of oppression faced by African women including female household heads.

The Radical feminist theory on the other hand claims that women's oppression originates in men's power over women, patriarchal power and advocates the complete removal of men in society (MacKinnon C, 1999). This is true as Female headed households in Manama village are struggling because of male forms of domination that control their access to resources. Patriarchy is still deeply rooted in rural communities of Zimbabwe so female heads with or without a male presence; have to come up with strategies to survive regardless. However these women are not man haters but simply challenge the status quo as they see that it limits their mobility and freedom to engage in business or livelihood activities that are perceived as "male oriented." African feminism acknowledges that men are needed and should be engaged as partners in creating gender equality (Gaidzanwa P.R, 2011). These female heads value their relationships with men and the sanctity of marriage but want men to change their perceptions and attitudes about what women should or can do, those are individual choices that should not be dictated by society. Feminism is a radical thinking that has challenged convention, arguing for a transformation of politics and daily life. It is the rejection of and struggle against patriarchy, which is a system that privileges men and gives them power. The Radical feminist theory is supportive of this as it advocates for women to have powers of decision making over their fertility, children, lives, resources within the home and business.

The Standpoint theory is also used as a supporting theory in this study as it responds to this worrying state of affairs of deeply entrenched patriarchy that suppresses women's capabilities, through one of its themes which is situated knowledge. The Standpoint theory states that overgeneralizations and stereotypical constructions do not work; each area has its own experiences and challenges that need to be researched fully in constructing knowledge (Hesse-Biber S. N., 2014). This is true in the sense that female heads in Manama have their own unique needs, socio-economic challenges, constraints and coping strategies. The Standpoint Feminist theory together is similar to the African feminist theory in that it demands the expansion of the analytical horizon by adding issues such as activism, culture, geographic location, ethnicity and economic development. The theme of situated knowledge states that there is no universal body of knowledge, different experiences; challenges and culture prescribe certain behaviour. This research seeks to explore the socio-

economic challenges and livelihood experiences that are faced by Female heads in Manama village therefore the themes under Standpoint feminist theory are crucial as it will serve as a supportive theory.

As noted in the discussion above on the relevance of African feminism and supporting theories such as the Liberal, Radical and Stand point feminist theories, these theories support each other and have aspects that apply to Female headed households in the area under study, Manama village.

After considering the above feminist theories, African feminism was chosen as the main theory as it is more in touch with the actual lived realities of African women. African women have their own specific needs, demands, inspirations and their own trajectories which contribute significantly to the global understanding of African women. African feminism in the context of this study advocates for the rights of female heads to be recognised and respected, such as the right to food, shelter, education, and equal wages for equal work with men, healthcare, water and sanitation (Adichie CN, 2010). Other theories such as the Standpoint, Liberal and Radical feminist theories will be referred to as they have aspects that apply in this study.

2.9 Theoretical insights on feminism:

2.9.1 Feminism in the world

The location of African women within international feminist epistemologies is as objects of knowledge production not as knowledge producers themselves. African women's critique of prevalent feminist theories goes beyond the issues of relevance, adequacy, and appropriateness to include the big question on representation (Adichie CN, 2010). An analysis of most international feminist writings that attempt to incorporate diverse voices shows that they still quarantine African voices from theory sections only to materialize as case studies, implying that African women do not have the capacity to be part of the intricacies and arguments on theory as intellectuals (Adichie CN, 2010). This allocating or positioning of African women as research objects is colonial both in intent and execution. Often in genuinely collaborative work, Western researchers do not include Africans as collaborators or co-authors; at best they are recognized and thanked as informants (Nnaemeka, 2014). This raises serious questions about information gathering and knowledge construction of African feminist issues by Western feminists.

First world feminists writing on third world feminism is simply a process whereby the lives of third world women, their plans; imaginations are shaped by first world feminists who do not share their lifestyles, neither their hope nor values. In the same light most of the early feminist theories noted above, had frameworks that were context specific for Western

women's movements, even those founded by African American women, for instance womanism (Mishra, 2013). Alice Walker an African American author and poet is credited for coining the term "womanism" from "womanish" (Tally, 2003). This womanism theory is a social change perspective based on the experiences of women of colour. Therefore, it is a theory associated with the conditions, events and values within the African American community. Around the 1980s it was embraced, debated and dismissed due to its African American perspective. However academic discourse progressed and scholars continuously referred to it, leading to its resurfacing in the early 2000s.

Another example is the Africana womanism theory founded by Clenora Hudson Weems, an African American feminist. In this theory she states that it is impossible to incorporate African cultural perspectives into feminism as it originated with white women with totally different issues (P.Bruno, 2006). Just as African American women felt it was impossible to apply the same theory as white American women, African women also feel misrepresented. African women want to attain freedom not only from gender related inequalities, but also those related to race, class and national asymmetries.

Mohanty identified the factors why earlier or first Western feminists could not advocate for African women's rights, namely: they had a tendency to universalise values such as freedom; misunderstand African social and religious conventions and fail to articulate African issues because of stereotyping and prejudice (Mishra, 2013). This need for a custom made African form of feminism gave an impetus for the rise of Third world feminism and African feminists.

Therefore diverse African voices need to be heard clearly as they speak out their challenges, experiences, attitudes and perceptions. This study's aim is to give Female heads in Manama village a voice by clearly articulating and presenting their actual lived realities in terms of their socio-economic challenges, prevalence of poverty and coping strategies.

2.9.2 Feminism in Africa

African women have been struggling to identify with traditional feminism because most western feminists portray African women as poor, uneducated, tradition bound, domesticated, family oriented and victimized. This is far from the reality, African feminism is proactive, and has a life of its own rooted in the African environment (Nnaemeka, 2014). Moreover, African women at times feel western based gender discourse is "empty" based on its inability to connect with or refer to the realities of the environments they live in (P.Bruno, 2006). In as much as there are arguments about the politics of theory, western theory though not completely applicable is helpful in a way, in that it exposes contested elements and offers alternative arguments.

Post-colonial feminism was one of the first Third world feminist theories to emerge in Africa in the 1980s and gained popularity by the 1990s (Mishra, 2013). It rejected Western

feminism for its utter “euro centrism”. It brought to light the typicality of problems faced by third world women such as domestic violence; sexual abuse; rape; honour killings; dowry deaths; child marriages; female foeticide to name a few (Mishra, 2013). However, post-colonial feminism was part of the overhaul of colonialism and so it analysed gender relations from a colonial perspective, especially in its early stages it could be viewed as nationalist writing (Mishra, 2013). This left out other social dimensions and most women were not yet fully empowered to engage in this feminism. Needless to say, it gave a foundation for a much more encompassing feminism needed by African women, which is African feminism.

African feminists have a sense of keeping having and keeping a family together. African women prefer balance; they do not view motherhood as constrictive (Nnaemeka, 2014). They love having children and families. The fact is that African feminists simply want to remove age old constrictions and live at par with their men (Chant S. , 2011). They expect emotional support from their men. Be it educated, uneducated, rich, poor, weak or strong all African women want to be respected and be equal partners (Ikwuakam O.T, 2011). In short, African feminism is a corrective measure to all mainstream feminisms.

This study seeks to add situated knowledge on Female headed households, the factors behind their high vulnerability and incidence of poverty to the voices of African women.

Chapter 3

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study for the purpose of collecting data to understand the socio-economic challenges faced by Female Headed Households and their coping strategies in Manama village a rural district in Gwanda, Matebeleland South Province of Zimbabwe. Moreover, it provides a detailed explanation of how participants were selected; the ethical considerations guiding the researcher; the interviewing process and the summary.

This research was guided by feminist epistemologies such as the Standpoint theory which states that no one standpoint should be regarded as more privileged knowledge and that knowledge should include the marginalised, silenced or thrown away (Hesse-Biber S. , 2014). Moreover, it is based on the premise that research has systematically privileged male knowledge and thus attempts to give a voice to women. In essence, it addresses the exclusion of women from the making of knowledge, culture and ideology (Chant S. , 2011). To achieve all this, multiple research techniques were used to gather data on the challenges and experiences of female heads directly from the women in Manama village.

The chapter describes and justifies the qualitative approach used to provide solutions to the challenges faced by Female Headed Households. It also looks at issues of access and entry to the research setting in Manama village. The chapter further describes how data was collected from the participants. Finally, it describes the data analysis procedure employed in the research.

3.2 Methodology

Qualitative methods, namely; Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, Field Participatory Observation and Documentary Reviews were used to investigate the socio-economic challenges faced by Female Headed Households, the effect they have on their children, marriages, families or communities, what increases their vulnerability to poverty and their copying strategies. For Focus Group Discussions, the researcher only had female heads as participants. However, for Key Informant Interviews, the researcher engaged government community development workers who work with female heads and their dependants. The researcher then engaged in Field Participatory Observation to validate or confirm findings from the women's narratives. Documentary Reviews were done as a complimentary method to compare findings gathered from the women's narratives and mainstream literature on Female Headed Households. Comparability is another criterion that helps to determine the rigor of a qualitative study (Given, 2008). In this regard, Given

(2008) says research methodology refers to a technique for collecting data or a procedure that a researcher uses to condense, organise and analyse data in the process of undertaking scientific research in social science (Given, 2008). These are the methods that the researcher used to conduct and pursue the study on the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of female heads in Manama village.

3.3 Research design – Qualitative paradigm in the study

The researcher chose a qualitative research design in the form of a case cum phenomenological study because of its Standpoint Feminist Research Approach. This approach addresses the exclusion of women from the making of knowledge, culture and ideology (Hesse-Biber S. , 2014). It is a critical kind of theory as it argues that knowledge is not universal rather it particularises knowledge and acknowledges that different areas have their own situated knowledge (Hesse-Biber S. , 2014), communal and localized experiences. Case studies have also been used before to investigate the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of women. For instance, one such example is Musekiwa's (2013) research on the livelihood strategies of women in Mutoko District in Zimbabwe (Musekiwa, 2013). Therefore, based on this, the researcher chose a case study to explore the lived experiences and localized realities of Female Headed Households in rural Zimbabwe and chose Manama village as a case study. Moreover, since the intention was to explore issues of female head's higher vulnerability and higher incidence to poverty; the researcher chose Matebeleland Province since it has the highest rates of female heads due to migration. The researcher had to narrow down to a specific village and chose Manama village due to its centrality in the district and for being a rural setup.

The researcher used several qualitative methods to explore Female Headed Households and to understand how the women cope with family headship. This is in line with Creswell (2009) who defines qualitative research as a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human process (Creswell, 2009). The researcher engaged in a systematic investigation that started with a pilot study; followed by focus group discussions with female heads; supported by key informant interviews; complimented by field participatory observation and documentary reviews of the experiences of Female Headed Households in Manama village. Thyer (2001) states that qualitative research involves systematic investigations, that include inductive, in-depth, non-quantitative studies of individuals, groups, organisations, or communities (Thyer, 2001). By using multiple methods, the researcher was not seeking consensus but to understand the experiences of female heads from multiple angles in order to examine the consistency of findings and assess dependability of the study. When a study is dependable, similar participants and research methods generally lead to similar results. The researcher reviewed all the data from the women and key informants' narratives of their socioeconomic challenges; made sense of it and organized it into themes that cut across all the data sources.

In this research project, female headed households were allowed to talk about their social reality, problems and needs, express their opinions and emotions. Furthermore, the researcher was interested in the perspectives attached to and experiences of female heads, how they survive without male counterparts and their livelihood strategies for their households in Manama village in line with the objectives of the study. Boeije (2010) observes that the purpose of qualitative research is aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing in terms of the meanings that the subjects attach to it (Boeije, 2010). It is a research approach that privileges the lived experience of the subject, and the meaning the subjects attach to the phenomena being investigated. The researcher adhered to this by describing and interpreting the experiences of the female headed households in Manama village according to their actual lived experiences expressed in their narratives and observed in their day to day activities.

Data was collected from female heads in their village which is Manama village located within Gwanda Rural District, Matebeleland South province of Zimbabwe. Since the intention was to explore the challenges of Female Headed Households in rural communities; the researcher spent two weeks living among female heads in Manama village investigating the challenges they face in their natural setting. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative researchers tend to collect data in a natural setting at the site or area where participants experience the problem being studied. This is defined as the interpretive or naturalist paradigm which seeks to understand a phenomenon in specific settings, such as real world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon; interest meanings, perspective and understanding (Patton, 2001). Thus the researcher gathered situated knowledge on the experiences of Female Headed Households in Manama village.

A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to ask the participants open ended questions which gave them room to talk with latitude in their own words about their everyday challenges of being female and heading households. As a result, researcher obtained first-hand information and in-depth knowledge about the women's experiences. To gain a fuller understanding of the extent of their suffering, the researcher also interviewed ward officers and community development workers who work with Female Headed Households in government food security programmes. Finally, the qualitative approach was used because it correlates with Standpoint feminism approach which advocates the giving of marginalised women a voice or chance to be heard. This theory allows women to express themselves; thereby producing knowledge on the phenomenon. As alluded to earlier, feminist social research uses methods supplied by the discipline such as qualitative research and adds its own perspective to create innovative approaches to analysing human activity allowing for the inclusion of women's experience. This study did not use a patriarchal approach to research as it is female centred.

In this research, the marginalised are female headed households because they are excluded in decision making. They are also denied access to resources by men and are constrained in

mobility due to caregiving roles and have no say about how their earnings are used within the home. This is a result of male domination in rural areas which is what the Standpoint theory seeks to correct. Standpoint theory also talks of situated forms of knowledge (Gaidzanwa, 2011). The researcher wanted to bring out challenges and strategies peculiar to Female headed households in Manama village.

Standpoint theory talks to power relations between the researcher and the researched through epistemic privilege which states that both are important to the study, more so the participant as she or he possesses better knowledge of their situation (Hesse-Biber S. , 2014). This encourages and creates a good rapport which in turn creates high quality data. This is relevant to this study because the researcher established a sharing relationship so that the women felt comfortable enough to share the challenges of heading families. This was important because the study intended to find out the real challenges and extent of poverty of the participants. This could not have been gathered if participants had no rapport with the researcher. The researcher in this study was an outsider.

3.4 Pilot study

A pilot study was also used to negotiate entry into the research area. Learning how to properly conduct a pilot study is an important tool to ensure that one's work is efficient and productive (Zambrana, 2008). The researcher had to follow the government of Zimbabwe protocols for researchers of approaching the Provincial Administrator; then the District Administrator and the Village Head or chief for approval. At all these offices, the researcher showed the administrators the University Ethical Clearance Certificate; Academic proof of registration and National Identity documents to prove that she was a postgraduate researcher and her intentions were purely research motivated. The researcher was given approval at all stages and cleared to proceed without any hassles.

Moreover, the researcher embarked on a pilot study to assess the feasibility of the research methods and to familiarize herself with the research environment. Learning how to properly conduct a pilot study is an important tool to ensure one's work is efficient and productive (Zambrana, 2008). In this study, it served as a pre-testing of research methods and gave advance warning about where the main research project could fail and to determine if the proposed methods or instruments were inappropriate or too complicated (Silverman, 1997). For instance, the researcher initially had decided on simple random sampling but once the researcher was in Manama village searching for participants, she realised that she could not easily identify female heads given the size of the village. This was due to the suspicion associated with strangers since the villagers tend to be conservative nature. Therefore, the researcher had to be directed by community development workers to the first female head who in turn led her to other female heads. The fact that she was "referred" by other women known to the rest of the villagers made it possible for the female heads to agree to engage and participate in the Focus Group Discussions.

In addition, the pilot study assisted the researcher to determine the amount of financial and stationery resources were needed for the planned study. This assisted the researcher to come up with a sufficient budget to cater for subsistence and traveling and also incidental costs. For example, the researcher had advance warning about the fact that the participants expected some form of hospitality from the researcher in order to participate wholeheartedly. Therefore, when the dates for the scheduled Focus Group Discussions arrived, the researcher had sourced funds to provide refreshments such as cool drink and snacks for the participants. As a result, the participants felt appreciated and were eager to participate.

In addition, the pilot study gave the researcher a chance to gather preliminary data on Female Headed Households in Manama village. After consulting the Provincial Administrator, the researcher was directed to the Provincial ZimStats offices and given the last census report on the province and its sub-districts poverty and Female Headed Household statistics. Moreover, during the pilot study, key informants like the Community Development Workers volunteered to give interviews on the experiences of the Female Headed Households as they work with them on various Government Community Development Projects.

Thus a pilot study was conducted to negotiate entry into the research area in order to assess the feasibility of research methods and identify participants and set up dates for Focus Group Discussions. This also helped the researcher to have a feel of the area necessary for drawing up a travel and subsistence budget and collect preliminary data and familiarise herself with the study area.

3.5 Case study cum phenomenological study design

A case study design was adopted to enable the researcher to get an in-depth and detailed understanding of the livelihoods of female headed households and afford the researcher an opportunity to provide recommendations that help to improve the livelihoods of Female Headed Households in Manama village. Fourteen participants were selected from Manama as part of the investigations, namely: 11 Female Heads as participants in the 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) that were conducted; 3 key informant interviews with the District Administrator and community development workers. A case study is a form of qualitative design where a limited number of units of analysis are studied intensively within a specified time frame, using a combination of appropriate data collection devices (Welman & Kruger, 2005). In this research, focus was on a particular issue, namely the socioeconomic challenges faced by Female Headed Households and factors that increase their vulnerability to poverty and their coping strategies. This issue was intensively investigated using several qualitative methods until a data saturation point was reached.

The researcher chose a case study because the population was too big and less manageable in the available short period of time. A case study also provides face-value credibility, that is; it provides evidence or illustrations with which the researchers can readily identify (Bachor, 2000). The study also utilized phenomenological design because it was interested in lived experiences of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2008). This assisted in the understanding of subjective experiences and in gaining insights into people's motivations and actions. In this case, information was gained from female heads, their dependants and community development workers on how they feel about being female heads and its challenges.

Moreover, community development workers from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Development (MWAGD) were of great assistance. The province is split into wards and in these the community development workers identify, implement and work with the villagers in development oriented programs. Women are their main target group, as is the case with the NGOs operating in that village. They do not set out specifically to assist Female Headed Households but as they seek women in general, they come across Female Headed Households as part of the most vulnerable and needy people. As such, they could point out Female Headed Households to the researcher and provide details about their names, socio-economic status and location.

This study was cross sectional, meaning that it was conducted once in 2017.

3.6 Research domain: Gwanda Rural district fact sheet

Gwanda rural is divided into villages and its population distribution is 46.7% males and 53.3% females. Some of the villages under Gwanda rural are Manama; Gwaranyemba; Tuli; Hwali; Matshetshe; Kafusi; Insiza; West Nicholson; Silonga and Dendele. 12% of the population never enrolled in school. 87% of those above 6 years of age were enrolled in school in 2012. The literacy level of Gwanda rural district was 95% in 2012. 57% of the total population was unemployed during the 2012 census. In households, 56% were male headed and 44% female headed (ZimStat, 2012).

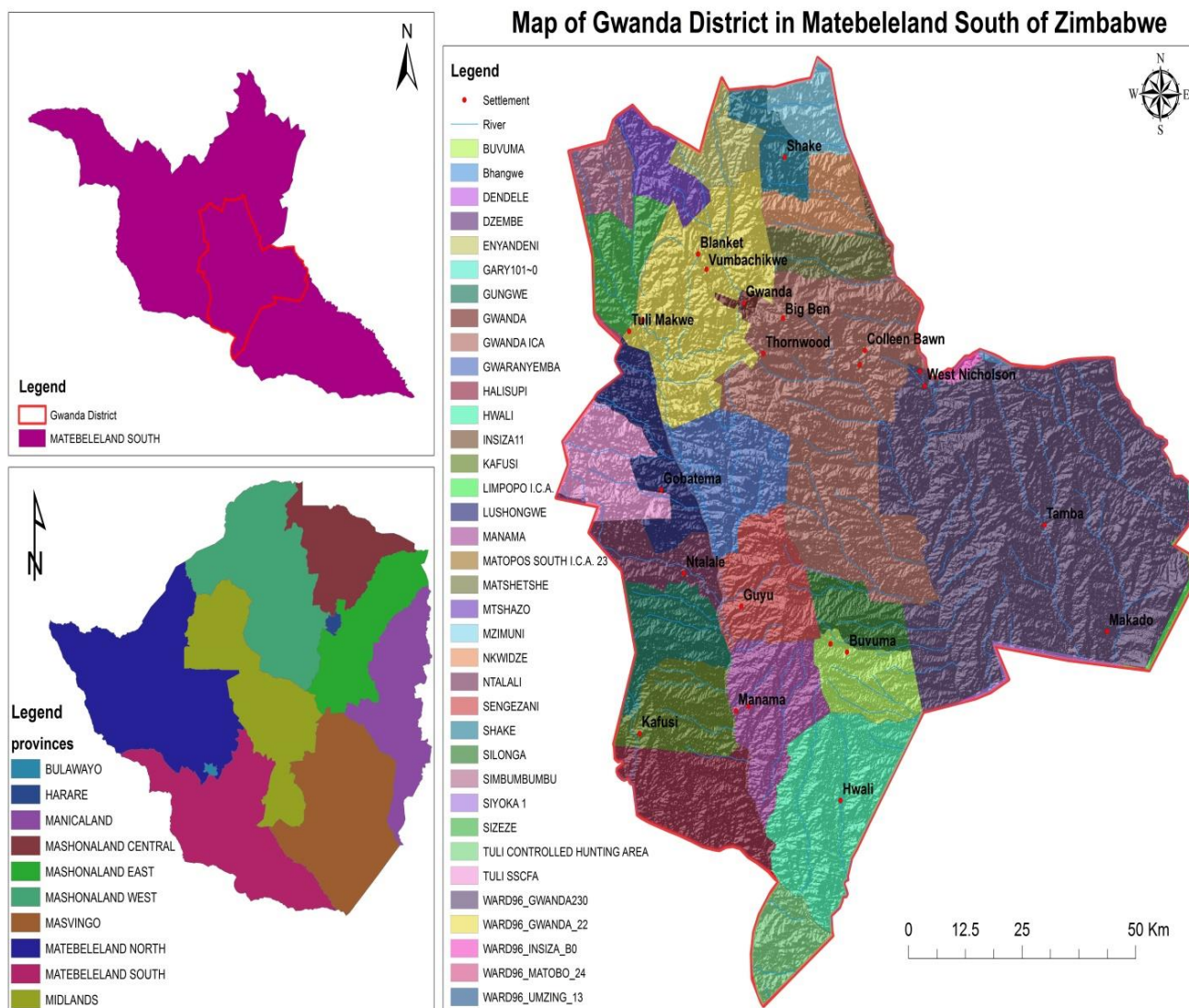


Figure 1 Map of Gwanda Rural District in Matebeleland South of Zimbabwe

Source: Farai Dondofema. University of Venda School of Environmental Sciences

3.6.1 Population and sample size

Population is the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements from which the sample is actually selected. De Vos (2005) defines a population as a set of entities where all the measurements of interest to the researcher are represented. Gray (2005) also defines a population as the total number of possible units or elements that are included in the study. According to Strydom (2005), a population is the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned (De Vos, 2005).

This study focused on Manama village, a rural district under Matebeleland South Province in Zimbabwe. This district has about 1 200 to 1 600 households, with more than 52% being female headed. The population, according to the 2012 national census, was 13 339 (UNFPA, 2015).

A sample of 14 participants was a finite part of a statistical population whose challenges, perceptions, attitudes and coping strategies were studied to gain information about rural based Female Headed Households as a whole. When dealing with people, a sample can be defined as a set of respondents selected from a larger population for the purpose of a survey. Robson (2002) provides a summary definition when he defines a population as referring to all the cases. It would be difficult for the researcher to study all the people from which the researcher wants to draw conclusions. The researcher would find it difficult to interview every member of the studied population; hence the researcher may select a sample. Cohen et al (2006:93) observe that too large a sample might become unwieldy and too small a sample might be unrepresentative.

Fourteen participants as determined by data saturation were engaged in this study. Some researchers consider 10-20 as appropriate for saturation of themes during analysis (Given, 2008). In this study, the researcher did not enter the field with a specific number of participants in mind as the sample size, but allowed the number of participants to be determined by data saturation.

3.6.2 Study Setting

Manama village is a ward under Gwanda rural district in Zimbabwe, located 126 kilometres south east of the city of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. This district lies along the Bulawayo - Beitbridge road and railway. It is the capital of the province of Matebeleland South, one of the 10 administrative provinces in the country. The village under study in Gwanda was Manama. Its economy is based on subsistence agriculture, mining and livestock rearing. The soils are not very fertile and the district is characterised by low rainfall. Mopani worms, (a local delicacy *Amacimbi*) are found in abundance as nature compensates for the aridity so that the inhabitants of the area have a source of food.

3.6.3 Sampling frame

The sampling frame for this study comprised all female headed households on the list from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare; the Department of Social Welfare in Gwanda and the village Headman's register (*Ibhuku lika sobhuku*). Sampling, for Kerlinger, (in De Vos 2005), is viewed as a subset of measurements drawn from the population which the researcher is curious to study. In other words, sampling refers to abandoning certainty in favour of probability.

3.6.4 Unit of analysis (sample size)

A sample was a small portion of the total set of female heads making up the subject of this study. It assisted the researcher in explaining some facet of the population. A sample consists of cases (units or elements) that were examined and selected from a defined research population (Boeije, 2010). This study was only limited to female headed households in Manama. Due to the qualitative nature of the research, the researcher set out with no specific number of participants but knew that she would select a sizeable number of participants. In the end, the research had a total of 14 participants, namely: 11 Female Heads in 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); 3 key informant interviews with the Administrator and Community Development workers. The choice for the sample size was mainly based on the concept of data saturation.

The concept of data saturation states that when a researcher collects data it is to explain a phenomenon of interest to come up with a theory. However, in doing so, a researcher will get to a point whereby no new or relevant information emerges. As the construction of that theory takes place while data is collected, if there are no gaps or unexplained issues, then saturation has been achieved (Q, 2001). The researcher noted that theoretical saturation is quickly achieved if the sample is cohesive and has less variability (Given, 2008). For instance, in Manama village, the participants were of the same ethnic and demographic group. Due to snowballing, the participants referred the researcher to other participants with whom they had something in common. For instance, nursing mothers had a lot in common by virtue of their frequently meeting on baby clinic days at the local clinic and facing similar child rearing budget constraints like outstanding hospital bills. As a result, participants had more similarities and less variability. Engaging in sustained field research also helped the researcher attain theoretical saturation.

3.6.5 Sampling procedure

The study utilised a snowball sampling procedure. Strydom and Venter (1996) describe sampling as the process of taking a portion of a population as a representative of that population (Strydom, 2002). The process of sampling is necessary due to large size of a population and the consequent impracticality and prohibitive cost of testing each member of any population (Denzin, 2000). Whittaker (1999) concurs and points out that "sampling refers to the process of selecting the participants that will be involved in the study". Thus the sample is chosen from total possible data sources known as the population. It has been argued that, in qualitative research, the sample is intentionally selected according to the needs of the study. The inclusion criteria were any Female Headed Households of Gwanda rural with or without a male presence and key informants such as their dependants and community development workers.

Some populations, such as Female Headed Households that this study was interested in can be hard-to-reach. These include populations such as widows, divorcees, homeless people, individuals with AIDS/HIV, commercial sex workers and so forth. Such populations can be hard-to-reach because of social stigma in the African rural setup. They are viewed as having illicit behaviours or other stereotypical traits that leave them socially marginalized. Snowball sampling is a non-probability based sampling technique that can be used to gain access to such populations.

The researcher created a snowball sample by identifying one or more units in the desired population. She then used these units to find further units and so on until the adequate sample size was met. The researcher embarked on a pilot study whereby she went to Gwanda to familiarize herself with the dynamics on the ground. This was also an opportunity to get approval from the Provincial administrator and District administrator to conduct research in Manama village. After that, the researcher then proceeded to Manama village which is Gwanda South.

Following the community protocol, the researcher approached the village head and informed him of her presence and intentions within the village. The researcher then selected Manama high school and went on to ask for permission from the school head to be based at the school as she conducted her data collection. This had the advantage that the researcher engaged in field participant observations by living among the study population.

Moreover, with permission from the school head, she asked teachers to identify children that come from Female Headed Households and then was led by the children to their mothers. Due to the sensitivity of the study, the researcher in turn asked the mothers she met to refer her to other single mothers, widows or divorcees who would be willing to take part as they knew each other. This helped make up the sample, the process continued until sufficient units had been identified to meet the data saturation point.

3.7 Advantages and limitations of snowball sampling:

3.7.1 Advantages of snowball sampling

For the researcher, snowballing had the advantage of assisting the researcher pick out a population of female family heads which is conservative and hard-to-reach. This includes populations that are susceptible to social stigma and marginalization, such as sufferers of AIDS/HIV, as well as individuals engaged in illicit or illegal activities, including prostitution and drug use (Faugier, 1997). Snowball sampling was useful in this study because coming forward to take part in research for some of the female heads in Manama village was not easy. Individuals that are commercial sex workers, for example, are likely to be less willing to identify themselves and take part in research than many other social groups. However, among the participants, there was one female head who engages in commercial sex work. Therefore, since snowball sampling involves individuals recruiting other individuals to take

part in research, there may be common characteristics, traits and other social factors between those individuals that help to break down some of the natural barriers that prevent such individuals from taking part (Boeiye, 2010). This was found true as the female commercial sex worker was pointed out by other female heads who felt that regardless of her livelihood strategy, they had a lot in common with her by virtue of the fact that she had no established male presence in her life and was struggling with female headship just like the rest of the female heads.

Furthermore, during the pilot study the researcher realised that there was no other way of accessing the sample, making snowball sampling the only viable sampling strategy. On arrival in the village, it was not easy to pick out female heads since the researcher was new in the village and did not know the structures or dynamics of the families within Manama village. Thus snowball sampling was chosen as an effective sampling strategy from the perspective of research design and the group of persons under study (Bryman, 2001). In the end, due to snowballing, the rightful participants were acquired and data was collected.

3.7.2 Disadvantages of snowball sampling

Studies show that snowball sampling does not select units for inclusion in the sample based on random selection, unlike probability sampling techniques and therefore it is impossible to determine the possible sampling error and make statistical inferences from the sample to the population (Boeiye, 2010). As such, snowball samples were not considered to be fully representative of all female headed households in rural areas in Zimbabwe but just in Manama village.

3.8 Data collection

The data collection process was exploratory since the researcher investigated through observing, studying situations, asking questions, listening attentively and expressing empathy as guided by feminist research scholars (Creswell, 2008) (Babbie, 2007).

3.9 Research instruments:

3.9.1 Key informant interviews

The researcher used key informant interviews to collect information from the District Administrator, a Community Development Worker and a female headed household dependent. These interviews were voice recorded. Key informant interviews were important in that they provided the researcher with more detailed information from a spectator perspective about the vulnerability of female headed households to poverty, female heads' perceptions and attitudes towards intervention strategies by the Government or humanitarian aid Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and statistics of female

headed households and their survival strategies. The researcher spoke face to face with key informants and was able to probe for more information.

Babbie (2007) explains that interviews are conversations with a purpose to get answers to questions and understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. The researcher also observed how much the key informants interacted with female heads to assess if they were relating issues from an informed point of view or just stereotyping the female heads. Babbie (2001) defines a research instrument as a tool that is used for collecting data needed to find solutions to the problem under investigation. The study used an interview guide to administer key informant interviews. The interview guide consisted of unstructured and non-directive questions. This was meant to guide the research respondents. The researcher also used an audio recorder to record the interviews whenever the participant allowed it.

Secondary data methods were also used to gather information about the survival strategies of female heads. Information was collected from previous studies and secondary sources.

3.9.2 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussions do not discriminate against people who cannot read or write and they can encourage participation from people reluctant to be interviewed on their own or who feel they have nothing to say. They are a non-quantitative technique which is valuable in social science research (Kitzinger, 1995). During the Focus Group Discussions, the researcher listed talking points to guide the discussions.

3.9.2.1 Rationale and uses of focus groups

In this study, Focus Groups were a form of group interviews that capitalised on communication between the researcher and participants in order to generate data. Although group interviews are often used simply as a quick and convenient way to collect data from several people simultaneously, focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method (Mohd Noor, 2008). This was adhered to by the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, or respond by either approving or disproving sentiments of previous speakers. The women were encouraged to talk to one another asking questions, seeking clarity from what others said, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view. After initiating conversation in the discussions, the researcher withdrew and concentrated on the emotions and listening as they spoke amongst themselves. The method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way (Hesse-Biber S. , 2014). The researcher would only interject to seek clarity or add talking points.

In this research, the researcher had not intended to use focus group discussions but upon getting to the field, an opportunity availed itself. While the researcher was getting approval from the District Administrator's government offices, coincidentally, a group of female headed households were present for community project training on embroidery. The researcher was allowed to address the women as a group and ask them viewpoint questions. As such, the researcher ended up holding a focus group discussion using talking points from her interview guide. Due to the location, the government complex and the fact that the researcher was introduced by the District administrator, the women assumed that the researcher was a government official and spoke freely about their social and economic challenges. As a result, the discussion was fruitful even though it had not been planned. The focus group discussion had 11 participants, all female heads. Subsequently, the researcher scheduled three more discussions on dates convenient to all participants. They selected days when they would meet with Community Development workers and the researcher scheduled the discussions during their lunch break on three occasions.

During the pilot study the researcher managed to collect preliminary data at the initial focus group discussion. On subsequent focus group discussions the researcher revisited unclear areas and created a platform for all women to narrate their experiences and discuss them at length. At the end of each discussion, the researcher used member check strategies to validate findings by summarising notes and asking the women to confirm the accuracy of the information they had shared with the researcher. In some instances, they would clarify and remind the researcher of a point that was not noted accurately. Although Given (2012) argues that member checking is not a gold standard of confirming accuracy since participants can either validate out of a desire not to offend the researcher or may forget and deny their personal statements and fail to identify with their emotions (Sandelowski, 2012). Regardless, the researcher used this strategy to optimize the validity of the findings and ensure that her final interpretation of the women's narratives did justice to them.

3.9.3 Field participant observations

The field participant observation that the researcher engaged in was the process of establishing rapport within Manama village with the female heads and trying to blend with them so that they would act naturally. The researcher then removed herself from the setting or community to immerse herself in the data to understand what was going on so as to write about it. This process of becoming a part of the community while observing their behaviours and activities is called participant observation (Kawulich, 2005). Observation methods were useful to the researcher in a variety of ways. They provided the researcher with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, assess how the community interacts with female heads, grasp how participants communicate with each other and check for how much time they spend on taking care of their responsibilities. Participant

observation allows researchers to observe events that informants may be unable or unwilling to share.

3.9.3.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Participant Observation

There were several advantages of using participant observation over other methods of data collection in this study. According to scholars, participant observation has advantages that include access to the "backstage culture" (De Vos, 2005). Indeed, it allowed for rich details on the female heads' behaviours; general mood, general outlook towards life, how poverty affects them emotionally, intentions, how they handle situations and responsibilities as the researcher observed them and participated in some of their unscheduled events. Therefore, this improved the quality of data collection and interpretation and facilitated the development of new research questions or hypothesis.

On the other hand, there was a disadvantage of using participant observation as a method. At times the researcher was not interested in what happened within the privacy of their homes or out of the public eye because not everything had a bearing on the information being sought. Some examples include these women's religious practices and activities.

In terms of field participant observation, the other problem faced by the researcher was on the concept of reflexivity. Broadly, reflexivity can be described as qualitative researchers' continuous examination and explanation of how they influenced a research project (Sandelowski, 2012). Whilst in Manama village, the researcher would move around the village and spend considerable time at the village market place, clinic and gardens observing the day to day activities of female headed households. The villagers became accustomed to the researcher but kept observing the researcher with keen interest and the researcher noticed that conversations stopped whenever she was within earshot. Thus in as much as the researcher tried to blend in with the community by dressing conservatively like the villagers and communicating in a friendly manner, the participants were not as free as they would normally be. As such, the observation summary was definitely negatively affected although the researcher continued to note their activities and attitudes.

The researcher kept a field notebook for jotting down observations. The researcher also engaged in some of their day to day activities such as watering the gardens and shelling nuts which were the only tasks the participants allowed the researcher to engage in.

3.9.4 Documentary reviews

In this study, Documentary Reviews were used as a supplement to the conventional social surveys. This is the documentary research method or the use of documentary sources in social research (Mogalakwe, 2006). The researcher used reviews by analysing documents and articles that contained information on rural based female headed households to

supplement information collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant field observation. Therefore, the researcher used the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency provincial reports on Matebeleland South province and reports from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) which had been providing humanitarian and developmental assistance in Manama village to children and mothers and the reports from Community Development Officers working in the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Development in Gwanda Rural (MWAGD).

3.9.5 Limitations of the study

Due to the purpose of the research, households had a tendency of giving socially acceptable answers in order to hide their situation and this distorted the collected data. The researcher then used probing to get more information.

The time frame of the research was also a limitation. Current statistics for Zimbabwe were not available since Zimbabwe conducts censuses after every 10 years and the last census was in 2012. Therefore, statistics for 2017 when the research was conducted were best estimates.

Moreover, officials under the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Development, the Offices of the Provincial and District Administrator could not show the researcher their documented work as they were in the form of internal reports. However, the researcher asked them if they could simply share the information through interviews, so that they would not have to breach government policy by handing over their reports to the researcher. Fortunately, they agreed to have interviews as key informants. As a result, the researcher got some of the documented information on female headed households Manama village.

In addition, most of the participants were disappointed to know that they were not getting any immediate material gain except for refreshments for sharing their socio-economic challenges. As a result, some refused to participate. Despite these challenges, the researcher explained to participants how the research would lead to policy recommendations for change and awareness for increased donor support and feedback recommendations on coping strategies that would follow the completion of the study.

Language was also an unforeseen challenge. After an overall assessment, the researcher gathered that Matebeleland South Province predominantly has Ndebele as the main language, with only a few people speaking Sotho and Shona. So it was with great dismay that the researcher met a small group of people who speak Nambya at the periphery of Manama.

Furthermore, transport was a challenge from the town centre especially during weekends. It had to be accessed by rides in donkey carts or trucks headed for West Nicholson.

Given the fact that the district had a poor harvest following the floods during the previous farming season and the prevailing cash crisis in the country, the households that accommodated the researcher were of little means and the researcher had to spend more on sustenance than intended or budgeted for.

In addition, the researcher also encountered cellular phone network challenges due to the poor communications network in the area. The researcher needed the local networks for calls when scheduling interviews with participants and also communicating with supervisors. However, the researcher had to make do with what was available.

The problem of not getting sufficient information was dealt with by having open ended questions that probe for more answers so that informants provide richer information.

The issue of sensitivity was overcome by ensuring confidentiality.

3.10 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

The collected data was analysed by qualitative data analysis methods. De Vos et al (2005) explain thematic data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to a mass of collected data. For the researcher, this involved reducing volumes of raw information collected from female heads, sifting the significant from trivial; identifying significant patterns; themes; subthemes and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what was being revealed by the data.

Identified themes were then analysed through content thematic analysis and this gave structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Content thematic analysis is the compressing of many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Stemler, 2001). Once the data reached a point of saturation, the process of data collection ended. The researcher followed eight steps as proposed by Creswell (Creswell, 2009) to analyse data. These consisted of the following:

- Transcribing all voice recordings of discussions and interviews into notes.
- Planning to get a sense of the whole by reading all the transcriptions carefully, whilst jotting down some ideas that come to mind which are related to the topic.
- Reading transcripts of field notes asking questions about them and writing thoughts on the margin.
- This task was done on all transcripts whilst making a list of themes. Similar themes were clustered together and then arranged as "major themes" and "sub themes"
- The researcher found the most descriptive wording for the theme and turned them into categories. The total list of themes was reduced by grouping related themes together and lines drawn between them to show interrelationships. The coding strategy involving generating themes and patterns was used to aid analysis through the lens of existing literature and theoretical frameworks. Main themes constituted

major findings in the study and formed separate headings in the findings section. According to Hesse-Biber (2014), there is no one correct way to employ qualitative thematic analysis. Hesse-Biber (2014) asserts that each project creates the appropriate manner for the employment of thematic analysis. Thus, the researcher gave meaning to the women's narratives and interpreted all transcriptions.

- Data material belonging to each category was assembled in one place and a preliminary analysis was performed.
- The researcher reported the results of the research.

The qualitative researcher acknowledges that there may have been bias in interpretation and took steps to correct this by ensuring that evidence for the analytical findings existed in the data, and that different interpretations of the data could be reconciled. In this way, the research conclusions were grounded in the real-life patterns that emerged from the research findings. It was therefore crucial for the researcher to document the process of analysis thoroughly so that the logic of the analysis can be tracked.

3.11 Data verification

Qualitative validity is the process whereby the researcher checks the accuracy of findings by employing certain procedures (Creswell, 2009). Guba's model of ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data was applied (Mogalakwe, 2006). Mogalakwe argues that the worth of any research endeavour, regardless of the approach, is evaluated by peers, grant reviewers or readers and the characteristics to ensure trustworthiness are truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

3.11.1 Truth-value

The researcher sought to establish truth in her findings. The concept of truth-value also establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of findings asked on the research design, participants and context (Zambrana, 2008). In qualitative research, truth value is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants. Therefore, the researcher represented those multiple realities revealed by participants as adequately as possible. For the qualitative study to be credible, this was done to the extent that descriptions and interpretations were mostly verbatim and accurate that participants could immediately recognize their contributions.

Truth value is established by the strategy of credibility and for this reason; the researcher used various techniques during the discussions such as talking points or questions as mentioned earlier in this discussion. The researcher also engaged with the research participants for about forty five minutes per Focus Group Discussion. This use of prolonged engagement assisted the researcher to detect response sets or trends where informants either consistently agreed or disagreed with the view point questions or statements.

Furthermore, the researcher made sure that the truth value of the study was not affected by closeness of the relationship with participants.

3.11.2 Applicability

The researcher adhered to the concept of applicability by presenting sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison by other researchers with other female headed households in similar settings. According to Mogalakwe (2006), applicability refers to the degree to which findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups. It is the ability to generalize from the findings to larger populations. Applicability is established through the strategy of transferability (Mogalakwe, 2006). However, transferability is largely the responsibility of the person wanting to transfer the findings to another situation or population than of the researcher of the original study.

3.11.3 Consistency

In this study, reference was made to similar researches or studies undertaken in the Southern African region on female headed households in rural settings. For instance, Musekiwa (2013) conducted a research on livelihood strategies of female headed households in Mtoko District in Zimbabwe; while Mukanangana conducted studies on gender based violence among female headed households in Harare (Mukanangana F. , 2014). Kang'ethe's also conducted studies in Botswana (Kang'ethe S. , 2011) and Harrison conducted studies in Lesotho on caregiving roles and HIV/AIDS amongst female heads (Harrison A. , 2014). Research was also done in South Africa on HIV and AIDS affecting female heads (Musekiwa, 2013) Chant has also conducted studies with a feminist slant on African female heads (Chant S. , 2011). This third criterion of trustworthiness considers the consistency of the data, that is, whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in similar contexts (Bachor, 2000). Consistency is defined in terms of dependability. The researcher described the exact methods of data gathering, analysis and interpretation used in the study. Such dense description of methods provided information as to how dependable the study was or how unique the situation was.

3.11.4 Neutrality

This was the last criterion of trustworthiness adhered to in this research. The researcher was involved intensely in the whole research process as this enhances research findings through familiarity and discovery of hidden facts but did not lose objectivity. Neutrality refers to the degree to which findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) shifted the emphasis of neutrality in qualitative research from the researcher to the

data, so that rather than looking at neutrality of the investigator, the neutrality of the data is considered. In this study, conformability was part of the criteria of neutrality.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines served as standards and the basis on which the researcher ought to evaluate her own conduct. Strydom (2005) defines ethics as a set of moral principles which are suggested by an individual or group, are subsequently widely accepted, and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents (Strydom, Sampling and sampling methods' in De Vos A.S, (ed) Research at Grassroots: A primer for the caring Professions., 2005). Consistent with the ethical requirements of research, the researcher respected and observed the following ethical protocols: consulted the relevant authorities to facilitate gaining access to data setting, sought research respondents' informed consent and adhered to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity.

In line with the ethical requirements of research, the researcher consulted with relevant authorities to gain access to research components. In order to gain access to the participants, the researcher gained permission from the University in the form of a clearance letter; then followed the community protocol of getting clearance from the Provincial Administrator; Gwanda District Administrator; Manama High School Head and the Manama village head to conduct research. According to De Vos (2005), obtaining informed consent means that all information on the aim of the investigation, the procedures, advantages, disadvantages, dangers will be rendered to their legal representatives. The most fundamental principle for ethical acceptability is informed consent (De Vos, 2005). The involved participants had to be informed of the nature and purpose of the research, its risks and benefits and consented to participate without coercion. The participants were given consent forms to sign and they were informed that they could withdraw at any stage from the research whenever they wished to do so. This exercise of informing participants of their rights was done by the researcher during the pilot study when participants were identified.

The researcher assured the participants that the information they shared was going to be kept confidential. To observe the principles of confidentiality and anonymity means handling information about subjects in a confidential manner. It places a strong obligation on the researcher to guard jealously against information that he/she obtains from respondents (Strydom, 2005). Strategies to sustain confidentiality eliminate the risk of harm and embarrassment of those studied. The researcher's promise to protect the research participants' rights and decisions was to be upheld in an effort to respect them. Ethics pertain to doing well and avoiding harm. Harm can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles. Thus, the protection of human subjects or participants in this research study was imperative.

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University Higher Degrees Committee; proof of registration or academic study and a consent form was approved by the study supervisor to seek permission from the relevant authorities to carry out the study. Identified people were asked to participate in the study and only those who were willing participated.

The participants were assured that the information from the study would be used for academic purposes only, and they were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. This was achieved by not asking for personal details such as names, ID numbers or physical addresses of the respondents.

3.12.1 Informed Consent

Prior to the discussions, the researcher first explained to the respondents the various aspects of the process. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, risks, benefits and that information shared would be kept confidential and that they would remain anonymous. Informed consent implies that subjects are made adequately aware of the type of information the researcher wants from them, why the information is being sought, what purpose it will be put to, how they are expected to participate in the study and how it will directly or indirectly affect them (Kumar, 2005). The researcher obtained the necessary permission from the respondents after they were thoroughly and truthfully informed about the purpose of the interview and the investigation. The researcher's aim of equipping the respondents with adequate information was to enable them to make an informed decision. After thoroughly explaining to the potential participants what their participation encompassed, they were each asked to sign the informed consent form.

3.12.2 Anonymity

The researcher used pseudonyms and the respondents made up fake names so that people could not identify a given response with a given respondent. When participants became aware that their real names were not going to be used, it enabled them to express themselves freely without fear. Anonymity is ethical protection that participants remain nameless; their identity is protected from disclosure and remains nameless; their identity is protected from disclosure and remains unknown (Hesse-Biber S. , 2014). The researcher used those pseudonyms and other identifying information was not added in the data such as exact locations or names of spouses or dependants.

3.12.3 No Harm

The researcher ensured that the participants were not harmed physically, psychologically or emotionally. If harm was realized, the participants would have been removed from the

study and offered counselling if needed. Scholars acknowledge that indeed social research can harm a research subject in several ways: physical harm, psychological harm, legal harm and harm to a person's career or income (Denzin, 2000). In the study, the researcher avoided inflicting anxiety and psychological discomfort by asking questions in an appropriate manner as well as not judging the respondents. The researcher was also very patient with the respondents when they narrated their ordeal as some of the experiences were sensitive and painful.

3.12.4 Rigor in the qualitative research

The researcher's objective was to come up with a rigorous qualitative research. Rigor is best thought of in terms of the quality of the research process with features such as transparency, comparativeness, reflexivity and dependability (Given, 2008). To achieve this, the researcher ensured that the findings were clear, represented accurately, reliable, had a comparison to the broader research context, linked with the literature review and accounted for the influence of the researcher's presence in the study results as will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis and interpretations of the study's findings on the challenges of female headed households in Manama village of Gwanda District in Zimbabwe. The chapter also discusses the severity of their poverty, the causes for a higher prevalence of poverty in their households and their livelihood strategies.

4.1 Presentation, interpretation and data analysis

The discussion in this section is presented in sections; first, the demographic information of the female heads, second the discussion of themes and sub-themes that were extracted from the research interviews followed by a conclusive analysis. Interpretation and the discussions of themes are supported by direct quotations from what the householders said. Data was collected through Focus Group Discussions with 11 female household heads from Manama village and 3 key informant interviews with the Provincial Director and Community Development Workers from the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Development in Gwanda, Zimbabwe. Other complimentary methods used were field participant observation and documentary reviews.

4.2 Table 2 Demographic Data on the female heads that participated in the Focus Group Discussions

NAME	MALE PRESENCE AT HOME	AGE	ETHNICITY	EDUCATION	MARITAL STATUS	NO. OF DEPENDANTS	RELATIONSHIP WITH DEPENDANTS
1 Angeline	None	27	Shona	Grade 7	Single mother	7	5 siblings, 2 children
2 Prisca	In a relationship	19	Ndebele	Grade 5	Single mother	4	3 children, 1 niece
3 Nkanyeziyethu	In a relationship	17	Ndebele	Form 4	Single	3	3 siblings
4 Ntombizodwa	In a relationship	23	Ndebele	Form 4	Single mother	6	4 children, 1 parent, 1 brother
5 Musa	In a relationship	29	Nambyiya	Form 3	Widow	2	1 child
6 Ayanda	None	34	Ndebele	Form 4	Widow	8	2 parents, 3 siblings, 3

							children
7 Thokozani	None	41	Ndebele	Form 2	Divorcee	4	2 children, 2 parents
8 Sandile	None	50	Ndebele	Form 4	Divorcee	6	4 children, 2 grandchildren
9 Luthando	None	47	Ndebele	Form 3	Divorcee	5	5 children
10 Nolwazi	Present	28	Ndebele	Grade 5	Married	4	2 children, 1 husband, 1 sister in law
11 Nomonde	Present	37	Sotho	Form 1	Married	9	4 children, husband, 1 niece, 1 nephew and 2 siblings

At the beginning of each interaction with the researcher, participants gave their personal details as presented in Table 2 above. Consistent with the ethical requirements of research, the researcher advised the participants to change their real names and replace them with any pseudonyms (Strydom, 2002). The demographic information was collected to help create a picture of the background and current situation of the household heads. This information included pseudonyms, age, ethnicity, level of education, marital status, number of dependants and the relationships between the female heads and the dependants.

4.2.1 Age

The research was guided by the UN General Assembly profiling of female headed households which considers female household heads aged between 15-65 years who have the burden of taking care of themselves, their families or other dependents (Assembly U. G., 2016). Therefore, selected female heads in this study ranged from 17-50 years. According to the Focus Group Discussions, it was realised that the younger they were; for instance 17-29 years, the higher the chances of having a male presence and the more physically stronger they are to take care of the households as compared to the second group of 30-50 years. It was also realised that the elderly female heads were increasingly complaining of constant illness due to age related health problems such as arthritis, high blood pressure and diabetes. This means that at times they needed to be cared for by their dependents.

4.2.2 Education percentages

A fundamental aspect in the demographic information of the female heads is their education level. 73% of the female heads indicated that they had received secondary education as indicated in Table 3 with 27% of the female heads having attended school at primary education level only.

Table 3 Education levels of the female participants

Levels	Description	Number of participants	Names of participants
1	Not formally educated	None	
2	Attended primary education	3	Angeline, Prisca and Nolwazi.
3	Attended secondary education	8	Nkanyeziyethu, Ntombizodwa and Musa.
			Ayanda, Thokozani, Sandile, Luthando and Nomonde.

These correspond with the Zimbabwe 2012 status report figures that state that in the province, 32% of the women completed secondary education and 51% females have at least enrolled in primary school (Zimstats, 2012). At least half of those who attended secondary school completed their Ordinary Level (Form 1-4) which is basic education in Zimbabwe. After completing Form 4, one can branch off to tertiary education; therefore the education level in this village is relatively high compared to statistics from other villages as outlined in the 2012 census report.

However, age was not a determinant of a higher level of education. The oldest participant aged 50 had the highest level of education in this group. This disproved the assumption that the researcher had held that literacy levels would be low in this village especially among the elderly female heads. In Zimbabwe, literacy is defined as attending school up to grade three. (Zimstats, 2012). According to this definition, all research participants are literate.

4.2.3 Ethnicity and language

Manama village is located in Matebeleland South, a province which has a predominantly Ndebele population. However, due to migration and marriage there are also Sotho, Shona and Nambiya people living in the village. This cultural diversity is captured in one of respondent's words below:

"I am Shona. My father was an orphan, he married my mother who is Ndebele and her family adopted him as a son; leading to his relocating to Manama. That's how we find ourselves as Shona in an area predominantly Ndebele people." (Angeline).

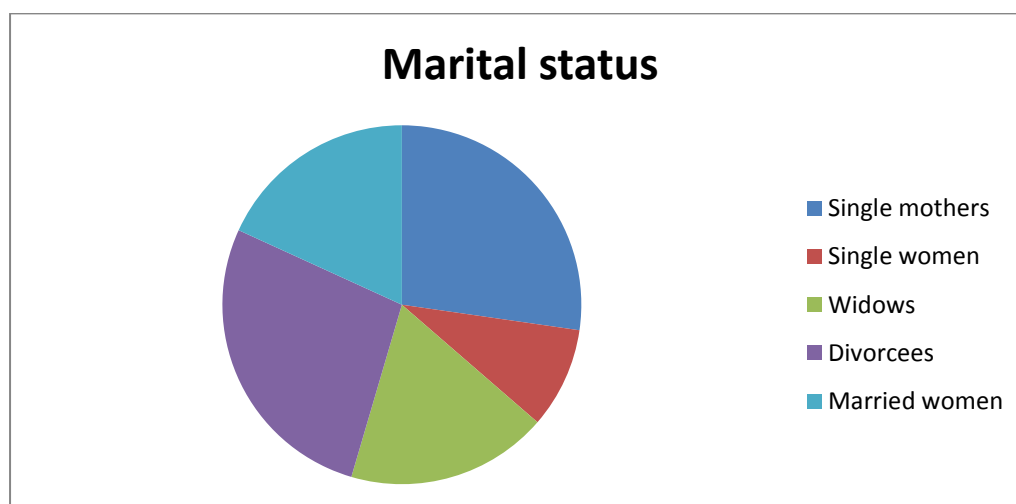
The researcher was privileged to have a mixed group of participants that fairly represented all these ethnic groups. Of the eleven participants, eight were Ndebele, there was one Shona woman; one Nambian and one Sotho woman. The discussions were held in IsiNdebele which was the preferred language of the participants and is also the researcher's first language. The other non-Ndebele women could also speak IsiNdebele fluently.

4.2.4 Marital status and causes of female headship

The results drawn from Table 2 show that most of the female headed households in Manama village are caused by separation of spouses, especially divorce, and being abandoned by men after unexpected pregnancies. The death of husbands also leads to female headship although in this village as indicated by the sampled population it accounts for a few female headed households. From the women’s narratives, the main causes of male deaths in this village are either suicide, HIV/AIDS, accidents or natural causes.

Participants fell into two groups of female heads, namely de facto and de jure. These two households differ depending on the presence of a man. The following are the two main types of female headed households in Gwanda that were considered. In the group that participated, 18% were classified as de facto female heads whereby the woman is head because the husband is absent temporarily or is present but incapacitated by alcoholism, physical disability, mental illness or unemployment. The man might make major decisions, but the woman ultimately is in control (Milazzo., 2015). In the group that participated, 82% were classified as de jure female heads whereby the woman is head because she is single, never married but with children, widowed, divorced or separated and girls who did not marry and take care of the family without a man’s assistance. De facto female heads have men who are unable or unwilling to work. Eighteen percent of the female heads were widowed. Two female heads stated that their husbands died of HIV/AIDS related diseases and one single mother stated that her fiancée died in a car accident while they were arranging to be married and they were already expecting a baby.

Figure 2 Marital status of the female heads



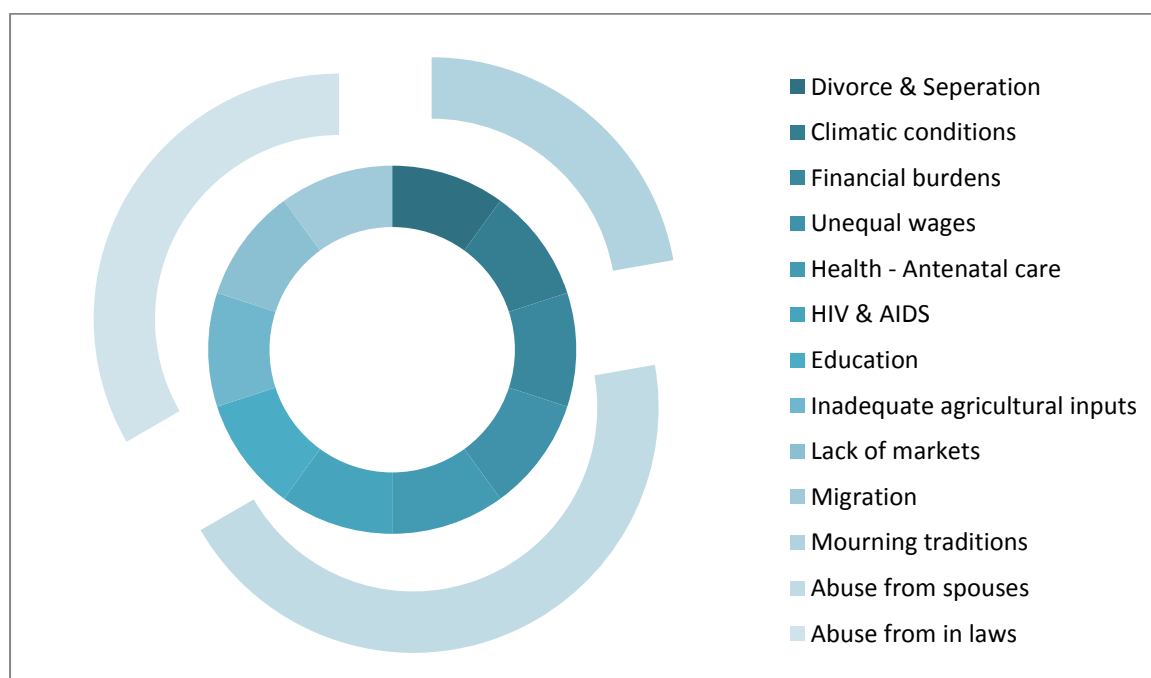
The above pie chart indicates that 64% of the female heads had separated from their partners or husbands as they are single mothers and divorcees, 18% are widows and 18% are married. Some of these women are involved in relationships with men.

4.2.5 Dependants

The study findings revealed that most participants had more than two dependants that included children, grandchildren, parents and at times siblings of the female head.

4.3 Challenges faced by females within female headed households in Manama village

Figure 3 Themes and sub themes of the socio-economic challenges female heads face



4.3.1 Main themes

Female headed households face many socio-economic challenges as they carry the double burden of being providers and caring for domestic duties. The themes below emerged out of the conversation with the participants:

4.3.2 Divorce and separation

The biggest challenge faced by women who are separated from their husbands or partners is that of lack of financial support. Some of these women do not have adequate knowledge about court procedures to sue the fathers of their children for maintenance. Ntombizodwa explained:

“I have never been to court; I do not know how to address them or how to even get there. My ex-husband is educated so he will convince them with English that he is right and should not contribute to the upkeep of his children”.

Furthermore, cultural misconceptions hinder these women from seeking justice from the courts. For example, Thokozani has two children but the father of her children who is a school teacher does not contribute to their upkeep. Below are her reasons for not having approached the paternity courts for help:

“My mother advised me against reporting the father of my children. She told me that it is culturally taboo to sue the father of my children. It would be gross disrespect that would reflect badly on my parents as the community would think that I was not raised properly. So I decided to leave the matter and fend for them myself. My mother said that one day the father of my children will come to his senses and start contributing towards the upkeep of his children”.

Thokozani, like the other women in her situation, suffer the emotional pain and loss of being abandoned, yet still suffers the burden of single-handedly taking care of the children. Even though the women did not say much, their body language indicated that they were suffering from emotional trauma as a result of their painful experiences. During the interviews, some participants were clearly fighting back tears.

4.3.3 Climatic conditions

Manama village suffers from regular droughts because it is located within Region 5 of Zimbabwe characterised by low rainfall. Due to their social roles and position worldwide, women are greatly affected by water scarcity and flooding (Anderson, 2013). According to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “climate change will aggravate the water stress currently faced by some [African] countries, while some countries that currently do not experience water stress will become at risk of water stress” (Figueiredo, 2013). The impacts of climate change have huge effects on all who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods (Carr, 2014). According to the study participants’, water is increasing in salinity and they have to walk long distances to get springs with fresh water for drinking and cooking and walk up to 10 to 15 kilometres, spending about 3 hours per day in collecting water. All participants wake up between 4am and 6am every day to collect water for household use. By the time they start doing other chores or income generating activities, they are already exhausted. For laundry and bathing, river water is used although it is slightly off colour due to mud and dirt found in rivers.

Of the eleven participants, only Nolwazi has a husband who occasionally assists her with fetching water. She said:

“I collect water to cook and for drinking, but on weekends my husband at times takes a drum and goes to the river to get water for laundry and bathing. I am fortunate because all the other men in our village do not collect water for their families, it’s only us the women”.

All participants pointed out that collecting water was viewed as a woman's duty. This allocation of roles is based on gender in patriarchal societies and always disadvantages women. As gendered work and family responsibilities make poor women the main cleaners and caregivers, poor women are the ones most affected by water issues.

Zimbabwe has been experiencing heat waves every summer since 2015 (J.Rurinda, 2014). Female heads in Manama village spend a lot of time outdoors exposed to direct sunlight and as a result they suffer from heat stress. They spend their days either in their fields, gardens, market stalls or vending areas thus they are always exposed to the direct rays of sunlight. Thokozani said: *"We (me and other women I work with) go home after sundown. Our lives are basically outdoors. We only go indoors to eat or sleep"*. However, the intensification of heat leads to humans getting heat stroke, nausea and dizziness among other things. Angeline said:

"I have a lot of migraine headaches and at the clinic they said I am mostly dehydrated. I am always outdoors, I drink water but I suppose it is not adequate, but I have to continue to fend for my family".

Increasing temperatures reduce women's work productivity, affecting their capacity to provide for their dependants.

Sub-Saharan Africa has been identified as the most vulnerable region to climate variability and change because many areas inherently receive unpredictable rainfall (IPCC, 2007). Zimbabwe is one of the 'hotspots' for climate change, with predicted increases in temperatures and rainfall variability, and increased probability of extreme events such as droughts and flash floods (J.Rurinda, 2014). For example, the Gwanda district had flash floods during the 2016 agricultural season. Villagers had poor harvests and all participants stated that they buy maize meal rather than take theirs to the mill like they used to do because their granaries are empty. In this regard, Sandile said:

"I did not have fertiliser so when the it rained too much my crops were completely covered by water and turned yellow. When the water level subsided I did not have fertiliser to boost their growth so the whole field did not produce much. This year I have to work hard to buy maize for consumption".

Ntombizodwa also observes: *"Because of the floods we could not plant in time. It was too wet and the plough could not work properly. We had to dig with our hands and only got two buckets from a three acre field."* Ayanda had similar comments: *"This is my third year failing to harvest much after putting in a lot of work and seeds, next year I do not think I will engage in farming, it does not pay"*. This indicates that women's vulnerability to climate change is strongly influenced by their reliance on subsistence agriculture, socioeconomic status and gender roles which undermine their ability to cope with and adapt to climate change (IPCC, 2007). Effects of climate change in this case seem to be gender selective by

severely affecting women. In as much as men also work long hours outdoors in this village, their resilience is different compared to women.

4.3.4 Financial burdens

Unemployed husbands

Married female heads had husbands who were incapacitated by unemployment. For example, Nomonde explained:

“My husband used to work in Bulawayo at NRZ (National Railways of Zimbabwe) but was retrenched in 2015. While he was working I used to engage in retail buying and selling clothes and shoes to supplement our budget. However, when he lost his job that petty trading had to take care of our family. Fortunately, I also have poultry and a large garden. All these small projects have kept us going. My husband is used to office work; he cannot make good sales when he tries to help. So he stays at home minding the household while I search for money”.

Nomonde’s experience is representative of most Zimbabweans because the country has had massive retrenchments since independence and company closures due to the on-going economic crisis in Zimbabwe (Tawodzera, 2012). This unfortunate situation has caused a lot of suffering especially among women.

The study findings revealed that 18% of the female heads had husbands but still took the main responsibility of running the households because their husbands were compromised by the economic situation. However, women’s narratives indicated that these unemployed husbands did not want to engage in household chores. As a result, these women have a double burden of handling domestic work and being breadwinners (Harrison A. , 2014). Patriarchy has socialised these men to believe that house chores are for women.

Research findings also revealed that some household heads are grandmothers taking care of their grandchildren. These grandmothers happen to be the breadwinners of the households and the main decision makers of these households. They were forced to take care of their orphaned grandchildren. However, even though some grandchildren have parents in urban areas, the state of grandmothers shouldering such heavy load drives them into deeper poverty.

4.3.5 Unequal wages

Some of the female heads who engage in hired labour work complained about unequal wages between men and women. For instance, some women pick *Amacimbi* (Mopane worms) for individuals who supply retail shops. Women are paid 25 cents per hour while men get 35 cents per hour. Suppliers pay them less because women work at a slower pace

than men. On close analysis, these women are slow because they have caregiving duties and health constraints. Musa complained:

“They do not consider that we work with babies on our backs; we have to take baby feeding breaks; some women there are even pregnant and besides, our physical makeup is different. We cannot work as hard as men”.

Nomonde also raised the same concern:

“We don’t expect to be paid for what we have not done, but we simply want to be paid equally for equal work done. Men ultimately would get more money by virtue of having the ability to collect more, but we should all be paid 35 cents per bucket”.

Unequal wages are a violation of these women’s rights and efforts (Carr, 2014). However, little can be done since these hired women are not engaged as employees with written contracts and their capacity to raise their grievances through legal channels is limited. Therefore, it is a “take it or leave it” situation and they just have to take it due to lack of better opportunities.

4.3.6 Health

Most elderly female heads complained about having backache problems, aching joints, headaches and chest pains but could not seek medical attention for these ailments because the clinic is not easily accessible. Nkanyeziyethu said:

“The clinic is far and at times you sacrifice a day off from your work and still at the clinic they do not have medication to treat you. At times they just diagnose and refer you to the hospital in town and write down medication to purchase from pharmacies in town. Going to town requires money, so if you are sick but it is still bearable you just stay at home and drink homemade concoctions of herbs”.

Nomonde concurred:

“When my back is sore I cannot even walk all the way to the clinic which is about 8 kilometres away. We don’t have a scotch cart at home that can carry me to the clinic. Some in the village who have scotch carts use them to carry their sick, but with me I have to walk. I only go there when I am feeling better”.

The disadvantage of delayed medical assistance is that initial symptoms which guide medical personnel in diagnosing the problem would have long subsided. Some conditions can be treated at home but some only fester since these women self-diagnose and treat symptoms not the root problem.

4.3.7 Ante natal care

Pregnant mothers find it difficult to go to do their booking at the clinic, regularly attend ante natal check-ups or classes and get vitamins or iron supplement tablets given to expecting mothers. Of the eleven female heads, about half of them stated that when they were pregnant, they only booked for antenatal care in their third trimester just before delivery. Prisca, one of the participants who was pregnant at the time, when asked for her comment said: *“This is the fifth month of my pregnancy; I cannot leave my petty trading and go every now and then to be checked. I will go if I am not well, for now I am okay”*. Late pregnancy booking make it difficult for the mothers to be tested for HIV/AIDS so that if the mother is positive the PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) treatment can commence. The national coordinator of the Ministry of Health and Child Care’s PMTCT and Paediatric ART programmes stated:

“While committed to a goal of zero new HIV infections among babies in 2018 and improved survival of mothers, it remains a challenge as women in rural communities cannot access antenatal care services easily” (Yikoniko, 2017).

Without any interventions, the chances that a baby born to an HIV positive mother also gets infected during delivery are high. Sandile who has a grandchild who was born with the HIV virus said:

“If only my daughter had received the needed treatment when she was pregnant, I would not be suffering with her child after she passed away. The baby is still young and is always sick with different infections; she also suffers pain, ulcers in her mouth and digestive system. I cannot afford at times to give her the balanced diet she needs”.

If PMTCT treatment was made readily available to these women, it would assist them to give birth to health babies. Sick babies drain them or their caregivers financially, physically and emotionally.

4.3.8 HIV/AIDS

For decades, marriage and family dynamics in Manama village have been affected by male labour migration common to Southern Africa whereby men moved to South African mines for work on a regular schedule which requires semi-permanent absence from home. This led and still leads to family disruptions thus rendering rural areas as female spaces, reinforcing gender inequalities and making women more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS (Harrison A. , 2014). In as much as men are no longer going to work in mines, the lure of better economic opportunities and a higher standard of living in South Africa are pull factors. This has led to

negative impacts on family stability and marital stability. Spousal separation creates a near perfect environment for HIV infection to spread.

The disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on women's caregiving burdens and economic vulnerability has multiple consequences for families. In some instances, it is a direct result of separation of spouses. HIV/AIDS leads to the expansion of the household size through the addition of children from extra marital affairs, orphaned or other vulnerable children (Harrison A. , 2014). In this regard, Nomonde said: *"When your sister or brother passes away you just have to share the children as siblings and take them under your care. For those orphans you adopt, everything rests on you, be it food, education, medical bill, clothing, everything"*. Generally, these female headed households face increased needs in the face of HIV/AIDS. Ntombizodwa observed:

"We need medication, healthy food and at times the sick one cannot eat our normal food because of mouth sores or ulcers in the digestive system. In such a situation a liquid diet with milk, juice or yoghurt would be recommended. To get those needs money, in the village we mostly eat what we produce, but for a sick person we now have to buy better food".

Clearly, caring for the sick, especially HIV/AIDS positive patients is difficult on a thin budget as the patient needs a healthy balanced diet and because of low appetite, the sick one might have food preferences that are costly.

4.3.9 Education

The female heads that only had minimal primary education pointed out that lack of financial resources, social problems and cultural beliefs were responsible for their situation. The following sentiments support this observation. Angeline, a 27 year old single mother said:

"I never finished school because I was raised by a stepmother who influenced my father against sending me to school unlike her sons. She told my father that educating me was a waste of funds as I would simply get married in the end and benefit another family if ever I would get employed".

"We were poor; my father believed education was a waste of time and money so he forced me to drop out of school. He believed that we had to focus on farming and help him reap large harvests each year"- Prisca 19 year old single mother.

Nolwazi who is 28 years old said:

"We were 13 children raised by my maternal grandmother after our parents died so we had no money for school and at our local school they only educated three children per family under BEAM a government initiative to educate orphans. My

grandmother selected my older sister and two brothers, so I had to stay at home with my other nine siblings”.

The responses of the female heads above indicate that most of them were raised in poor families that discouraged educating the girl child.

Due to lack of financial resources, the children dependants of most participants do not attend school. Of the 58 dependents, 45 are of school going age and only 13 are adults. Of the 45 children, only 25 are in school. The other 20 are not attending school due to lack of school fees. According to the provincial director under the Ministry of women Affairs, Gender and Development (MWAGD), there are interventions from the NGO sector and government, but these are inadequate. He said:

“From 2015 to 2016 UNICEF was paying only for one week per month per child; for children from female headed households who had dropped out of school. However, this programme was suspended end of 2016 after running for close to two years; although UNICEF could not pay for full terms, the children benefited by attending school for a few weeks per term. It was not ideal but it was support that was needed. On the other hand, under government, we have the Basic Education Assistance Model (BEAM) in Zimbabwe to assist double orphans attend school by paying for their school fees. However, due to money constraints, children from single parent families cannot be added onto the programme”.

The United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) officials were unreachable for comment at the time data was being collected to find out why the programme was suspended and if it would be revived in future. These children who are not attending school face a bleak future and the vicious cycle of poverty will continue as they will have a high chance of being poor in their adult life.

4.3.10 Inadequate agricultural inputs

Due to financial constraints, participants highlighted lack of agricultural inputs as one of their main challenges. Nomonde said *“This year I had few nut seeds; maize and pumpkin shoots for planting because when our food reserves were down I ended up cooking the grains I had set aside for planting”.* Musa stated:

“I have a large area to farm but only did a small portion because I did not have enough maize seeds. I only managed to buy a 5kg bag of maize seeds. However, we had early rains and we decided to plant early. When the rains disappeared the seeds did not sprout and we had to replant, so we only planted a small portion”.

However, seeds are not the only challenge. Thokozani said:

“This year I planted a large portion of maize crop, pumpkin, sugar cane and sweet potatoes. However, there was a stalk borer outbreak and all my maize was affected because I did not have money to buy pesticides to spray my crop. We lost it all, and only had sweet potatoes, but losing maize is just difficult because we use maize meal a lot”.

It should be noted that maize meal is a staple and is used almost in every meal in this village. It is used for breakfast as soft porridge, lunch as part of the ingredients for homemade bread and for supper as a stiff porridge. For some, labour is a challenge due to male absence and few hands. Musa explained:

“We cannot do much since we are few. Our soil is poor and has been over used. Some in the village are clearing virgin lands with fertile soils and getting big harvests. In my family, we are only three and cannot clear a whole new field and I have no money to hire hands. In this village for collective communal help, you can organise what is called ‘ilima’, people just come and work but you have to prepare lots of traditional beer or drinks and cook food. I cannot afford that so I cannot call for combined village assistance”.

These inadequacies in agricultural inputs are closely linked to lack of finances (J.Rurinda, 2014). Therefore, the socio-economic challenges these female heads face are interlinked.

4.3.11 Markets – vendor licences

When asked about trade, the female heads mentioned several challenges they face as in marketing and selling their agricultural produce and other goods. Participants complained that they do not have markets to sell their goods. Their products fetch a low price within the village but participants have no money to transport their products to urban town and city markets. For sustainable development to be achieved, economic and wider benefits for women are needed through improving their engagement in markets (Baden S. , 2013). But there is limited understanding of what works for rural women in terms of their participation in collective action, and the ‘empowerment’ benefits to be gained from it. This can be gathered from the women’s narratives. For instance, Prisca said:

“During the Amacimbi (mopane worms) season I managed to collect a bucketful. I cleaned; cooked and packaged them in small plastic bags to sell. When I got to town, Council officials banned me from selling in the streets saying there are designated areas for vendors. When I went to the designated areas I was told that to get a stand I had to apply in writing; pay USD\$50; wait for the next council seating which would look at my application and either approve or reject my application. I do not know how the application is written or what an affidavit is and I did not have the application fee, when I asked them they could not assist

me. I had to go back home with my goods. I had already wasted my transport fare”.

Ayanda’s experience is similar to Prisca’s. She said:

“As for me I knew that in towns you are not allowed to just sell anywhere, but I would just go and stay on the lookout for council officials while I was selling. However, on my last trip I was caught unaware and they confiscated my boxes of bananas and oranges. It is not that I enjoy being chased around by Municipal police but I do not have money to apply or the requirements to get a vendor’s license”.

Nolwazi also supported this notion saying:

“If only they could make it easier for us simple folk to apply. We are unlettered and uneducated and all we want is to find good markets for our goods. We are not begging we want to do honest work like everybody else”.

Consideration must be given to these women’s circumstances and specific strategies should be made by local governments to increase rural women’s marketing capacity.

4.3.12 Migration

Migration from rural areas is increasingly becoming an important livelihood strategy. It often occurs because of lack of economic opportunities, land shortages and poor infrastructure in rural areas, perceived better employment prospects elsewhere and improved communication (FAO, 2010). Although data is sparse and trends are not well documented, migration patterns seem to have gender characteristics, with men migrating more frequently than women, especially internationally. As confirmed by the women’s narratives, 27% of the interviewed females stated that rural–urban migration resulted in female headship in their households. It was stated that the husbands migrated to urban areas where there are more economic activities and hence higher chances of getting jobs. Therefore, in this village, despite the proliferation of myths regarding the feminization of migration (Quisumbing, 2014); there is no evidence that the proportion of females migrating locally, regionally or internationally has increased.

Moving out of the village is not easy for these women who have lives rooted in the village. Nkanyeziyethu, a 17 year old bright girl said:

“I only managed to go as far as Form 4 last year in 2016. I wrote my exams for 8 subjects and passed them all with high grades but because of my three siblings that I take care of since our parent passed away I cannot move to the city to my uncle who wants to educate me further. My uncle said he can enrol me at a College to learn a trade, I would have loved to do an Accounting course, but my

uncle said he can only take me alone as he also has a big family. There is no College here to learn a trade and I cannot leave my three siblings alone. I wish I had someone who could watch over them while I go and study in the city but I do not have anyone who can assist me with that".

Her promising future has been compromised by her responsibilities, which was a situation reflected in most of the women's reflections on the topic of migration.

However, with men it is a different situation as most of them migrate to urban areas to look for jobs to supplement their agricultural income. Even those with children, they simply leave them in the care of a female figure, be it the mother, aunt or grandmother. Findings also show that in case of a husband migrating to urban areas, the female head and the family members could not join the husband/father of the children. They take care of rural home as well as tend to the animals such as cattle and goats. For example, one female head stated: *"My husband told me that urban women do not have traditional norms and values like us. So he told me that I will be corrupted if I relocated with him".* Such thinking causes unnecessary separation of spouses.

The effect of migration on the employment opportunities and well-being of those who stay behind is not clear. Out-migration of labour from agriculture might reduce crop production and undermine food security. On the other hand, remittances may facilitate on-farm investment or relieve credit constraints that prevented farmers from purchasing key inputs (FAO, 2010). Significant gaps in knowledge remain in relation to the effects of migration on rural employment opportunities and gender roles (FAO, 2010). However, from the female heads who participated, only one out of three women has a spouse working across the border and she stated that her spouse sends her money for food and sustenance. The other two said that life for men who migrate at times is not good and as a result they fail to send remittances back home. Prisca said:

"In South Africa it's now difficult to get a job without a work permit. So men without proper documentation have to do menial work only and at times they are not paid well or according to the agreement with the employer, but they cannot take it further by reporting to the police because they too will be arrested for illegal presence. So at times they don't get jobs however when they do, they are paid poorly by employers who take advantage of their lack of legal documentation and exploit them. So in my case he sends whenever he can but it's not much".

Therefore, although most sources purport that migration is a long-term strategy which may result in the return of remittances to the rural family and is an entrenched feature in Zimbabwe (Government of Zimbabwe, 2010), the remittances are not guaranteed.

Moreover, migration has other disadvantages. High mobility of the population from the rural areas contributes to the high level of female-headed households in rural areas and temporary relationships in urban areas (CSO, 2010). However, in the end, these “urban relationships” are not just temporary. Migrants often set up second households in urban areas or places they migrate to leaving rural wives to largely fend for themselves until the migrant decides to return (ZDHR, 2003). When asked about their views on migration, one of the divorcees stated:

“My husband migrated to Botswana in search of a job. He called and told me that he had found a job and would make arrangements to send money to use in the home at the end of the month. The next time he called, he refused to talk to me and only talked to the children on the phone, I realised then that something was wrong. Whenever he calls, if I pick the call he drops the call and only speaks if one of the children picks the call. Apparently he is now engaged with another woman there that is how our union ended. Now I wish I had not agreed to his move, it has cost me more, losing my husband and still he no longer supports his children here. He now works for his new found family there”.

Another divorcee, Luthando said:

“My husband also established a second family in South Africa when he left us to search for a job. He married a South African woman there in order to get an accompanying spouse permit. That is why he left me; he said to me he had no other option”.

This suggests that migration contributes to high divorce rates. It should be noted that in this community, divorce is mere separation as these women are rarely legally married. They have traditional marriages where only bride price has been paid. When the relationship ends, they view themselves as “divorcees” even though there is no legal process involved to nullify the marriage. As result of this situation, “divorce” rates are very high in this village.

Another element of unequal rights within the home can be noted from female heads with absent male spouses who still have a say on how resources are used within the home. Many male migrants usually return every few months, and major decisions (marriage, land use and sale) are taken by them. But participants indicated that this is not ideal since the female heads take household control on a daily basis and are more attuned to how best to spend money on priorities. A situation whereby female headship is not consistent, but is on selected periods is not healthy for families. For instance, the woman whose husband is a migrant worker and is automatically or only the household head when her husband is away results in many challenges (Hossain and Huda, 1995; Zarhani, 2011). Nolwazi’s words support this view:

“It is difficult to work hard and yet not have the final say on how money is to be used. Last year after our harvest I sold our surplus grain and my intention was to buy winter wear for children since winter was fast approaching and I know my children lack warm clothing. The father of my children was absent at the time at the capital looking for a job. He came back after I had sold the surplus maize and took the money saying it was better to use the money to fix his broken down car which he cannot even afford to run. He used all the money to buy motor parts, still it doesn’t work, while I have sleepless nights with children coughing because they don’t have adequate warm clothing. I am the one who takes care of the home hence I know which specific needs are there”.

This supports the notion that women are more likely to spend money wisely within the home (Harrison A. , 2014). Therefore, migrant men should acknowledge that by moving away, they no longer have adequate capacity to know how best money should be used within the home to benefit the family. However, most migrant men still maintain a position of oversight on the households they leave behind and women only have partial headship.

Generally, migration results in the drain of both labour and human resources which could have contributed to rural development. This partly contributes to increasing poverty situation at household level.

Sub-themes

4.3.13 Mourning traditions

In Manama village, widows are subjected to painful cultural practices and widowhood rites. Such cultural practices have physical, financial and psychological effects on their wellbeing (Tosam, 2016). The women’s narratives demonstrated the gendered nature of mourning rituals where widows are expected to wear black clothes for a year. This means that they have limited public participation. These mourning rituals do not consider that they have families to take care of rather they constrain widows’ involvement in business or income generating activities as they have to keep a low profile and basically live in solitude. Below, Musa explains what she went through:

“My in laws told me that I had to dress in black until the unveiling of my husband’s tombstone the following year. I only had one black skirt in my wardrobe, they had one black dress made for me, however I was absent on the day for the tailor to take measurements. Therefore, the dress is tight and uncomfortable, so I would wear it alternating with other clothes. One of villagers reported to my in laws and I was told I had to pay a goat as a fine. I told them that I do not have money to buy black clothes but still they did not consider that. I have only five goats, but I had to pay them with a goat and sell one goat to buy

material to have black clothes to wear. This pained me because I lost two goats. I am just a poor woman and could have used that money for other things. The colour I wear has nothing to do with the pain I feel for losing my husband”.

Ayanda on the other hand said:

“I had to stop going to the marketplace to sell beer. The family told me that I had to limit my contact with men and the public in general even for business purposes for a few months after the burial. We had nothing to eat and I defied that order and compromised my relationship with the family”.

What is sad is that such cultural mourning traditions marginalise widows and not widowers. When their wives die; nothing much is expected of men. This shows that patriarchy is deeply entrenched in this village. As highlighted earlier, women’s lack of time and restricted mobility due to family responsibilities remain barriers to their engagement in marketing their goods.

4.3.14 Abuse from spouses

Emasculated males were a recurrent theme in the women’s narratives. Some men fail to provide for their families because they are incapacitated by disability, insanity, sickness or unemployment. Emasculated men abuse their wives because they feel they have lost the male dominance as ascribed by patriarchy and try to reassert it through violence (Mukanangana F. , 2014). Participants indicated that dealing with unemployed men who feel emasculated is difficult. Nolwazi confirmed this, saying:

“Ever since my husband lost his job he seems bitter. He appreciates my contribution but he feels as if I might become disrespectful and forget my place, so he beats me up for slight mistakes. He never used to be like that”.

In addition, Nomonde concurred and said:

“My husband became the laughingstock of the village when he lost his job. He could not engage in manual labour like other men in the village, so they would laugh and tease him saying that he was being taken care of by a woman. His family too advised him to keep a firm hold of activities in the home so that I would not become wayward since I was not the bread winner. That changed him, he became physically abusive and at times I get beaten without knowing what wrong I have done”.

Gender-based violence manifests itself in a number of ways such as domestic violence, physical violence, sexual violence and psychological violence to mention but a few (Mutanda, 2015). The tradition of patriarchal control of marital decisions and resources gives men the right to use ultimate force or violence to enact control (Thobejane T. D.,

2015). Moreover, domestic violence confirms that women are victims of sexist oppression. According to the women's narratives; some of the women still have conservative ideas about their position within a marriage. For instance, some believe that the husband should make all major decisions and that a woman should seek permission to engage in any form of work. However, physical abuse is the most dominant form of abuse according to the women and it should be dealt with in order for communities to be safer and peaceful.

4.3.15 Abuse from in laws

Some respondents highlighted abuse from in laws as part of their day to day challenge. For instance, Angeline said:

“My mother in law and sisters in law always blame me for the breakup of my marriage with my ex-husband. They say I drove him away by my wickedness; it hurts me to the core since I tried everything to save my marriage. I try and limit my interaction with them, but because of the children I cannot shut them out of our lives. They leave me demoralised every time”.

Ntombizodwa also added: *“My in laws blame me for the condition of my youngest child who is crippled. They say I have bad genes and I caused it. They say in their family there is no history of disability so only I could have caused it”.* Nomonde also said:

“My in laws sabotage every business I try to start, when I started petty trading they would just come home and take some of my vegetables for sale. I tried buying and selling second hand clothes they would come and take without paying, whenever I complained they would say after all the money I used is their son's money that he left”.

These unhealthy relationships with in laws demoralise these women and even affect their performance in providing sustenance for their families.

4.4 Causes of the higher prevalence of poverty amongst female headed households in the village

4.4.1 Economic situation

The economic crisis which started in Zimbabwe in the year 2000 continues worsen. There is a cash crisis and shortage of basic commodities. The economic situation in Manama village is also unpleasant as the main source of income, namely subsistence farming and mining, are no longer viable. Most Zimbabweans have been living under trying circumstances for the past two decades. In addition to an increasingly volatile political situation, they have had to endure the virtual collapse of the national economy, record high unemployment, increasing poverty and a cash crisis (J.Rurinda, 2014). The country's economic collapse decimated

livelihoods and savings of most households. Rural areas like Manama village are the epicentre of malnutrition and poverty as they have no safety nets to cushion residents against such disasters. Female headed households are especially affected as they have little capacity to survive adverse shocks. They remain highly vulnerable to poverty (Tawodzera, 2012).

The following sentiments expressed by the female heads support these facts. Luthando stated:

“When money started devaluating around 2008 to 2009 I had no idea of what was happening. I did not know that it was a bad time to sell. I sold one of my few cows and saved money in order to pay for school fees and fix our leaking roof among other things, only to find out when I got to town that the money I had lost value. I was told I could only buy a few groceries. Imagine selling a whole cow which is about USD\$300 and being told that you can only buy groceries. It was unbelievable. Now it seems to be a bit stable but I am afraid it might happen again”.

Ayanda who is a widow, collects a supporting spouse government pension for her husband who worked for years in the army. She said:

“I also had a similar experience. Every month I go to the bank to collect my widow pension, but the USD\$100 I get used to cover a lot of things in the home. But because of price hikes and what people call devaluation of money, which I do not understand, with every passing year my money buys less and less of provisions in the home. We go without basics such as laundry soap; sugar and relish at times, considering that we are nine in our family. It is the situation in the country that causes this, but I do not know how it works”.

Changes in the economy are affecting everyone, but more so rural female heads who cannot follow the trends on money markets to see the performance of the US dollar to decide when to sell and know when it is not wise to sell. Due to a combination of lack of knowledge on how to handle the economic challenges they face and on what is happening on the broader national economy, these female heads have a higher incidence and prevalence of poverty.

4.4.2 Constrained mobility

On closer analysis, what hinders women from migrating in search of better opportunities is their suffering from more pronounced time and mobility constraints (Stephen, 2015). Children and dependants hold them back, and this negatively impacts on the income for their households. Prisca who has three children and one niece under her care said:

“The government had a program in January this year (2017) which targeted female heads for training in mining and business. It was a fully funded program and afterward those trained would be assisted to start their business. I was interested but I could not participate because the training was in Bulawayo for three weeks. My children depend on me for everything, they are still young and I cannot entrust them to the care of my neighbours for a long time. So I missed that opportunity. My heart hurts when I think about it because I know it would have improved my opportunities to engage in meaningful business. At times being a mother is difficult”.

Such situations are beyond the control of these women.

Caregiving roles deny these female heads the ability to move freely and conduct business at a larger scale to boost their capacity to provide for their dependants. Sandile, a female head with four children and two children stated:

“I have a friend who does cross border trading. She said she can help me by sponsoring my first trip to Tanzania to order materials for retail. This was going to be way better than struggling with my petty trade here in the village. However, my oldest child who passed away left two young children and one of them is sickly, she tested positive for HIV. My other children are in secondary school and the last born in primary school. So I had to forfeit that business opportunity because I cannot leave my two grandchildren with my older sons. They wouldn’t be able to take care of this sickly one and the baby. I wish I had someone to relieve me of my caregiving role temporarily to start my business but I do not have any relative in this village. The other women I am close to are also struggling with their responsibilities”.

Thus for caregivers, the reality of their lives is more difficult compared to that of men.

4.4.3 Lack of collateral to secure credit

Due to socialisation, most female heads have a profound fear to venture into business since it is viewed as a “manly” activity. Women often feel inadequate. For instance, a Community Development Worker who participated in key informant interviews stated:

“The government launched women in mining empowerment programme to increase women’s participation in mining and boost their capacity to provide for their families. After training, each woman would be given a mining claim on a lease and be funded to start operations. It was a lucrative deal, but most of the female heads did not even enrol. They believe that is a man’s field and they cannot succeed in that field”.

Such perceptions are fed by socialisation which limits women to certain socially constructed gender roles.

As such, women are left behind. Of the eleven female heads, only one, Prisca, applied to go for the mining training but failed because of her caregiving duties at home. The other ten expressed similar comments on this initiative which show that they do not believe they could learn and excel in a new field. Nkanyeziyethu said:

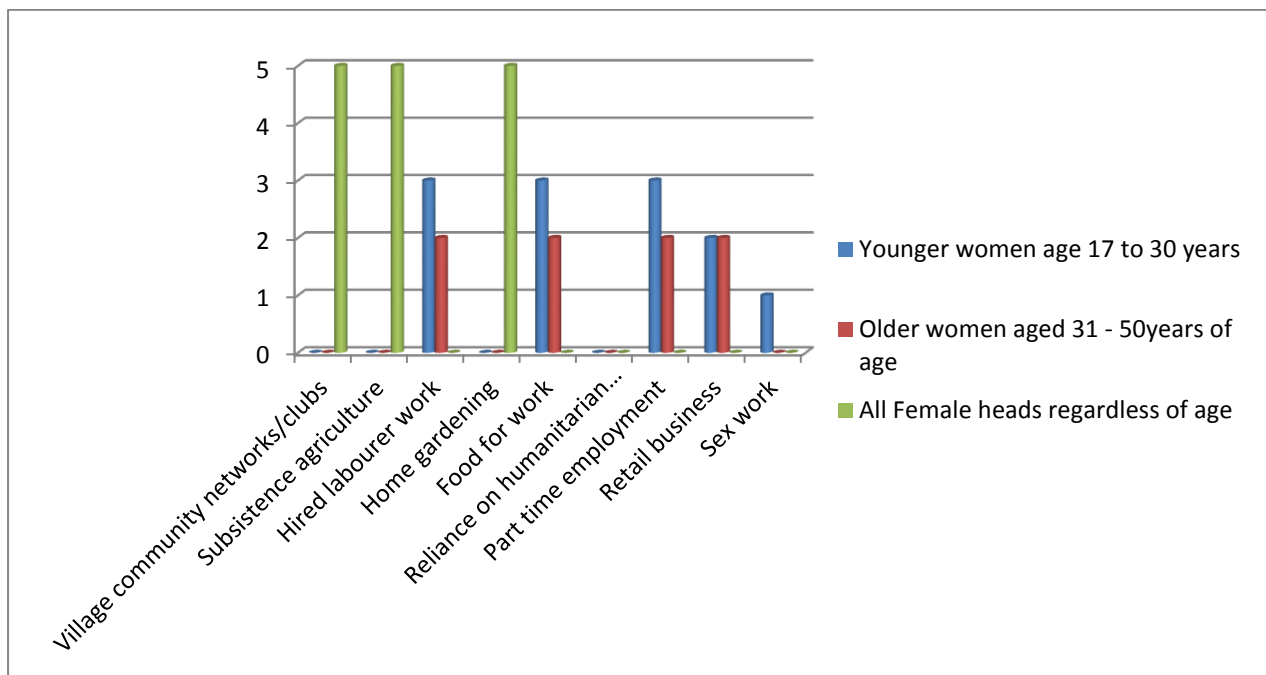
“Mining seems difficult I do not think I could learn and master it. I have seen small time gold panners working, it is back breaking work. The government people said it is not the same they will teach us, but I do not believe them”.

Musa said: *“They should invite men to participate; I feel they want us as women to join so that they can take advantage of our ignorance. Let them fund our petty trade or bring other projects like sewing”.* Sandile supported this notion, saying: *“Mining has always been a man’s job. I have never heard of women excelling in that field”.* Thokozani also added: *“We are not interested in a trade that will make us relocate. Relocating is for men not grown women who have homes in this village”.* With those sentiments, the government initiative was dismissed. The researcher noted that it is because of socialisation that mining was shunned by most female heads as they felt it was men’s work.

4.5 Coping strategies that female heads in Manama are employing for survival

Female headed households in Manama village reported that they engage in a number of livelihood strategies for their households’ survival. The households were asked about their livelihood strategies and the responses are shown in the chart below. The following themes were noted by the researcher from the livelihood approaches:

Figure 4 Coping strategies employed by female heads



4.5.1 Village community networks

Informal savings and credit groups are widespread forms of community networks in Manama village. They are often an important means for women, especially poorer women, to build up social capital and other assets, as well as skills and confidence (Baden S. , 2013). Such groups allow women to experience and become comfortable with other forms of collective action, not least because they provide access to limited capital for engaging in market-based activities or for paying membership fees in formal groups (Baden S. , 2013). According to the women’s narratives, they have savings and credit groups for various issues from burial societies, grocery clubs, blanket clubs, kitchen ware clubs and business clubs in the village.

Women with a common need meet together, coordinate each other and make monthly contributions of agreed amounts which are kept as savings to be used for the benefit of the group members. For instance, a common goal could be to purchase blankets for households before winter, to purchase groceries for the festive season for each home or to have savings to cover any death that may befall a household which is part of the group. The women reflected a sense of enhanced autonomy through managing their lives and having viable community networks which develop their homes. Thokozani said:

“I have brand new pots and a lot of crockery because of our kitchen ware club. We are a group of ten women and we joined voluntarily. We started contributing USD\$5 per month per woman and after twelve months we went to a whole sale

store and bought big good quality pots, pans and plates. My home is now a proper home and I am proud of what we achieved”.

Sandile who was part of a club for buying blankets said:

“We were a group of twelve women and we contributed USD\$7 per month starting in January this year. It was not easy at times because I make very little money compared with the needs of my family, but because I had a goal I endured and without fail contributed for 6 months. We all managed to get three big two-in-one double bed sized blankets by June this year. My home no longer had good blankets, now even when visitors come to sleepover, I am not worried. I have enough blankets. So it was worth the sacrifice”.

Nolwazi who is part of a saving club for emergencies like death and sickness had this to say:

“We contribute USD\$2 per woman every month. We started last year in January so this is our second year. We have a rotating treasurer each year and whenever one has an emergency or death we cover expenses and at the end of the year those who did not claim share the remaining money. Early this year my son got seriously sick, he had a kidney infection. It was this club’s money that catered for the hospital bill and medication. I can proudly say we are not employed but we have medical aid and funeral cover just like those fancy working women”.

There was noticeable pride as a result of self-accomplishment in the sentiments of these female heads. It should be noted that these women although they are poor and marginalised from most bank credit schemes due to being “high risk” because they lack collateral security; they are money wise and can solve their problems. They are active women who have practical solutions for their challenges as acknowledged by the African feminist theory.

However, these networks have challenges such as inadequate information on how they can invest their money, inadequate leadership skills by network leaders and inadequate entrepreneurial skills by the club members. Nevertheless, the fact that these women are active needs to be commended.

4.5.2 Engagement in agricultural activities as the main livelihood activity

Study findings indicated that engagement in agriculture was a central livelihood strategy amongst the female heads in Manama village. The study participants engaged in both subsistence farming and in home gardening.

4.5.2.1 Engagement in subsistence farming

The discussions conducted showed that subsistence farming was the main survival strategy of the female heads who remain the main providers of labour for farming in Manama village. It was noted that 64% of the female heads engaged in subsistence farming for the survival of their households. The main source of food comes from subsistence farming and they also sell excess products. Some female heads made the following comments:

“We grow maize, groundnuts, round nuts, cowpeas and pumpkins. Around our homes, we plant fruit trees. We also have small gardens near the homestead that are specifically for vegetable production” (Nomonde).

“As a family, we farm maize, groundnuts and vegetables mostly for family consumption. At times, we sell vegetables in the Beitbridge highway especially when we are in need of cash for the grinding mill. I usually ask my daughters and granddaughters to go and sell” (Nkanyeziyethu).

“As a household, we farm cereal products so that we can have enough to eat. I spend most of the time in the field from around 5 am in the morning. Otherwise, sleeping could result in hunger for the household” (Luthando).

The sentiments above revealed that female heads in Manama village depend on subsistence farming as a survival strategy though it is not sustainable to the households due to erratic rainfalls, inadequate agricultural inputs and shortage of labour. However, all things being equal, farming can sustain the lives of the female heads in Manama village.

4.5.2.2 Gender allocation of tasks in agricultural activities

Study findings indicated little gender differentiation. Various tasks were equally performed by different genders. For example, all the members of the household irrespective of gender got involved in activities such as preparing the field for planting, weeding as well as harvesting. However, it was observed that one gender was well suited to some tasks than the other. For example, women and the girl children did well in planting than men while men were more suitable to tasks that required physical strengths such as fencing the farms, digging compost and livestock manure and building houses. However, it was revealed that in households where there are no male dependants, females end up conducting those tasks. For example, women and girls would take the responsibility of looking after livestock, especially cattle and goats away from their homes.

In contrast to subsistence farming, engagement in home gardening was viewed as the responsibility of women. Supporting agricultural linked activities included going to the market to sell vegetables and fruits.

4.5.2.3 Age allocation of tasks in subsistence farming

Data analysis confirmed that in subsistence farming, tasks and duties were allocated depending on age. Children helped their parents and grandparents before and after school. Children of ages between 9 and 12, for example, were expected to assist in planting, gathering the weeds during weeding or applying fertilizers and manure to the fields. Children were also expected to engage in household chores such as cleaning the houses, cooking, as well as fetching firewood and water from the community well, whilst older household members are in the field. After finishing household chores, they would then join the rest of the household in the field.

Where there is irrigation, children are expected to help in watering the crops. Sometimes this involves the difficult and time-consuming task of getting irrigation water from dug wells. Besides irrigating the land using well water, kitchen waste water was also used for gardens close to the homestead. Households with adequate irrigation labour enjoyed a measure of food security.

4.5.3 Hired labourer work

Female heads in the study area sought manual labour engagements from wealthier or better off farmers in exchange for food supplies. This is especially important during times of crisis and droughts. When the female heads secured such engagements, they received assistance from their dependants to carry out the assignments quickly and move on to the next. However, such engagements were not assured and only served as temporary safety valves. The opportunities also came to the physically stronger women and therefore disadvantaged the relatively frail and elderly household heads. The following comments support the above finding. Angeline said:

“At times when we do not have enough food, we will go to work for other families who are better off. We make arrangements with them and they will allocate a piece of land for us to work and we will be paid with food. I work with my grandchildren”.

Ntombizodwa stated:

“At times we work as a family so that we finish the job quickly. When we have this food for work, my children do not have to attend school. They miss school so that they can help as well, because on my own, I will not be able to finish on time due to aging”.

Ayanda added: *“When we experience hunger in the households, we work for better families for a bucket of maize to be able to feed the household”.* This state of affairs condones child labour and children missing school. It provides temporary relief which creates permanent problems as the school performance of these children is negatively affected and could likely lead to a life of poverty as adults.

4.5.4 Engagement in home gardening

Study findings also revealed that engagement in home gardens was the second important agricultural livelihood strategy employed by the female heads. 35% of the respondents use home-gardens as a survival strategy. The home garden produce is sold in Gwanda Town as a way of maximising profits. The participants stated that vegetables and fruit trees are the most important plants for the home gardens. Vegetables that are grown in home gardens included spinach, tomatoes, green beans, cabbages and onions. Fruit trees such as mango, lemon and guava trees were also grown in these home gardens. The following observations were made about home gardens: Luthando said:

“Most female heads here in Manama village produce vegetables and fruits especially mangoes. We sell in the highway from Beitbridge and some even travel as far as Bulawayo to sell at the Egodini market place”.

Nolwazi added: *“Selling garden produce provides income to buy groceries and also to afford us money for the mill to grind our maize”.* Participants confirmed that products harvested from home gardens improved the family’s nutritional status, health, and food security and provide female headed households with income and animal feed. This helps the Manama community to achieve some measure of self-sufficiency because the female heads are able to take care of a larger part of the needs of the households. Another advantage is that home gardening is carried out throughout the year.

4.5.5 Food for work

Several dependants in female headed households at times are an advantage when it comes to providing agriculture labour. Five of the female heads who had more than five dependants confirmed these as shown by comments below. Ayanda said:

“I have a big piece of land about 5 acres and my family is big so during the planting; weeding and harvesting season we are all active including the children. We work hard and have better harvests than our neighbours. At times we sell some of our harvested crop to buy clothing or pay school fees for the children”.

Nomonde who has nine dependants supported this, saying:

“My family can manage to work in our fields and also work as hired labourers by other families in this village. At times we divide ourselves some work in our fields while others get part-time work in our neighbour’s fields at an agreed fee. So it supplements our money supply as they pay us once we finish the job”.

Angeline also supported this view stating:

“In our village some families have money or children working abroad, so they look for hired labourers to plant, weed or harvest for them. Since we are many we can provide labour for several families because we can quickly finish a job”.

Therefore, this shows that many dependants do not necessarily lead to more poverty.

Findings also revealed that some female heads were taking care of orphans left behind by relatives who have died. All the eleven female heads live with their siblings, children or grandchildren. Some households could barely take care of the needs of their dependants. The researcher engaged in field participatory research and could see the type of meals they had, the clothing of the participants and their dependants, the material possessions within the household and wealth indicators in a rural setup such as the number of livestock or poultry each female headed household possessed. Some of the dependents were malnourished. In the same vein, some households could not afford the school fees either for their children or dependants. This compromises the future of such children and many resort to menial jobs for survival. Some male children who had dropped out of school were encouraged by their parents and community members to engage in petty trading in Gwanda town since it is located on a busy major highway, so that they could contribute to the household’s income. Luthando said:

“My seven year old daughter actually gets more sales than I do, she is more active. When a bus or private car stops she runs with her salted nuts and sweet potatoes to sell to the travellers. I go with her because she is not attending school”.

It would appear that the poverty situation condoned child labour.

4.5.6 Reliance on hand outs from governments and humanitarian aid organizations

Study findings disproved the general notion that some rural based female heads relied on food hand-outs from the government, NGOs and also from middle class families. Reliance on food hand-outs is not a sustainable livelihood to the female heads as it is not always available. For instance, humanitarian aid organizations, such as Care, provide food donations on an irregular and unpredictable basis. In addition to not always being available, the protocol of getting food hand-outs is characterised by nepotism and corruption.

4.5.7 Reliance on temporary employment from different agencies

Respondents also indicated that they sought temporary employment from agencies such as NGOs or construction firms involved in activities such as building schools, clinics or roads. Although such opportunities are rare and usually favour the relatively younger and stronger individuals, they do provide occasional economic relief.

4.5.8 Household heads sanction child labour that compromises school attendance

Study findings revealed that the female heads involved children as important agents of labour, both in their farms and also in helping them finish off assignments they get in exchange for food from villagers who are relatively well-off. As a result of these activities, sometimes children missed attending school. This denies the children an opportunity to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty that their parents or grandparents find themselves in.

4.5.9 Involvement in large scale retail business

Study findings revealed that involvement in large scale retail business among the female heads was not a common livelihood strategy. The majority of the respondents were involved in small scale petty trading regardless of age. When interviewed, a few female heads stated that they make business trips to South Africa and some as far as Mozambique where they then buy groceries, clothes, kitchenware or even blankets for resell in their village and the surrounding communities. The traders stated that they target teachers in Manama schools, at the clinic, better off households or established farmers. The statements below support this finding. Angeline said:

“Trading is the most income generating strategy in our family. I make trips to South Africa where I buy kitchenware, blankets and clothes that I sell in this village. Trading enables me to pay fees for my children and provide most of their needs”.

Ntombizodwa added:

“If I have extra income from farming, I travel to Botswana to buy groceries especially cooking oil and washing soap to resell some of the products to households in this village. I cannot go and work there because I have a big household to look after”.

Engaging in business sustains the few female heads who are involved in it. However, due to lack of capital, most respondents could not participate in large scale retail businesses. Business trips that took the respondents away from home for a long time lead to social problems such as the disintegration of the households or child headed households.

4.5.10 Sex work

Only one of the eleven participants openly admitted to being involved in sex work. In as much as she acknowledged that it was one of the most paying and easiest jobs for her, she expressed regret for engaging in this sort of work. She said:

“I am able to take care of my dependents quite well. They do not lack food, clothing or any other basic commodities needed for their survival. Personally, I have moments whereby I am flooded by guilt because I feel what I am doing is wrong as most of my clients are married men. But when I look at what I am able to provide and the ever increasing needs that my dependants have, I feel pressured to continue. It’s a job which kills you inside, I feel worthless and dirty most of the times. In the village people do not say it out to me but I know I have lost their respect and in a community like ours respect is everything because we do not live in isolation like people in towns”.

Asked for further comments on whether she would stop if she found something else to generate income, she responded:

“Yes I would leave sex work without a moment’s hesitation and live a quiet life, but till then I will continue. The government once introduced us to an embroidery and tie and dye project whereby they gave us materials and we made beautiful things to sell at our major city Bulawayo. I spent three weeks trying to sell my wares, people would admire but say they have no money to buy. So I quit and came back home, where I frequently go to Gwanda town and meet most of my clients who are truck drivers and business men plying the Beitbridge-Bulawayo highway. It pays and for now I have to manage it”.

It should be noted that the motivation for engaging and remaining in sex work is to provide for her dependants.

4.6 Intervention

The government has not done much to alleviate the poverty within female headed households. A Government Community Development Worker had this to this say:

“The government knows the situation of the female heads in Manama village that they are living hand to mouth. In 2016 we had a programme to teach these women skills like knitting; embroidery, tie and dye of fabrics. The government provided the inputs and we had about 65 women from Gwanda rural as a whole and 15 specifically from Manama village which had the highest participants from one village. After training, the women started and in three months had marketable goods. However, when we assisted them in going to towns to sell we did not foresee that challenges of getting sales considering that these were handmade. They could have been an attraction for tourists’ not local people. Thus the women had poor sales, next to none and most were disheartened and pulled out of the process. So in the end we did not help them and we realised that maybe we should have simply funded the small businesses they already had

than start a whole new project however there are no funds in the ministry to do that”.

This means that the government needs to engage in a process of consultation first before initiating poverty alleviation projects in the rural areas.

NGOs that have been operating in the village are UNICEF, Oxfam, Plan international and Care. These organisations have promoted education and provided humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, at the time of collecting data there were no on-going projects. Clearly, the respondents were not dependant on humanitarian assistance as the researcher had assumed.

4.6.1 Conclusion - Analysis

The study findings addressed three main areas amongst female headed households in Manama village. These are: challenges faced by female headed households and the extent of their poverty and suffering, the causes of the higher prevalence of poverty and the coping strategies that these female headed households adopt. The overall analysis is that female headed households in Manama village face numerous socio-economic challenges. Moreover, they have a higher incidence of poverty and vulnerability to poverty because they lack collateral to secure loans. Their caregiving roles and the economic situation that is prevailing in the country constrain them from being effective bread winners.

Patriarchy is also marginalizing women in Manama village, the setup is patriarchal and female heads are not given decision making powers. Even without a male spouse, a female head has to have an older brother, uncle or father to approve the business or use of income in the home; or make weighty decisions about when or how to bury a child since the mothers are not consulted. Society dictates what women can or cannot do confining them to a small domestic space which cannot sustain their households’ for instance traditional practices like mourning rites that restrict widows from engaging in business for a stipulated time while they are in mourning. All these cultural practices marginalize women and add to their challenges as they fight to bypass them and face reproach from the community. However these female heads are not stopped by patriarchy, they acknowledge that they have society restrictions but decide to fight for a living even in ways that society may frown upon such as sex work or cross border trade. They are self-asserted, exemplary and goal oriented. The responsibilities they have move them to make this bold decision.

Financial constrains lead to inability to survive or recover from disasters and combined with poverty this magnifies women’s vulnerability to climate change undermining their ability to adapt. This was evidenced by the effects that the 2015 drought and 2016 flash floods have had on them. Both these natural disasters reduced their harvests and worsened their situation of food inadequacy considering that for most female heads subsistence agriculture is their main source of income. According to the women’s narratives such situations then

force women to rely on short term coping strategies such as taking loans, eating less, breast feeding babies for longer and reliance on food aid whenever it is available.

Most respondents elaborated on the centrality of marriage in their lives. The importance of male presence was an underlying theme which is line with the African feminist theory that the researcher utilized. The African feminist theory acknowledges that African women are not men haters and want to be equal to their spouses and still revere the sanctity of marriage. Stories of divorce, in actual fact “spousal abandonment”, separation and divorce were common but they viewed it not as a permanent situation but as a temporary situation that could mean a husband’s eventual return. Women’s response highlighted the importance of marriage in this community. The interviewed women expressed a need for active men in their lives as partners, good husbands, fathers and providers.

The argument that gender inequalities are not natural but social constructs was also noted from challenges such as abuse from in laws, traditional mourning rites, migration which favours men and how the double burden of caregiving and provision limits women’s access to opportunities. The argument that poverty is evolving and is more of a lack of rights than basics to human survival was noted as true by exploring how women’s duties affected their access to education; access to engage in large scale business and invest in their own personal development. It was also observed that female heads are constrained by their responsibilities, caregiving roles limit their mobility they have to work close to home regardless of fewer opportunities there.

Moreover, acknowledging and addressing the many significant interactions between climate change and gender inequalities is fundamental for the development of climate policy and adaptation strategies that are effective and gender sensitive and which do not further aggravate existing inequalities. Interventions that create greater awareness and understanding of the complex links between gender equality and the environment can help to build the capacity of the female heads, especially poor women to adapt to the impacts of, and take action on climate change.

There must be a move beyond a discourse framing women as ‘passive victims’, to framing them as ‘active agents’ with important and relevant skills, knowledge and experiences which should be harnessed in adapting to and mitigating socio-economic challenges. These female heads in rural communities like Manama are vulnerable to poverty yet they find ways to mitigate and fight poverty. The Focus group discussions with respondents indicated that if women are given appropriate support, they can take care of themselves and their dependents. Supporting women’s involvement in economic development should begin from a rights-based and not just from an instrumentalist perspective.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises research findings, makes conclusive analysis and recommendations as way of concluding the study on the socio-economic challenges and experiences of the female headed households in Manama village. The previous chapter focused on challenges faced by female headed households, causes of the higher prevalence of poverty amongst female headed households and their coping strategies. The chapter highlighted the dynamic nature of managing hardships related to female heads. This chapter provides insights for policy development, incorporating the discussions, conclusions and recommendations emanating from the themes and the subthemes that emerged from the study. The overall objectives of the study were met and research questions were answered based on the findings of the study discussed in Chapter 4.

5.2 Research tools

Similar findings were obtained from the focus group discussions, key informant interviews and field participatory observations. Different research methods were used in order to obtain valid results. According to feminist researchers triangulation of methods leads to better results (Hesse-Biber S. N., 2014). However, with documentary reviews, there were many similarities in findings when comparing mainstream literature on challenges faced by female headed households and the actual lived experience of female headed households in Manama village. Challenges such as lack of access to healthcare, ante natal care, education for themselves or dependents, assistance in caring for the sick, young and elderly are the main themes in studies based on the experiences or hardships faced by female heads. For instance, most literature cites social discrimination as a major challenge for female headed households (Chant S. , 2007). However, in the selected sample from the village, most female heads, especially widows and divorcees, also complained about discrimination from in-laws and being blamed for the death of late spouses or for failed marriages. Moreover, access to agricultural inputs is often highlighted as a major challenge for rural based female heads (Milazzo., 2015). In this village, most of the female heads were struggling to get subsistence farming inputs due to lack of funds and access to credit facilities for loans.

However, one difference was noted between literature and the actual lived experience of female headed households in Manama. Mainstream literature, especially Non-Governmental Organizations poverty assessment reports, depicts female heads as victims who are dependent on aid and unable to solve their problems (FAO, 2015). The research

findings of this study revealed that this is not true. In as much as NGOs such as Oxfam; UNICEF and Plan International have had programmes in this district; the programmes are not sustainable or predictable since they only run when funding is available. At the time when this research was conducted, there was virtually no NGO activity in the area, yet these female headed households continue to survive because they are not dependant on humanitarian assistance. On the issue of being victims, these women are poor yet active in the socioeconomic challenges they face and have several livelihood strategies which this research unearthed as highlighted in Chapter 4 and will be discussed in later sections of this chapter. Their resilience and activism has helped largely to reduce male hegemony, misogyny and patriarchy which suggest that women cannot succeed without the assistance of men.

Thus the four research tools namely focus group discussions; key informant interviews; field participatory observation and documentary reviews worked together to bring out the lived experiences of rural based female headed households in Manama village.

5.3 Recommendations based on the issues found within the demographic data

The demographic data was divided into the following:

5.3.1 Age

Female headship is common across all ages. For instance, the ages of selected female heads in this study ranged from 17-50 years. The study explored their challenges collectively as a group, and discussions were held with them all as one group. Similarly, on data analysis, the researcher analysed the findings collectively and a few similarities were drawn that split the group in two. For example, the women aged between 17 – 30 years were found to be more capable of taking care of their households and had higher chances of having a male presence even though less dominant and had less health problems as compared to the second group with women aged 31 – 50 years. Feminization of poverty, therefore, has been an increasing phenomenon among many female headed households especially in the developing part of the world (UNDP, 1995). It would be recommended that there be extensive education on unwanted pregnancies and safe sex in rural communities to reduce the percentage of young girls becoming mothers and increasing female headship statistics.

However, for the older women, it is rarely a choice. Literature suggests that it is becoming a common feature in many developing countries for women to be left to head households as men die due to various circumstances and high divorce rates due to migration in this village (Kang'ethe S. , 2009). Regardless of female headship being thrust upon these women by circumstances such as death, divorce, separation, absent fathers or abuse; these women are a part of society which needs to be respected and acknowledged for raising families and contributing largely to rural economies despite the associated challenges.

5.3.2 Education

Study findings indicated that most female heads were literate and had formal education. Education is a basic human right in the lives of females and its absence might result in poverty amongst the dependants (Horrell S. A., 2007). However, although most literature views the attainment of basic education as a means of giving leverage to female heads in terms of equal opportunities (Klasen, 2015); the researcher observed that just being literate is not enough. What is needed is not just basic education but trades or courses that can assist female heads to join the workforce and have a reliable steady income.

These females also need education at tertiary level in order to be relevant in corporate fields rather than engage in subsistence agriculture which is becoming more and more difficult due to climate change. If these women were to move out into the competitive world, they would not stand a chance in the job market where opportunities do not consider how unfortunate they are but only prefer those with qualifications. Therefore, these women need to be empowered with skills such as marketing or business entrepreneurship. This is because the researcher observed that inadequate education in many life settings informs the level of returns, remuneration of tasks and assignments, as well as promotion in job settings (Assembly U. G., 2016). Thus women empowerment in terms of information and skills is urgently needed in this village than humanitarian assistance.

Study findings showed that minimal or inadequate education is also a contributing factor in the feminization of poverty in Manama village since lack of tertiary training means that women cannot get good jobs or get involved in well-paying businesses. Baden argues that minimal education among women is a deficiency representing underdevelopment prevalent in many African countries (Baden S. , 2013). Baden also sees the gender gap in education closing in most parts of the world except in sub-Saharan Africa where it is widening. This researcher recommends that since education is a tool of empowerment and has a mentally liberating and economically emancipating effect to all, the government and NGOs should strive to provide opportunity for adult literacy education to women in the rural areas.

5.3.3 Poverty status

Most of the women participants were poor even before they started their families or had dependants. Their families did not invest in their education as attested to by some participants who said they only had primary education. Traditionally, in many African societies, girls are expected to get married and therefore become assets to the families that they would get married to (Harrison A. , 2014). This means that their development is dependent on the families they would get married to. However, with the current modernization and globalization trends, and the phenomenon of girl children not getting

married as was happening before, the thinking is increasingly being championed that girl children should be treated in the same way as boy children. Thus this research recommends empowerment of girl children through education.

5.3.4 Marital status

Study findings revealed that most of the female heads in Manama village were de jure Female headed households (without a male presence) due to death, divorce and separation or being abandoned by their spouses. In addition, study findings also revealed that although a few female heads (de facto female heads) had surviving husbands, these men remained the main decision makers in the households. These men could not be bread winners as they were incapacitated by unemployment. This scenario is not only a feature of Zimbabwe. In Lesotho for example, most female heads are de facto female heads or actual household heads in lieu of the permanent absence of their spouses /husbands or adult male members through death or divorce (Kehler J. , 2001). Regardless of being de jure or de facto female headed households, both face similar socio-economic challenges. The major difference is that de facto female heads have the advantage of having moral support from their passive male partners which de jure female heads do not have. The researcher would recommend support systems for these female heads from other male villagers (for assistance in male oriented tasks within the village); the community and churches.

5.3.5 Dependants

The research findings revealed that poverty seriously affected the households with more dependants, especially those with little or no stable income. Most female heads in Manama were barely able to take care of their needs because of the burden of taking care of many children and grandchildren. A larger family contributes to economic difficulties, low income levels, education costs, high costs of living, and immense household poverty (J.Rurinda, 2014). On the other hand, a larger family, especially in rural traditional farming areas, is also viewed in a positive way by virtue of more labour translating to bigger fields and harvests (Chant S. , Gender, generation and poverty. Exploring the feminisation of poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 6., 2007). This is the same thinking that prevailed among many female headed households in Manama village. This is a blank cheque of sanctioning child labour, child poverty and the passing of family poverty to other generations. Moreover, subsistence agriculture is no longer viable due to climate change. Therefore even with adequate labour and large fields, there is no guarantee of good harvests. The researcher recommends that these female heads should not view children as labour and should reduce the number of children they bear.

5.4 Recommendations on the socioeconomic challenges faced by female heads

5.4.1 Care giving for ill dependents

Most participants complained that they spend a substantial part of their time providing care to children, grandchildren, elderly and or other ill dependants. Care giving services have unforeseen costs such as buying special foods, medication, deterioration of caregivers' health as well as their participation in social networks (Kang'ethe S. , 2011). The deterioration of both human capabilities and the social capital due to stresses and difficulties involved in the care of especially people living with HIV/AIDS and other debilitating diseases is an issue most countries of the developing world are addressing through improving community home based care structures (Kang'ethe S. , 2011). However, care giving still continues to be a challenge in many countries of the developing world because they cannot afford external and professional assistance and therefore leaving women to provide care with little or no male assistance (Harrison A. , 2014). These gender discrepancies in care giving need to be addressed because of the enormous burden that women caregivers face.

The researcher recommends that government health departments embark on awareness campaigns and home based care training of men to assist the sick in their homes as loving sons, fathers, husbands or brothers. This will demystify the idea that only women are good at caring for the sick. Moreover, if male nurses take the lead in these campaigns, more men will accept such caregiving roles and relieve the burden that female heads have. It will help these men in villages see that caregiving is an act of love and not feminine activity as defined by their patriarchal socialisation. Having men as active caregivers will boost the productivity of female heads as they can delegate duties and have more time to be economically active. As mentioned in chapter 4, most participants cannot engage in cross border trade or move to the city due to being constrained by care giving tasks. In Lesotho, for example, absentee rates among female garment factory employees due to caregiving responsibilities have been rising dramatically and ILO/UNIFEM sent a delegation to Lesotho to review the connection between the care economy and formal employment (Harrison A. , 2014). Care giving is taking the time female heads need to pursue meaningful economic activities resulting in dire consequences such as the withdrawal of girls from school, as well as making it difficult for female heads to be active and productive in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy.

5.4.2 Lack of access to credit

Study findings revealed that female heads from Manama lack access to credit to finance or kick-start business projects. Credit programmes can empower women economically, socially and politically, as well as in the context of the family. Female heads cannot access credit as

banks consider them to be high-risk borrowers without collateral security. However, their community networks and clubs show that they are experienced on matters of borrowing and with cooperatives they should be able to access credit. Inaccessibility of credit lowers production levels for female farmers hence exacerbating female poverty. According to a report by UNICEF, the prevailing global economic conditions have made it difficult for banks to gain access to funds from international financial institutions (UNICEF., 2012) which would increase their capacity to extend funds to farmers at much lower interest rates. Moreover, the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe makes it more difficult as banks are cash strapped. As a result, agriculture, which traditionally requires both short and long term financing, is facing stiff competition from other sectors for the few available resources contributing to food insecurity in Africa (Baden S. , 2013). However, credit is not a solution for the poor as it can sometimes make their situation worse especially the non-productive use of credit can lead to problems in loan repayment. To improve the status of poor female borrowers, the credit funds must be invested properly. The researcher is of the opinion that the female heads, due to lack of exposure, do not know other NGOs or microfinance organizations that could advance them credit to strengthen their farming activities. Therefore, Rural District Councils need to create engagement platforms between these female heads and low interest microfinance organizations that assist farming communities so that these women do not fall prey to fraudsters or financial scams.

5.4.3 Abuse from in-laws

The study conducted in Manama village revealed that most of the female heads especially the de-jure female heads experience abuse from in-laws. Single women heading households encounter challenges when dealing with their in-laws as they endeavour to make ends meet. This is due to the patriarchal nature of African communities that do not approve of households headed by women and ultimately blame the woman for a failed marriage, divorce, separation or the death of the husband (Horrell S. A., 2007). According to the Marxist feminism theory, social discrimination includes class inequality causing female oppression, exploitation, discrimination and the patriarchal ideology which justifies economic exploitation of women (Hesse-Biber S. N., 2014). Still implicit in Marxist ideology, women have no place in the political institutions of the village, and therefore male presence is critical. This is why the centrality of marriage was a sub-theme of the discussion as society makes them feel that male presence is essential in a “respectable” home.

Although female headed households are called upon to discharge the entire social and economic functions of their male counterparts, their social status remains marginal and peripheral. This should change and everyone should embrace the fact that in today’s world, a woman needs a special place as a mother, head of a household, a business person, a bureaucrat, a leader as well as a contributor to her country’s Gross Domestic Product (Assembly U. G., 2016). Social discrimination though is not an exclusive feature of Africans.

In Brazil, social discrimination has exposed the female heads to a greater chance of being in poverty than male-headed ones (UNDP, 2011). Globally, various initiatives have been initiated to address social discrimination in societies. For instance, the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, reiterated the importance of these new options, drawing up an agenda to strengthen the status of women and adopting a declaration and platform for action aimed at overcoming the barriers to gender equity and guaranteeing women's active participation in all spheres of life (UN, 1995). The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and post-2015 agenda is also a unique sub-regional instrument that brings together African and global goals on poverty reduction of feminization of poverty within rural communities through targets and timeframes and Zimbabwe is signatory to it (SADC, 2015). Zimbabwe adopted a new constitution in 2013 recognizing the rights of men and women to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres (OECD, 2014). It also guarantees the right to equal pay and avoids all laws, customs, traditions and cultural practices that infringe on the rights of women. Finally, it calls for the state to ensure gender balance and fair representation of marginalized groups and promote women's participation in all spheres of society (OECD, 2014). Therefore, the researcher recommends implementation of the constitution, protocols and conventions to come up with strategies to assist female headed households in rural areas, and not just documenting and being signatory to them.

5.4.4 Inadequate agricultural inputs as a challenge to farming productivity

Study findings indicated that subsistence farming faced productive challenges due to lack of adequate farming inputs. According to a report by Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), some farmers in sub-Saharan Africa pursue farming amidst the challenge of requisite farm inputs. For example, in this village, the smallholder farmers especially women have pursued farming without fertilizers for many decades. This has had the challenge of lowering soil nutrients and therefore diminished crop production. This situation has also been responsible for starvation and hunger, both at household and national levels. However, this research recommends that the government of Zimbabwe respond with a national scheme to subsidize seeds and fertilizer prices, targeting female heads who are small scale subsistence farmers.

This strategy would improve food security at both household and national levels. In South Africa, the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa and Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council, have engaged in a process of transforming agriculture production systems, livelihood patterns and human development of rural farmers in need of support (Kehler J. , 2001) (FAO, 2015). The process, supported by donor organizations, is part of a broader effort to tackle poverty, create employment and build the capacity of local communities (FAO, 2015). The approaches are broadly referred to as Agrarian Transformation and Food

Security pillars of the Provincial Growth and Development Plan (PGDP), which have created programmes such as Massive Food Production, Siyazondla Homestead Food Production, Comprehensive Nutrition Programme and Integrated Agricultural Infrastructure Programme (FAO, 2015). Zimbabwe's departments for rural development and women affairs need to adopt such strategies to address agricultural input challenges faced by female headed households.

5.4.5 Shortage of Labour

The study findings confirmed that female-headed households cultivate less land, produce fewer crops and own less livestock than male-headed households. Female heads are also disadvantaged in agricultural production and food security, access to land and water due to shortage of labour. Recent studies show that labour shortage affects production in rural areas; for example, a study conducted in Botswana showed the reduction in agricultural labour time as a result of HIV/AIDS. The number of hours per week in agriculture was observed to fall from 33.6 hours in non-afflicted households to between 11 and 16 hours in afflicted households because of their care giving responsibilities (Kang'ethe S. , Gender discrepancies abound in Community Home Based Care Programme (CHBC) in Botswana., 2011). This is so because the female heads that provide most of the labour are constrained by their care giving roles. Therefore, the Zimbabwean government and regional bodies like SADC should take the HIV/AIDS campaign vigorously in the rural areas because most campaign structures in many countries of the developing world are concentrated in urban areas (Kang'ethe S. , 2009). With HIV/AIDS increasing unabatedly in rural areas where there is poverty and low levels of education, food security can seriously be compromised. The researcher recommends that social workers be at the front line in advocating equality in social services delivery between urban and rural areas. This will lead to social justice, reduction of female poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

5.4.6 HIV/AIDS and poverty

An analysis of the women's narratives shows that indicators of lower socio-economic position are associated with lower educational attainment, early marriage, depression, hopelessness and anxiety. Being poor to the point of having insufficient food and being hungry, or having hungry children in a household instigates a need among these women to do whatever is required to survive including disregarding their own safety and health. The relationship between food insufficiency and high risk sexual behaviours was further supported by one of the female heads who is engaged in prostitution and other female heads involved in extra-marital affairs. These women lack food security. While the proportion of participants reporting food insufficiency was high, it is in line with the World Food Programme estimates of the number of people requiring food aid in Zimbabwe as at 2015 (J.Rurinda, 2014) (Tawodzera, 2012). Despite the use of a multiple currency, the

position regarding food security had not changed significantly at the time the study was conducted. These results concur with those from other studies (Harrison A. , 2014) that have demonstrated a massive effect of poverty on risky sexual behaviour and/or on HIV prevalence.

Women's narratives suggested an association between food insecurity, socioeconomic position and HIV prevalence. Few studies have explored how food insufficiency contributes to the spread of HIV although the likelihood and plausibility of the association have frequently been discussed. A study in Botswana and Swaziland found similar results where food insufficiency among women was significantly associated with increased HIV risk behaviour although no biomarkers of risk were collected in that study (Kang'ethe S. , 2011). The influence of food security as a driver for adopting risky sexual behaviours among these female heads is important particularly in light of the high prevalence of poverty in Manama village. The researcher recommends the integration of nutrition and HIV/AIDS programming activities by the local authorities and health departments in efforts to reduce poverty and HIV/AIDS. In this study, the importance of food insecurity was increasingly observed as a variable of central importance in HIV prevention efforts.

The overall decline in HIV infection within Zimbabwe during a time when the levels of poverty, particularly food insufficiency and unemployment were undeniably increasing, challenges the idea that poverty was driving the overall epidemic trajectory in Zimbabwe over this period (Mukanangana F. , 2014). However, the observations of the researcher suggest that the poorest female heads, particularly those who do not have access to sufficient food, have riskier sexual behaviour and are at increased risk of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, it is recommended that programme planners within government or humanitarian aid organizations ensure that female heads made vulnerable through increasing poverty and food insufficiency are successfully and appropriately targeted. There are many practical and ethical difficulties in determining how to deliver food to those most at risk amidst widespread food insecurity. However, interventions will be successful with a high level of governmental support. Structural interventions that include cash transfers, vocational skills training and microfinance interventions could be considered important components of the poverty or HIV prevention strategies. The data collected suggest that targeted structural interventions that tackle social and economic constraints are likely to be critical factors in fighting poverty and HIV prevention programming and policy.

5.4.7 Markets

Markets are a challenge for female heads who want to sell their produce, vegetables, amacimbi (Mopani worms), embroidered materials and handmade mats. This is because lucrative markets are in urban areas and these women do not know how to obtain vending licenses needed for them to sell their wares in big cities or towns. Markets are crucial for sustainable development to be achieved and bring benefits for women such as sustainable

income, exposure to bigger and better business opportunity and provide an opportunity to gain insight and practical skills (Baden S. , 2013). Therefore, engagement in markets should be improved. It is recommended that the government decentralise licensing offices and give Rural District Councils the capacity to assist women in their rural wards get licenses in order for them to gain access to designated areas for trade in urban areas. Usually when women from rural communities seek assistance from Municipal offices in towns they encounter numerous challenges such as language barriers and the possibility of falling prey to fraudsters in big towns who can take advantage and rob them or give them fake documents.

5.5 Recommendations on the support systems available for female heads

5.5.1 Government safety nets as a support mechanism for female heads

Study findings indicated that although support strategies to help women are inadequate, there are some varied and relatively reliable sources of assistance for the female headed households. These sources include the reliance on families, the community and social protection measures. In Zimbabwe, one often quoted assistance government package during the focus group discussions is the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is a social protection introduced by the government of Zimbabwe to assist orphaned and vulnerable children from poor households with education (Horrell S. A., 2007). This safety net only accommodates primary and secondary school needs. In South Africa, safety nets for the needy children to get bursaries are important. For example, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and Social Development bursary packages have been alleviating poverty among the disadvantaged families (Kehler J. , 2001). However, these safety programmes in many resource constrained countries only assist a few people. For example, from the discussions with participants, it was observed that in Manama village, some orphans and vulnerable children are not assisted. In most of sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, government and NGO social protection mechanisms cover a minority of the population and rarely extend to households facing severe poverty. In Zimbabwe, formal social security systems declined in the 1990s as a result of structural adjustments (Essof S. , 2005). Therefore, social protection mechanisms cover only a few. It is recommended that the government come up with a bigger budget allocation for bursaries and scholarships to cater for disadvantaged children. For instance, the Presidential and other merit scholarships should not fund students at tertiary levels only but also young children from female headed households at primary level.

5.5.2 Reliance on families and community members for support

Research findings also revealed the role and importance of families and community members as source of support and hope for female headed households. In the absence of large-scale social welfare programs in sub-Saharan countries, most households rely on their

own resources and assistance from relatives and neighbours to cope with the effects of female headship. In Zimbabwe, more than 60 per cent of households resort to seeking help from relatives, friends and neighbours, particularly during hard times (J.Rurinda, 2014). As observed by the researcher in Manama village, women support each other by sharing basic commodities. It is common to see children scurrying from one home to another delivering parcels of foodstuffs such as maize meal, sweet potatoes, vegetables, sugar, salt and cooking oil.

This sharing is not based on friendship ties but on values of Ubuntu that are still strongly entrenched in rural communities. This is contrary to some literature which makes broad sweeping statements about Africa suggesting that most female headed households face hostility in their communities (Chant S. , 2007). Although it may be true in other communities, in Manama village the community is a safety net for these female heads. Although the extended family in the form of in laws can be passive and not offer assistance, the women participants do get assistance during moments of crises. Family and community safety nets are of greatest value during times of crisis. However, when the research was conducted, community help was less forthcoming as every female head is being affected by either lack of money, high unemployment, too much commitment in care giving due to the high mortality as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic or female headship.

5.5.3 Empowerment for sustainable development of the female heads

Research findings noted female heads requests for financial, educational, social and psychological empowerment. The empowerment approach is a digression from traditional social work practice and concentrates on liberating victims from their social problems. This enables the female heads to achieve their potential enabling them to have sustainable livelihoods as well as giving them a fighting chance against poverty. This benefits the nation as empowering the female heads has lasting results of these women investing in their homes; as literature testifies that women spend all their income within the home as compared to men (Chant S. , 2007) (FAO, 2015). By so doing, they invest in their children, which in turn is an investment in future generations.

Worldwide, there are three organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Labour Office (ILO), that are partnered to carry out an assessment of the latest trends on the gender dimension of rural and agricultural employment. These organizations are committed to improving gender equality, women's empowerment in agriculture and rural areas, strengthening women's leadership and decision-making participation with the aim of promoting gender equitable rural employment. This is also in line with SDG number 5 and 10 which aim to promote gender equality and empower women (FAO, 2015). Zimbabwe is signatory to these global goals; however, the researcher recommends further research on how access can be strengthened within rural communities. This is possible, for instance in

Cameroon, Madagascar and Niger, governments there have identified women as a specific target group in their national poverty eradication programmes (Assembly U. G., 2016). The researcher has observed that with strong partnerships with above mentioned organizations like FAO (which is in line with SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals) and strong political will, resources can be devoted to special projects for the development of entrepreneurial skills among women.

5.5.4 Counselling and psychosocial support as a support mechanism

Study findings also revealed the need for female headed households to be supported psychosocially to help them cope with the state of widowhood, being divorcees; being on separation or being abandoned. It is recommended that they get counselling to help them cope with their socioeconomic challenges and caregiving to the sick members of their households. Several sources of literature suggest the importance of psychosocial support to caregivers in order to reduce the stress of care giving and poverty that is associated with the care of people living with HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe S. , 2011). The researcher concurs with Kang'ethe by confirming that the female heads in Manama village need counselling so that they can function fully in implementing their livelihood strategies especially those that are going through divorce, separation or have been abandoned by their spouses. Counselling will help them heal, be happy in their homes, restore their confidence or self-esteem and give them the drive to work and take care of their dependants.

5.6 Recommendations on coping strategies

5.6.1 Engaging in subsistence farming as the main livelihood approach

The study revealed that subsistence farming was a common livelihood strategy amongst the female heads in Manama village. According to the women's narratives and observations, subsistence farming is an unsustainable livelihood activity due to erratic rainfall and other unfavourable climatic changes causing low production as well as the prevalence of hunger and starvation. Literature confirms that climate change, recurrent droughts, deforestation, increase in disease incidences and energy crisis, have continued to threaten farming communities in many parts of Zimbabwe (J.Rurinda, 2014). These factors also have had a greater impact upon women's farming life in Manama village. Subsistence farming in Manama village only becomes a sustainable occupation in the years when rains are sufficient. The scenario in Manama mirrors many regions in Africa which experience poor and unreliable rains, with some situations bearing hunger and starvation (FAO, 2015). With drought, low rainfall and increasing heat, the researcher recommends that these women move away from maize production which needs a longer wet season and venture into cultivating crops that are drought resistant or need a short wet spell for example sweet potatoes. In addition, these female heads with availability of government funding, could

venture into market gardening which requires a short wet spell for example tomatoes, sugar beans and vegetables to compliment maize cultivation and achieve a balanced diet. The women are aware that they can venture into market gardening but do not have the funding or the courage to change from the maize cultivation that they are accustomed to.

5.6.2 Engaging in home gardening as a livelihood approach

The research findings revealed that home gardening was an important livelihood strategy in Manama village. Almost every household had a vegetable garden and fruit trees in its farm for sale and to supplement their diet. The marketing of home garden products by rural households and small-scale farmers has been identified as a potential means of poverty alleviation in Zimbabwe (Horrell S. A., 2007). Although home garden production provides a small source of income, it is particularly important for poor households to afford food and to meet other basic needs. Notably, properly managed, home gardens can improve people's livelihoods and quality of life, reduce poverty, and foster economic growth into the future on a sustainable basis. Thus the researcher recommends that Rural District Councils should lobby government and mining companies to engage in local corporate social investment and any NGOs that want to operate in the area to contribute towards irrigation pipes.

5.6.3 Exchanging labour for food supplies

Study findings revealed that 55% of the female heads provided labour to wealthier neighbours in exchange for food. However, working for food could only be done by the young and able-bodied female heads meaning that the weak and the frail ones were disadvantaged. Moreover, engaging in temporary labour in exchange for food is not a sustainable occupation, but only a safety measure to relieve poverty stricken households for only a short period (Baden S. , 2013). In as much as the female heads in Manama village complained about unfair wages under such programmes; it assists them when there is no other alternative. However, the researcher recommends further research on how these women can fight for equal wages in a scenario whereby there is no formal contract and how labour law assists casual labourers in order to ensure that they are not taken advantage of or that if they take legal action they are well within their rights.

5.6.4 Reliance on hand-outs from government and other bodies

Study findings revealed that the female heads did not depend on food hand-outs from the government, NGOs and also from middle class families but accepted them when offered or available. Most literature links female headed households with reliance on food hand-outs as a livelihood approach thereby creating a picture of dependency syndrome (Milazzo., 2015). Since 2008, Zimbabwe has received food hand-outs worth more than 5 billion from emergency food organizations (Horrell S. A., 2007). Such assistance, according to the

discussions, is not regular; therefore, the female heads are not dependent on it. When this research was conducted, there was virtually no NGO or humanitarian aid assistance in the village, yet the female headed households continued to survive. The researcher recommends development assistance not humanitarian aid, as these women do not need hand-outs but need funding for their small retail, cash cooperatives, subsistence farming and vegetable farming initiatives.

5.6.5 Female heads sanctioning child labour that compromises school attendance

Study findings revealed that the female heads involved children as important agents of labour both in their farms and also in helping them finish off temporary hired labourer work. When children participate in labour, they forgo their school attendance and are in most cases exploited by those they work for. In essence, involving children in tasks that make them forego attending school, goes against the rights of children to access school and is against international labour laws. Nearly 25 years ago, the world; Zimbabwe included; made a promise to children through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to do everything in its power to protect and promote the rights of children to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential (UNICEF, 2014). In spite of the overall gains since then, there are many children who have fallen even further behind. For instance, in Manama village, due to lack of school fees some children cannot attend school. To meet these challenges, and to reach those children who are hardest to reach, new ways of thinking are needed.

In the light of the above, it is recommended that the government focuses its attention on developing innovative solutions for children's well-being by empowering their families or subsidizing the cost of sending children to school in rural communities like Manama village. This is needed since the prevailing economic situation obligates and demands that children get involved in working for their food and sometimes food for their other siblings (FAO, 2015). Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty that forces children into child labour (Horrell S. A., 2007). Worldwide, UNICEF estimates that 150 million children aged 5-14 years are engaged in child labour. The problem is most common in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than a third of children are engaged in child labour (UNICEF, 2016). It is likely that with the current economic crisis in Zimbabwe and Manama village coupled with feminization of poverty, more children will suffer labour exploitation. This researcher thinks issues of child labour's exploitation by these female heads, have not been adequately addressed through policy and administrative procedures. The government has not adequately invested in children in female headed households in this community. This is one of the things that must be done to ensure social justice.

5.6.6 Involvement in business as a livelihood activity

Study findings indicated that some of the female heads were engaged in both local and cross border trading. Cross border trade involves travelling to neighbouring countries like South Africa or Botswana. In spite of the dangers and other challenges that are associated with this business, some female heads who engage in it have been able to improve their financial independence and household security. Literature abounds which shows that business among women is growing around the globe and in Africa and in Zimbabwe in particular, women are participants through different indigenization projects (J.Rurinda, 2014). However, indigenization projects in Zimbabwe are poorly funded and are not evenly distributed to target all areas. Female entrepreneurs are also common in South Africa, Lesotho and Botswana to promote both entrepreneurship and also foster self-employment (Harrison A. , 2014). However, for the female heads in Manama, although their business operational horizon may be small and market unreliable, there is potential to expand in beneficial ways. This livelihood strategy can be sustainable if there are readily available and large markets. This links with the importance and policy recommendations to establish access to markets for these women discussed earlier.

5.7 Overall recommendations based on observation and documentary review of the situation of the Female headed households in Manama

Consistent with the study findings, analysis, conclusions and literature review, the following recommendations are made:

5.7.1 Mainstreaming gender in policy

Gender equalities must be promoted through mainstreaming gender and policy to ensure gender equality and possibly equity in many spheres of people's lives. In fact, redressing gender equality and equities is one of the goals of the constitutions of many countries such as Zimbabwe. The researcher also calls upon other bodies such as NGOs and the private sector to contribute to the campaign in favour of gender education. There is a need to bring gender-sensitive indicators to the attention of policy-makers as a step towards changing policies that are biased against women. Such moves, however, require adequate political goodwill. The gender sensitive indicators can include the increase in women's levels of empowerment or in attitudinal changes to gender equality and changing the social participation status of women or the changing of poverty level that affects women through policies and programmes aimed at women.

5.7.2 Efforts aimed at job creation

Employment creation in Gwanda can lessen the migration of males to look for better employment opportunities in urban areas. Rural household incomes can also be enhanced if government initiates poverty eradication projects in rural areas. Such poverty eradication

projects can provide jobs and incomes to a large number of rural household members who are currently unemployed. Poverty eradication projects can also be instrumental in enhancing rural infrastructures such as roads, primary health clinics and other community facilities. This will generate income for rural households and, at the same time, enhance a better quality of life for the rural people.

5.7.3 Agricultural extension services for female headed farmers

There is a great need to strengthen and increase agricultural extension services to play an active role in mobilizing vulnerable farmers in skills acquisitions as they change farming techniques in line with changing seasons due to climate change and as they venture into new crops that need less rain water. Such strategies include promoting labour saving technologies and low-input agriculture. Direct provision of inputs such as seeds and fertiliser for women will help to increase their returns in agricultural production and improve their livelihood and economic security. When women are targeted with resources, it is often assumed that the benefits they accrue trickle down to their children (Chant S. , 2007). This ensures children good nurturance and the avoidance of child poverty.

5.7.4 Equitable social service delivery

Social services by government, NGOs and even the private sector should be provided equitably across genders. This is because in patriarchal arrangements, females are always discriminated in the distribution and acquisition of resources from various sources. This explains the concept of feminization of poverty in Zimbabwe. The Department of Social Welfare should make sure that assessment for services to vulnerable populations, especially women, are equally distributed or prioritized. Social workers should strengthen their counselling services to female heads to enhance their psychosocial functioning and link them to requisite services. The role of social workers in addressing the state of poverty in rural areas is critical. This researcher, who is a social worker, believes that with optimal application of social work skills and interventions, especially as it relates to community development, poverty among the vulnerable women in rural areas can be mitigated. Support and goodwill from government is also critical.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study explored the socioeconomic challenges, experiences and existing livelihood strategies of female headed households in Zimbabwe through a case study research of Manama village in Gwanda District. The main objectives of the study were to explore the challenges female headed households' face, the causes of higher prevalence of poverty amongst female headed households and the coping strategies that they employ for survival.

These study objectives assisted the researcher to gather data that confirmed that Female headed households in Manama village face numerous socioeconomic challenges such as financial burdens, unequal wages for hired labourer work, lack of access to health services, higher exposure to HIV/AIDS infection and associated caregiving to infected dependants, inadequate agricultural inputs, climate change, lack of markets for produce and products, separation from spouses because of migration, abuse from in laws, divorce or separation and traditional cultural gendered mourning traditions among other things. These socioeconomic challenges lead to many other physical and emotional challenges. Moreover, female heads in Manama village have a higher prevalence of poverty as compared to male headed households. This is caused by lack of collateral security to access loans, shortage of labour, prevailing economic situation such as inflation leading to high unemployment as industries close or inability of government to allocate adequate funds from the national budget to assist vulnerable groups like rural based female heads and constrained mobility. Furthermore, the female heads employ various coping strategies such as local petty trading or cross border trading, engaging in hired labour work, sex work, seasonal amacimbi (Mopane worms) picking for sale, vegetable gardening, small scale subsistence farming and voluntary community cash clubs or networks.

In exploring the experiences of female headed households, the researcher sought to find out if the often quoted statement that “70% of the world’s poor are women” holds true in Manama village. The study observed how female heads survive without husbands. The study sought to find out what could be done to ensure that women are not left behind in development which is the core mission and spirit of the SDGs and to assess the challenges that contribute to the dysfunctions of female heads. These challenges also hinder sustainable development of the female headed households. The various concerns and difficulties surrounding the lives of female headed households in the study area result in worsening the condition of women, and hence validating the feminization of poverty among them. Some of these problems push the female heads to a crippling point impeding their full participation in other meaningful income generating work.

Female heads in Manama have strenuous lives because of unbearable workloads and are caught up in a vicious cycle of poverty. Patriarchy also has led to the marginalization of these female heads. The study clearly showed that feminization of poverty is a problem in Manama village as it has a high concentration of female headed households living in relative and abject poverty. The study also considered the support mechanisms available to female headed households to cope with life challenges or make their lives bearable. There are a few support systems available to the female heads in Manama Village. Entire households have strengths and diverse ways of survival when experiencing challenges. Family members were a source of immense social capital that brought joy, hope, and an assurance that their members will float together.

There was the application of various social work and sociological theories, for instance the African feminist theory which portrays women as capable of setting their own priorities and agenda and also as strong, innovative decision makers. The Standpoint feminist theory seeks to correct male oriented perspective that does not acknowledge the active role of female heads in their rural economies and the huge responsibilities they carry as family heads. Both these theories confirmed that the female heads in Manama village are active agents with important and relevant skills, knowledge and experiences which should be employed in adapting to and mitigating socio-economic challenges. Food insecurity is increasingly of central importance in HIV prevention efforts.

The aims and objectives of the research were achieved through qualitative focus group discussions, key informant interviews, observation and documentary reviews. The researcher managed to get the actual lived experiences of the female heads in Manama and this is situated knowledge as advocated by the Standpoint theory which insists that women's voices or the marginalized voices should be amplified. These women have to stick to their paradigm as marginalized women who are fighting poverty and the history of male andragogy that favours the cultural and economic advantages of men. It was also noted that there is need to think of specific and targeted interventions to assist rural women so that they can easily sustain their households as well as be important instruments in contributing to the country's Gross Domestic Product.

Contrary to mainstream literature on female headed households in rural communities; the researcher discovered that in Manama village, female household heads are not dependent on humanitarian aid and are money wise although not having financial or business entrepreneurial training. However, most of them feel that male presence would make their lives easier. This last aspect on the importance of male presence confirms the applicability of the African feminist theory as it states that African women are not man haters and still want men as part of their lives as equal partners.

Support mechanisms by the family, community, several government structures and NGOs have intervened in the problems of the female heads but have failed to produce adequate and fruitful results for these marginalised and vulnerable females to earn sustainable livelihoods. In light of the above, this research has managed to achieve its aims and objectives.

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APPENDIX A: Consent form

My name is Abigail Nkazimulo Nyathi, a student at the University of Venda, Institute for Gender and Youth Studies. I am conducting research on socio-economic challenges faced by female headed households in rural districts: The case of Manama village, Gwanda, Matebeleland South Province in Zimbabwe.

I would like you to participate in this study. Any information obtained from you will be treated as confidential and your names will remain anonymous. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may discontinue participation in this project at any time. Your decision to participate in this study will have no negative impact on your life or health.

Researcher signature _____ Date _____

Participant

I _____ have read through the content of this form and hereby voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

Participant signature _____

Participant's phone number _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B: Semi Structured Interview Guide & Focus Group Discussion questions

Interview schedule for women in Female Headed Households

I am a student at the University of Venda, South Africa (UNIVEN) doing a Masters Degree in Gender Studies (MGS). I am carrying out a research for my dissertation towards the fulfilment of the requirements for MGS. My Research explores the socio-economic challenges faced by Female headed households.

I am kindly asking for your assistance by responding to the questions as honestly as possible. The information obtained will be used with the utmost confidentiality it deserves and will be used only for academic purposes.

Thank you in advance for your time, effort and cooperation.

Biography

When and where were you born?

Where do you stay?

Where did you grow up?

How many children or dependents do you have?

What is your highest educational qualification?

Are you employed?

Experiences of Female Headed Households

What are the challenges you face, as a female family head providing for the family?

What is your economic situation, how would you describe it? If good or bad explain.

What is the extent of your suffering?

What are the causes for your situation, how did you get to this state?

What are your coping strategies that you employ in order to survive?

What do you think the following can do to help you?

- The government?
- Humanitarian aid organisations operating within your district?
- The community?

Has there been any intervention in your village to assist female headed households?

Do you have anyone else supporting you? Be it a husband; brother; father?

Do you have an adult male figure in your household? If so what is his role?

If not do you feel that if you had a man within the household providing your situation would be better?

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