Special Topic: Understanding Inequality

A Comparative Study of the experiences relating to childcare by lone parent mothers of African origin in Crumlin, Dublin South-Central and Mabelreign - a North-Western suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Third Year Special Topic Research Project

Name: Faomi Jocelyn Mothambazo

Department: Sociology

Year: 3rd Year

Supervisor: Dr. Eoin Flaherty

Date Submitted: 3 May 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is to express my thanks to my Supervisor Dr Flaherty for his support and guidance. I would also thank my interview respondents for their contributions towards this research project. My Sola, thank you for your encouragement and for being my pillar always.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the different experiences of lone parent mothers of African origin living in Crumlin, Dublin South-Central, in comparison with their counterparts in Mabelreign - a North-Western suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe and the problems being faced in silence by many African women in diaspora. Parenting alone is not exclusive to any particular social class, race, or gender and while a lot of research has been done on the topics of gender inequality, childcare, intersectionality and income/poverty, access to suitable employment and scarcity of childcare places for parents on low income, or the 'working poor', continue to further push lone parent mothers to the societal margins, especially for African lone parent mothers in diaspora. These issues may prompt other researchers to come up with possible solutions to help others in similar situations, as it is not unique to women of colour alone. According to O'Leary (2017), "research may not be the answer to our problems, but it can supply some of the data necessary for us to begin to tackle challenges we all face".

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine existing peer-reviewed literature on the topic: A comparative study of the experiences relating to childcare by lone parent mothers of African origin in Crumlin, Dublin South-Central and Mabelreign - a North-Western suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe. Secondly, it will provide an outline of the methodological approach undertaken and finally, it will discuss the findings and consequently draw a conclusion from these.

Crumlin, Dublin South Central is listed on Pobal HP Deprivation Index developed by Trutz Haase (a German-born independent social and economic consultant funded by the Irish government), as one of the disadvantaged areas in Ireland. Mabelreign used to be an affluent suburb and abode of many middle-class Zimbabweans of European descent but is now a semi-high-density area consisting of predominantly indigenous residents from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Despite the distance between these two locations (over five thousand miles apart), with each in its own global hemisphere (one in Europe and the other in sub-Saharan Africa), lone parent mothers from both regions may to some extent share many of the same problems relating to childcare. However, this study hopes to identify and compare the different ways these issues are experienced by lone parent mothers from both locations.

The world has become a global village; therefore, the economic events affecting the United State of America (USA) for example, would have a domino effect on the economy of the rest of the world to the detriment of

countries with weaker economic systems (Neckerman and Torche, 2007). However, the positive side of globalisation is the increasing ease of movement that afforded individuals to go and work in countries with better economies. Consequently, Zimbabwe's male labour migration triggered an entrenched system of female-headed families, as well as created a gender imbalance whereby women outnumbered men in local populations (Moyo and Kawewe, 2009:166), thus revealing how a nation's local and private issues may become a public and global problem.

Mills in Giddens and Sutton (2010:5) observed that many individuals do not connect their own life events to what is happening in the world around them. For example, lone parent mothers in Zimbabwe may not be able to apply that sociological imagination which enables them to be conscious of the gender-selective demographic transfers (migration) that may have given rise to their private social position, while their female counterparts in diaspora may not be able to associate these global events with the economic situation in their country (ibid; Moyo and Kawewe, 2009:166). Women may find themselves parenting alone in the event of the demise of a partner, through adoption, by choice (aided by a sperm donor), or through permanent migration, due to a marriage or intimate relationship breakdown (SP305 Lecture, 2020). Similarly, a study by Clark and Hamplova (2013:1522) identified giving birth before marriage and experiencing a union dissolution through divorce or widowhood as the two main pathways into single motherhood in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Ireland, the Central Statistics Office (CSO; 2016) reported 218,817 households with one-parent families registered, of which 29,705 were male and 189,112 female - more than six hundred percent the number of their male counterparts. This data revealed that lone parenting is gender-heavy towards women, a group which tends to be the most detrimentally affected. Unfortunately, an accurate comparison cannot be made for their Zimbabwean female counterparts due to the paucity of research and a lack of systematic estimates of the rates of single motherhood. Hence, Clark and Hamplova (2013:1522) remarked that "rather than examining single motherhood, studies in sub-Saharan Africa have tended to focus on female-headed households," which may exclude lone parents within these households.

The structure of society in Zimbabwe is phallocentric, legitimising the subordination of women. In some cases, women are exposed to a high risk of HIV infection and unplanned pregnancies, because of their inability to negotiate condom use, or to reject forced sex and non-consensual sex (Madiba and Ngwenya, 2017). Furthermore, childcare is often perceived to be 'women's work', with many females still believing that caring comes natural to women. Hence, childcare services (like those in Ireland) are dominated by a female workforce, as they are seen as offering a mothering substitute, despite boys also benefiting from having men as role models (Fine-Davis et al., 2005; Lynch et al., 2009:95).

Unfortunately, while marriage and motherhood in most societies in sub-Saharan Africa continue to provide a source of prestige to women and ascribe adult status to them (Ntoimo et al. 2019:149), single motherhood tends to be stigmatised, which may prompt some to relocate to other locations, thus geographically separating from their kinship network (if they reside far from home, or in diaspora). This results in fewer kin available to provide support; one of the most important survival mechanisms applied by lone parents globally (Lynch et al., 2009:108; Clark et al., 2018). This often leads to a reliance on others for childcare or relying on the services of centre-based day care services or crèches. Clark et al. (2018:2) observed that some mothers working in the informal sector managed to supervise their children while they work, but it was difficult for others to ensure their children's safety without compromising their productivity.

According to Wusu and Isiugo-Abanihe (2006) in Odimegwu et al. (2019:9) the traditional family in African societies is an institution that contains a heterosexual male and female with their children, as well as blood or marriage relatives. "In the African context, family is based on lineage, kinship and reciprocity" (ibid). Kimani and Kombo (2010) in Odimegwu et al. (2019:9) observed that women in Kenya faced hardship when they fulfil triple roles of being the mothers, fathers and providers, in order to fill the gap of their missing partners. However, Odimegwu et al. (2019:25) noticed a dynamic shift in family caring roles, as father-only households are emerging in some parts of Africa. For example, some

women in Zimbabwe, are now leaving their partners as sole carers for their children when they become economic migrants in other parts of the globe (ibid). And it is now becoming socially acceptable for fathers to care for their children upon the demise of their mother, a responsibility that was (by default) previously assumed by the woman's family, regardless of what the surviving spouse wants (ibid).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Literature

This literature review will cover four main topics closely related to this study, namely gender inequality, childcare, intersectionality, and

income/poverty. The topic on gender will explore the literature of Daly (2020), Lister (2010) and Fraser (1994). The topic on childcare will examine the contributions of Lynch (2009) and Connolly (2015). The third topic will refer to Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) and to Joseph (2019) on theories around intersectionality and feminism. Finally, the income and poverty topic will examine the writings of Giddens (1993) and Warwick-Booth (2019), to examine issues and theories relating to income/poverty faced by lone parent mothers.

Researchers have documented many reasons as to why one would end up parenting alone without the help of a partner, some of which are divorce and widowhood. Hannan and O'Riain (1993) in Bryne and Murray (2017) observed that having children at an early age, which is also another pathway to lone parenthood was associated with social isolation and psychological stress. And it is mainly found among some individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with low educational attainment and those with greater unemployment experience. Social class and race (in diaspora) have an impact on how children are brought up. For example, a single parent from an affluent background could afford to stay at home and raise her kids without any significant financial constraints and could also afford domestic help which enabled her to juggle family and other personal activities. In contrast, a single mother from a low socio-economic background would be restricted to precarious work, as well as being stigmatised for having children without proper financial means.

The family (of any kind) is vital for providing care and support to young children, vulnerable adults and older persons (Akinyemi and Wandera, 2019: 199), therefore, family instability and other negative processes would impact them negatively (ibid). However, the structure of this social organisation has been affected by several factors, such as migration, urbanisation, education, labour market economy, electronic communication and other developmental exigencies (Scott et al. 2015 in Akinyemi and Wandera, 2019:199).

2.2 Gender inequality (and the feminisation of poverty)

The feminisation of poverty calls attention to the fact that a significant number of poor households are headed by women (Chant, 2003:1). In Ireland, the Central Statistics Office (CSO; 2016) reported 218,817 households with one parent families registered, of which 29,705 were male and 189,112 female - more than six hundred percent the number of their male counterparts. This data revealed that lone parenting is gender-heavy towards women, a group which tends to be the most detrimentally affected. Unfortunately, an accurate comparison cannot be made for their Zimbabwean female counterparts, due to paucity of research and a lack of systematic estimates of the rates of single motherhood. Likewise in Ireland, there are also no peer reviewed statistics in relation to lone parent mothers of African origin in diaspora. Clark and Hamplova (2013:1522) remarked that, studies in sub-Saharan Africa mainly focus on female-headed households instead of examining single motherhood, which

leaves out lone parents within these households. However, Chant (2003: 1) argued that the data to suggest that women bear a disproportionate and growing burden of poverty at a global scale does not reflect the global figures that are often presented. Nevertheless, lone parent households continue to face numerous challenges today, some of which are poverty, childcare and work–family conflicts, the need for social support networks, difficulty in relationships with children, and child outcomes (Colman and Ganong, 2014).

However, the discourse surrounding poverty of lone parent mothers may sometimes put more emphasis on the parent, rather than on the children involved. For example, Alderson 2008:81 in Morrow and Pells 2012:910 argued that:

> In child poverty debates, children are subsumed under the umbrella of 'family' (usually narrowly defined as parents), and measures are based on parents' income or expenditure, with consequent recommendations that parental income through employment is the solution to children escaping persistent poverty. Within this paradigm, 'children are implicitly treated as "objects" and "products" of the system.

A rights-based approach (which views children as rights holders) may be essential for breaking poverty cycles (ibid). "It also respects children's dignity and worth, as social actors in their own right, not simply as means to an end" Morrow and Pells (2012:917).

2.3 Childcare as a hinderance to economic improvement.

Childcare issues are obstacles to working motherhood, compelling them to making a choice between family and a paid career. Furthermore, they are a hinderance for any parent of underage children, as one would not be able to engage in paid-work or other activities unless suitable, reliable, and affordable childcare arrangements are put in place (Bryne and Murray 2017). A significant amount of research has revealed that lone parent households experience significantly higher levels of financial difficulties than other family types, especially within marginalised communities and women tend to be the most detrimentally affected (Fanning et al., 2011) – more so, if they have low educational attainment, limited marketable skills, suffer from substance use, misuse and abuse and have been or are victims of domestic abuse by their non-live-in partners (Hannan and O'Riain 1993 in Bryne and Murray 2017; SP301 Lecture, 2020).

In the 1980s Zimbabwe overturned discriminatory policies that privileged only its colonial masters (the British) and other 'whites' to adopt a social justice and human rights approach to early childhood education and healthcare, whereby such services would be availed for free by all its citizens (Britannica 2018; Colclough et al. 1990). This is no longer the case as the sanctions that were imposed by America, Britain and the European Union have hindered progress causing unnecessary economic hardship to the most vulnerable population - despite its being rich in minerals such as, gold, diamonds, and platinum (AfDB 2019).

However, while the country is still benefiting from a high level of social capital within families and communities, and its citizens in diaspora (ibid),

childcare services (despite the unavailability of data) remain limited in much of the Global South where a significant number of workers are involved in the informal economy (ILO 2019). Thus, in many African regions, most people have strong community ties, and mothers often develop a reciprocal relationship with each other, hence they do not usually worry about childcare costs (as the children would be minded by some members of the community). Also, there is always a neighbour, a friend or a family member who will be willing to mind one's child/children free of charge, or for a token fee (if the child's parent/s can afford to be generous).

The ILO (2019) observed that in most cases women, sometimes make alternative childcare arrangements with domestic workers to care for children rather than using childcare facilities. Consequently, however, a review of survey data from 31 countries in the Global South by UN Women (2015) in ILO (2019), showed that caring for one's children while they work as the most common form of childcare among working women with the lowest incomes. Similar to the what is being experienced by African lone parent mothers in diaspora, UN Women (2015) in ILO (2019) also identified the scarcity of quality childcare services for children under the age of seven in the Global South and the prohibitive cost of these services as two major obstacles for working mothers - especially lone parent mothers.

Unfortunately, African mothers who are caring for children without the assistance of their partners in Ireland may not be able to replicate these familiar cultural practices of their Zimbabwean counterparts, as they would be unwittingly breaking Irish employment regulations, as well as exploiting other individuals by not paying, or paying them way less than a minimum wage (WRC 2021). For example, other women with children, students who need pocket money, undocumented migrants, or those who are documented, but may not have work permits. Such arrangements of working for another individual without pay may be misconstrued as modern-day domestic slavery, since many adults have household bills to pay. In fact, a report by Millar et al. (2016), highlighted that the level of family support network is an indicator as to whether one would return to, remain in, or take up employment, education, or training. Bryne and Murray (2017) also observed that the absence of extended family in filling in the childcare gap creates further inequalities of access for lone parent migrants.

There are childcare schemes that had been designed by the government to encourage labour market activation, reduce child poverty, enhance affordability etc., but they are oversubscribed (Bryne and Murray 2017). For example, in 2011 Pobal engaged with over 900 community childcare (non-profit) services and more than 3,000 private providers. The latter also provide 'free' pre-school places, which mothers reported have very limited available spaces and not all of these childcare providers are willing to sign up for the government's 'affordable childcare scheme' (Wayman 2018;

Bryne and Murray 2017). Furthermore, this overrepresentation highlights the financialisation and the commodification of childcare, as private 'expensive' childcare services outnumbered the 'cheaper' community care ones by more than three times as much. As a result, "early education and childcare are now much more a part of Ireland's economic and social life" (Pobal 2011), and is now being recognised for making important contributions to the child, the family, community, society and the economy as a whole (ibid). However, the same could not be said when lone parent mothers have to divert most of their earnings towards childcare, which may leave them with less money towards the upkeep of the very children they are fighting to protect.

2.4 Intersectionality

Intersectionality (Crenshaw 2019; hooks 2014; Collins and Bilge 2016) is a vital analytical framework and social research tool for illuminating issues faced by African mothers parenting alone, whether at home or abroad, as it exposes the multiple forms of discrimination such as race class and gender, experienced simultaneously, which they encounter within the Irish labour market, especially when juxtaposed with those experienced by their 'white' Irish counterparts, who may share the same experiences, but in a different and possibly more privileged way (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016; Joseph, 2019). There is research showing that restrictive policies around income thresholds and affordable childcare serve as obstacles to lone parent households that keep them impoverished, as they could be restricted to precarious work despite

(some) being highly qualified (Joseph 2019). For example, an ethnographic piece of research conducted by Marco (1992:2) revealed that lone parent mothers in low socioeconomic areas in the Global South ensure survival by forging networks of care within their communities, which function as survival mechanisms in an environment that lacks economic welfare. Hence, the norm of reciprocity would allow them to return unpaid and unregulated childcare favours, which in turn enable them to earn and fulfil their physiological needs - food, shelter, clothing etc.

In contrast, childcare provision in Ireland is heavily commercialised and privatised. It also requires providers to adhere to strict guidelines, such as having comprehensive insurance, ensuring child safety, hiring of experienced and trained staff, healthy food promotion, etc. The cost of putting all these measures in place would be transferred to parents by childcare providers, making it unaffordable for lone parents who may be on a single income, as well as those who may be above the income threshold that qualifies them for government benefits - e.g., medical card, rent allowance, affordable childcare scheme etc. (Lynch et al., 2009:108). While lone parent mothers in Mabelreign do not have access to these types of resources, their counterparts in Crumlin may have greater difficulties in accessing them.

2.5 Access to employment/income:

Daly (2020:82) stated that, "access to employment is one of the most important dimensions of economic status, income level and financial well-being." But lone parents have a lower employment participation rate than their coupled counterparts. In 2016, 52.7 percent of lone parent mothers whose youngest child was aged zero to over six years were engaged in paid work, compared to 70.7 percent of coupled women (CSO 2016). Depending on the number of dependents that need support, the absence of a male 'breadwinner' would deprive households of the former the earnings of another adult (Chant 2003), thus further compromising the economic efficiency of women who are working, caring for children, and carrying out house chores (ibid).

Ireland is the fifth country on the OECD list for the most expensive childcare. Hence, many working parents are spending a significant part of their income on childcare costs (Fleming, 2019). For example, a couple with two children would allocate 27.8 percent of their wages towards childcare (ibid), an amount that may not be achieved by lone parent mothers on low income. Furthermore, the twenty-first century social model omitted the issues surrounding childcare of lone parent mothers in its assumption that encouraging more female employment participation is vital for the promotion of gender equality, and consequently would award them greater independence and career development (Daly, 2020:82). The notion that "work comes second to having children" is also a major factor affecting women's careers (Giddens 2006:217), for some employers

would discriminate against those who are pregnant or intend to start a family.

However, working parents are also encouraged to strike a 'work-life balance' – an equilibrium between working and life at home (ibid; OECD, 2021), which could be a difficult task for individual who are single-handedly working, caring for children and maintaining the household. Fraser (1994:598) noted that lone parent mothers suffer disproportionately from 'time poverty' as they may often have no choice but to work long hours, and doing otherwise would reduce their wages. Work does not end when the shift is over for these individuals, as 45 percent of working women are also providing regular care at home (Russell et al. 2019), which may have a negative impact on one's health and well-being.

In fact, Mulinari (2016) in Daly (2020:82) argued that, high female labour market participation rests on a very specific model of the heterosexual couple responding to the needs of the labour market. Hence, it did not consider that "in the labour markets of post-industrial capitalism, few jobs pay wages sufficient to support a family single-handedly", as many are available on temporary or part-time basis without standard benefits (Fraser, 1994:592). In addition, Watkins (2018) in Daly (2020) urged the promotion of gender equality in increasing women's labour market participation to consider women's needs, the conditions or quality of employment and other goals such as social justice or redistribution.

In contrast, women who are living on the margins in the 'Global South' have learnt to devise other ways of earning an income (Sweetman 1996:5), as they have been historically excluded from formal employment regardless of one's educational level of financial well-being (ibid). Similarly, African women in diaspora seems to be pushed on the margins, as they have no voice or the power to lobby their own management, government (in their host country), and international bodies that determine macro-economic policy affecting workers within and outside formal employment (Sweetman 1996:6). Furthermore, for the African lone parent mothers in Ireland, Joseph (2020:1) observed that, even though "Europe is a migratory hub; a milieu of intra-and inter-continental movement of people where every immigrant has to adjust to their new environment and access its socio-economic resources and status," people of colour continue to be considered after their 'white' counterparts, despite the fact that race, or biology has nothing to do with one's intellectual abilities or work performance (ibid). Ireland is not an outlier in job segregation. Giddens (1993:276) commented that 'blacks' in Britain (especially females) are overrepresented in manual work, care work, unemployment and are living in inner city areas that are least favoured by the 'white' population. Additionally, they are vulnerable to racism of one kind or another no matter how affluent they are (ibid).

In conclusion, there is a myriad of research done on the topics of gender inequality, childcare, intersectionality and income/poverty. The first

section has revealed how childcare is mainly a woman's responsibility. The second shows how childcare, which is significantly privatised, acts as a barrier for parents to engage in paid-work or other activities outside the home. The third section highlights how other factors and vectors of oppression such as race, class and gender intersect (at times simultaneously) and contribute to hardships experienced by single parent mothers (Crenshaw, 2019; hooks, 2014; Collins and Bilge 2016). Looking at problems through the lens of intersectionality demonstrates that these issues do not happen in isolation but are the results of global structural forces. The final income/poverty section displays how income is crucial to the development of children growing up in single parent households.

It would appear that the vast amount of research that has been carried out on kinship and privatised childcare within Ireland, overshadows the undocumented reciprocal childcare practices by some Africans within their own communities. According to UNICEF (2015), "across the continent, communities continue to rely on well-established family, and community-based care arrangements". However, the scarcity of childcare places for parents on low income, or the 'working poor', continues to further push lone parent mothers to their financial limits. Class differences are also revealed in the under resourcing of childcare facilities in disadvantaged areas (Phillips et al. 1994:473). For example, the average weekly charge for full-time childcare is €184.36 euros, while those on part-time bases would pay €109.98 or €143.02 for School Age Childcare (SAC) and

depending on their geographical location, the fees are higher in affluent

locations (Clarke 2019).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design and question

The main objective of this study is to explore the factors that shape

experiences of lone parent mothers of African origin living in Crumlin,

Dublin South-Central, in comparison with their counterparts in Mabelreign

- a North-Western suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe. A qualitative research approach was considered the most suitable method to apply to this study. And, in order to capture these experiences, semi-structured biographical interviews were conducted on four lone parents of African origins both in Ireland and Zimbabwe. Assessing these experiences need to put into consideration: the number of children one has, the amount and means of income available to them, available network of care for their children, etc. Barriers in accessing income (a domain of income inequality and poverty), such as childcare, gender and racial discrimination form themes and sub-themes that will be explored in my project.

3.2 The Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is a broad term that describes a methodology that focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand their social worlds and construct meanings from their experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 2011:8). Unlike quantitative research that collects and analyses numerical data in large quantities, it focuses mainly on images, thoughts, words and behaviour that can be observed (Bryman, 2012: 380; Thomas 2017:118; Denzin and Lincoln 2011:8).

An interview is a qualitative approach that can take the researcher on an adventure and may lead to an unexpected and interesting discovery in the lives of those he/she is investigating (Thomas, 2017:2). Gathering such data involves asking open-ended questions and listening to people's unique and interesting life stories; stories about their communities and

history. For example, whilst conducting a qualitative interview, other stories the researcher did not think of earlier on usually crop up and spark new ideas. Such ideas may serve as a base for later research or add to an existing one. Therefore, they should not be regarded as irrelevant, unlike its quantitative counterpart that discards materials that do not relate to the research (Thomas 2017:118; Pole and Hillyard 2016:3). However, even though data collected by means of qualitative methods such as case studies, interviews, direct or indirect observations, etc. is seen as subjective and may neither be replicated under the same or similar conditions, nor generalised, it does not indicate a weakness (Holliday, 2007:5), as the only goal of the study is to understand that particular study in great detail (Thomas, 2017:156).

Another research methodology that requires a qualitative approach is a case study (an in-depth investigation of an individual or a group in their social environment). This methodology may require the researcher to gather data from statistics (from quantitative data, even though they have a different epistemological view), interviews and/or from observations in order to understand the whole story under investigation (Thomas, 2017:156). The researcher is expected to research on the topic as well as identify his/her target audience and contacts. One should always prepare for the unexpected when conducting qualitative research as well as having good observational and listening skills and also patience. Furthermore, in their endeavour to gather people's narratives and to have a deeper understanding of their perspective, researchers should be aware of their

own prejudice as well as being able to recognise how they influence their own research, so as to minimise bias (Mill et. al. 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). It was noted by Pole and Hillyard (2016:15) that fieldwork is about doing, and being wherever the social action is and one should take on board that it can be tremendously rewarding, frustrating, fun, dull, exciting and ordinary, because it is about life.

3.2.1 Paradigm most associated with qualitative methods of enquiry

According to Holliday (2007:5), "paradigm is a whole framework of beliefs, values and methods within which research takes place". Interpretivism (my approach to the research question, which is associated with the American sociologist, George Herbert Mead) is a paradigm that is most associated with the qualitative research method, because it believes that knowledge is socially constructed by individuals. Hence, there are no universally agreed explanations of phenomena. For example, reality can be seen the same way people interpret ambiguous images, or reversible figures (that can reveal multiple pictures in a single image depends on the viewer's take on it), meaning that there is a myriad of ways reality can be perceived (Thomas, 2017:110).

Additionally, Thomas (2017: 114) noted that the researcher in this approach "aims to understand the particular, contributing to building a framework of multiple realities"; in other words, it is interested in understanding how people construct their world, their connections to one another, what they think and how they form ideas about the world. Thus,

making the researcher part of that research, as they use their own interests and understandings to help interpret the expressed views and behaviour of individuals they are researching. However, the researcher should also acknowledge and put into consideration how his/her "positionality" (gender, class, social background, etc.) may affect the research (ibid). In fact, Bryman (2017:393) noted that "reflexivity entails a sensitivity to the researcher's cultural, political, and social context." Hence, I have to ensure that my position of being a lone parent mother who faced challenges in balancing work and childcare in the past, should not cloud my judgement.

3.2.2 Method of data collection and Sampling

Expensive and privatised childcare serves as a barrier to women's development. Thus, my main intention is to interview a small sample of African lone parent mothers in Dublin and in Harare, on their experiences relating to childcare. With the use of technology, I intend to gather such data - via Zoom video call and WhatsApp audio voice notes - by asking open-ended questions and listening to their responses regarding the study.

3.2.3 Ensure validity, reliability, and verifiable research

Even though data collected by means of qualitative methods such as case studies, interviews, direct or indirect observations, etc. is seen as subjective, it cannot be generalised, nor yield the same or similar results

when replicated. This does not indicate a weakness (Holliday, 2007:5), as the only goal of the study is to understand that particular study in great detail (Thomas, 2017:56). O'Leary (2017) acknowledged that it is a highly complex process providing accurate and verifiable research accounts when conducting research. However, this does not mean that an altered account of the research results is permissible. So, the researcher has a responsibility to minimize false or misleading results. They are also encouraged to admit their shortcomings and limitations and their research is expected to be reproducible.

3.3 Ethics and data protection

The researcher is expected to identify a relevant topic to research, as well as identify their target audience and contacts. One should always prepare for the unexpected when conducting qualitative research. For example, if the person being interviewed gets upset. In this scenario empathy is essential, as well as recognising the need to seek further assistance if required. The researcher should also acknowledge and put into consideration how his/her "positionality" (gender, class, social background, etc.) may affect the research (Thomas, 2017:114). They should also be aware of their own prejudices and presuppositions, as well as being able to recognise how they influence their own research, so as to minimise bias (Mill et. al. 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) and encourage validity.

3.4 Anonymity, Privacy, and Confidentiality

The Sociological Association of Ireland (SAI) expects researchers to honour and respect the privacy of those who participate in sociological research, as well as ensuring that their identities remain anonymous, whether or not an explicit pledge of confidentiality has been given. For example, when one is researching about transgender and the person feels comfortable sharing their story with the researcher, but not yet ready to disclose it to friends and family, revealing their name would cause damage to their relationships. The advice mentioned earlier also applies to all those who are closely involved with the research - e.g. colleagues and others the researcher may be have given access to such data (SAI, Nd; Marvasti 2004:137; Mothambazo, 2020: SO205). However, while I strongly acknowledge confidentiality as advised by SAI, as a novice I have to inform my Supervisor if a research participant discloses information that is immoral, illegal and/or unsettling.

3.5 Informed consent

Section 8 of Maynooth University's consent forms states that "the right of the individual to give informed consent is paramount whether research is directly related to the individual or to material derived from the individual". Accordingly, after explaining clearly the aim of the research and what it entails, the participants should be asked to sign a form giving their permission. They should also be fully aware that they have a right to change their mind at any point of the research.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore thematically, how lone parent mothers of African origin in Crumlin and Mabelreign experience childcare. It also analysed the findings of peer-reviewed literature that had already been written about the topic, and previously explored in chapter two. The study was able to connect a series of semi-structured interviews to the literature in chapter two, to highlight how the research findings may contribute to other studies. Kinship support; isolation/alienation; childcare; integration difficulties; discrimination, and depression are some of the themes that emerged from the respondents' interview conversations, which will be

explored and discussed. These biographical interviews were conducted on four African-born lone parent mothers, two of which are resident in Ireland and the other two in Zimbabwe.

Researchers have documented that the family is a vital institution for providing care and support to young children, hence instability and other negative processes would have a negative impact on them (Akinyemi and Wandera, 2019:199). Hence, people with the sole responsibility of caring for children find it difficult to engage in outside activities in the absence of other suitable childcare arrangements.

4.2 Kinship support

One major finding in this research in relation to a network of support structures for responding to childcare, is with regards to kinship. Kinship is very important in Zimbabwean society and other parts of the globe. In the Sub-Saharan region for example, the titles 'mama', 'papa', 'aunt', 'uncle', 'brother', 'sister', 'my son/daughter', etc., are not strictly reserved for blood relatives, as is the case in the West (Ntoimo et al 2019: 149; Clark et al. 2018; Lynch et al. 2009:108). In many parts of Africa, kinship is a social construct that extends beyond the bloodlines. And these titles symbolise the strong connections or bonds that strangers have formed over a period. In some cases (to a lesser extent) they are used as a mark of respect to the 'stranger' that one is having a conversation with. In fact, Lynch et al. (2009:298) have acknowledged the significance of the network of reciprocal arrangements between family members in shaping the space of family life for many of the children in their research. This is

also revealed in the findings borne out by Respondent Y (a Zambian mother of four) in Crumlin:

It breaks my heart to know that I'm practically raising my kids by myself without my family around, coz things would have been better if they were here. Unfortunately, it didn't end up that way, but I always make sure, you know, that two to three times a week I will Face-Time my family at home, and that is just my immediate family because I can't reach everybody else. You know, we've got other people in the village maybe they don't have access to phones or the Internet. So, the ones that I can, I always.

I just want the kids to know their family, to know where I'm from. I know it's not the best, but for now it's doable and you know at least they are familiar with the faces. They notice this is auntie, this is grandma, this is granddad, yeah and I intend to keep it that way until we are able to, maybe sort of, meet everybody when we can afford to have a holiday. If it was up to me, I would want them to go back at least once a year, just to see everybody. Just to, you know, to get a feel of who you are, because who I am is part of who they are. So, I'm always encouraging them to know the family (Respondent Y 2021).

The above conversation further illuminates the mental and emotional turmoil of lone parent mothers (which in turn would trickle down to their children) in diaspora when the structure of these social institutions are disrupted and forced to change by migration (Scott et al. 2015 in Akinyemi and Wandera, 2019:199; Kufakurinani et al. 2014:116). However, my findings also reveal that the importance of kinship cannot be underestimated, especially when it comes to their children. Hence, to counteract being alienated from their kin, many tend to take their children back home to meet their grandmothers and other relatives when they get the chance.

Ah, we all look forward to school holidays, it's that time we will be working everyday, because the children will be on holidays visiting their grandmother (Respondent V 2021).

These findings have also highlighted a vital role that social media connectivity plays, as it is being used by all these mothers as a social

extension for maintaining and sustaining these long-distance relationships.

> *I might be far from my people, but we communicate a lot on WhatsApp all the time. It's as if I have never left, I mean I am not there, but I know all the gossip and stories that are happening in my village. We have no electricity in our village, but internet connection is great, its only that data for video calling is too expensive. So, we talk or send some voice notes for a quick hello when I am busy.*

> *But when it comes to Easter or public holidays we will all go for the weekend, then when they close school I will take them home or one of my siblings will come a few days before the kids go on break, then they will leave the day after. I will be saved money during school holidays, but it is not really saving, because I will buy groceries and the bus drivers will drop it off, then one of my people will be waiting at the bus station to collect it. WhatsApp is very good, because even if any of my children want to misbehave, they know that their grandmother will give out on the phone -* she laughed *(*Responded S 2021).

Another revelation of the importance of knowing one's kinship which was not documented in the literature in chapter two, was strongly expressed by Respondent Y, as she did not want her children to unknowingly fall in love or marry their cousins. Marriage between cousins is encouraged by some nationalities. But there is an abundance of scientific research highlighting that having children with one's immediate blood relations carries a risk of inherited disorders. Furthermore, kinship marriages may lead to dissolution or severing of ties, thus reducing one's kinship network upon bitter divorce of separation. And, with the prevalence of HIV in that region (as was highlighted in chapter two by Madiba and Ngwenya, 2017), it would mean that the affected families that are involved in this type of union would be losing two of their immediate loved ones, unlike sharing the burden, as those who get married outside their family.

> *Family is everything, family is best, so I want my kids to know my family even if it's not physically, but you know, one day. I don't want a situation that one of my kids meet up with my nephew and they don't know each other, then they may start dating each other, so I try by all means to just keep in contact*

with my family, especially through FaceTime, and that really helps, and it actually makes me feel better even though I'm not physically with them and I will continue to do that (Respondent Y 2021).

People learn about their cultural norms, tribal history and beliefs strictly from their kith and kin through stories and songs. Hence, another important finding in relation to kinship was revealed in Respondent S's (a mother of twins) transcript in Mabelreign, as she expressed concern about the stories that were being told by her minder as entertainment for her children, that did not resonate with her own culture. Also, she was not comfortable with the fact that another woman has taken her place in assuming her mothering duties, some of which have storytelling as an integral part of it. In other words, the cultural identity of the children was being adulterated and replaced with that of the minder, since she spends more time with the children.

> *Ah, yes, my work has a major impact on my children. Sometimes I feel very upset that I don't have time to ask my children about their day or help with their homework during the week, or even have a chance to read them a bedtime stories or other things with them.*
>
> *Like most of the time I arrive home about 30 minutes after their bedtime. Their dinner that will be kept in the fridge, another woman (my next-door neighbour) will warm it in the microwave for them and she is also the one that gets the chance to watch them eat, make sure that they brush their teeth and then she tucks them in bed. You know all these little things that their mother is supposed to do. At times I feel like I am missing out a lot, because she does storytelling with them more than I do. Those stories are mainly folklore, and we are not from the same tribe, so it is her culture they are absorbing, not mine. I don't like the arrangement, but I have to feed and clothe them, so I must work, and I should be grateful that I have a job.* (Respondent S 2021).

Similarly, a sense of being alienated from one's children could be located is Respondent Y's transcript whereby she is greatly concerned that the minder has taken a large portion of her duties as a mother.

> *Like I work for four days in a week and that's during the weekdays, it's not the weekend. I don't work on the weekends usually unless if I have to cover somebody else.*
>
> *I'm always constantly at work so it's like, I don't have, I wouldn't say good relationship with my kids, but it almost feels like my kids don't know me anymore and I don't know them because, somebody else is raising my kids and you know I don't know if they're actually being raised in a good manner.* (Respondent Y 2021).

In the former's remarks, encouraging a 'work-life balance' - an equilibrium between working and life at home is a big ask, when feeding one's family is the intended goal (Giddens 2006: 217; OECD, 2021; Fraser 1994: 598; Russell et al. 2019),

4.3 Isolation/Alienation

Alienation is also another theme that can be identified in these findings. Hence, it could be assumed that both lone parent mothers in Crumlin (even though they are neither acquainted nor familiar to one another) are alienated, as they cannot fully integrate into the society of their host country. This was fleshed out in Fanning et al. (2011) when they used data from five studies of the 'Well-being of Children, Families and Neighbourhoods' to compare the experiences of recent migrants and Irish citizens living in disadvantaged communities. The research revealed comparatively low levels of well-being amongst adult immigrants, which was partly explained in terms of greater levels of isolation, lower trust and lower reciprocity, than long-standing, but poorer Irish residents in the same areas (ibid).

The issue of trust and the absence of a sense of belonging that was commented on by Respondent L and previously mentioned by Respondent Y, resonate with Fanning et al. (2011). The preservation of cultural values and beliefs constantly reoccur in the conversations of all the Respondents:

> *I particularly dislike the fact that my children have to be looked after by strangers. I am aware that they are trained and covered by insurance if anything was to happen. However, culturally the village raises the child from where I come from and I do not feel that I am part or that the society that I live in is a village that is able to raise my children with the same values and beliefs that I hold. If I tend to work, I have no time with the children as I have to work long hours to make ends meet. Whilst I am going to work for longer hours, my children's behaviour in school is greatly affected. My children exhibit defiant behaviour and have no motivation in relation to homework or even preparing meals for themselves* (Respondent L 2021).

Similarly Respondent Y:

> *Well, I would say […], the fact that I am from a different background as an African lady. Eh, not that I have anything against them, but it's, you know the whole culture differs. So, I may talk to them here and there, but you know they're not those kinds of people. No, they're not so welcoming some of them, that way, so you kinda always have to keep your distance, you know, it's hello, how are you sometimes. I've got a neighbour that I've been saying good morning to for years, and she just never answered. So, I stopped* (Respondent Y 2021).

However, she also acknowledged that,

> *I can't blame them because I'm never there, like they hardly see me, the only short time they see me is probably maybe once or twice a week, but then I would want to spend time with my kids. I don't want to have to go out there and make friends again. So, partly it is because I don't have the time, coz my life is built around the kids so as it stand (Respondent Y 2021).*

4.4 **Childcare**

A common finding is that lone parent mothers on lower income would be forced to opt for a cheaper informal unregulated childcare, when it is as expensive as it is in Ireland, as highlighted by Fleming (2019) and by the UN Women (2015) in ILO (2019) in chapter two.

> *Ah my children are being looked after by one of my neighbours who is a street vendor. So, when they finish school they go to her stall, she is the one who will check that they have changed into their house clothes, because if they are not monitored, they will be playing in their school uniforms. She also checks, they have eaten, she will also make sure the house is locked. When they finish, they will go and play in the vicinity, so that she can keep an eye on them while she goes about her business at the same time. Even if they chase around their friends, they don't go very far* (Responded S).

Fleming (2019) also stated that many working parents are spending a significant part of their income on childcare costs. However, Respondent V (a mother of two) who is also in Mabelreign and in a similar situation, found a very beneficial and unfamiliar arrangement, which can reveal that the same issue of childcare could be experienced differently despite some commonalities. According to Respondent V:

> *Childcare is not a problem at all. In fact, I am spoilt for choice. If I didn't meet the other mothers I befriended on the bus, in this community everyone will keep an eye on your children if they are playing on the street. I can even give a spare house keys to street vendors, they will open and feed my children then let them play near their stores. But those children will not be serious about school. That is not what I want for my children. My current setup is a blessing, because some of these mothers are teaching me, they are well educated, but life does not always take us on the path that we really want to go, but we can only try our best* (Respondent V 2021).

I have learnt from Respondent V's remarks that racial discrimination is just one of many barriers that prevents one from being hired within their field of expertise. This phenomenon occurring on a structural level in Zimbabwe, is the result of the economic sanctions, political violence, extraordinary hyperinflation, a collapse of formal employment etc. (Britannica 2018; Colclough et al. 1990; AfDB 2019), unlike in the case of their counterparts in Ireland.

For example, Respondent L in Crumlin remarked that,

> *I feel that childcare should be free regardless of status or income. If childcare was free, it would enable myself and others who find themselves*

*in the same position. I would be able to go to work freely and choose the right jobs that are satisfactory in relation to the qualifications that I hold (*Respondent L 2021).

4.5 Discrimination, and depression

It is safe to comment that structural forces beyond their control have forced both these lone parent mothers to accept employment beneath their qualifications for survival.

Correspondingly, Respondent Y also remarked that:

> Well, my dream job, I am a psychiatric nurse by profession. Eh, but I'm currently just working as a care assistant because I can't find work at the moment. I have gone for interviews for psychiatric nurse position, and I am unable to get anyone to employ me, for whatever reason. I'm not really happy because I know that I'm qualified for more than just a care assistant, but this is how the situation is at the minute. And, I have sent out loads and loads and loads of CVs. The thing is yes, I've been to interviews many times, but I just never got offered any work (Respondent Y).

It should also be noted that Respondent L is a qualified Solicitor with expertise in mental health, the qualifications she obtained in her home country, but unfortunately, she is currently working as a carer in a nursing home, because the interviews she attended did not yield satisfactory results. The above findings solidify the argument by Joseph (2019) on how people of colour are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of the employment ladder despite having the necessary qualifications for a particular job, even though Respondent L was not part of the former's study of "Discrimination against Black Bodies." (ibid). Thus, a barrier to accessing employment, "one of the most important dimensions of economic status, income level and financial well-being" (Daly 2020:82).

The findings also revealed that intersectionality is a vital analytical framework and social research tool for illuminating issues faced by African mothers parenting alone, whether at home or abroad, as it exposes the multiple forms of discrimination such as race class and gender, experienced simultaneously, which they encounter in their lives, especially when juxtaposed with those experienced by those on the top of the racial, class, and gender hierarchy (Crenshaw 2019; hooks 2014; Collins and Bilge 2016; Joseph 2019).

Childcare issues are obstacles to working motherhood, compelling them to making a choice between family and a paid career. However, in an environment whereby one does not get social welfare assistance, staying at home is not an option. Hence as suggested by (Bryne and Murray 2017), lone parents like Respondent V are using their own initiatives to help their situation.

> *Our common burden of after school care prompted us to come up with a solution when we realised that we had gaps in our working schedule, whereby we can all take turns collecting our children from their schools (not far from each other). We all live in the same neighbourhood. So, even though we are all strangers, our common problem has united us. And, in our community we do not worry about child abuse, because anyone who causes harm to a child will be dealt with mercilessly - mob justice* (Respondent V 2021).

Another finding that is scant, but briefly mentioned in Marco (1992:2) in chapter two of the literature was highlighted in the case of Respondent V, as she expressed joy for her experience with childcare. There is a myriad of scholarly literature that mainly focuses on paid private, government, and informal childcare, or other arrangements between kith and kin, but

unpaid arrangements between unrelated community members with mutual benefits or otherwise are not common (Lynch et al., 2009:108).

> *I would say that from the day we worked out a solution to our childcare problem, things are better for us, that burden has been lifted off, we no longer have to spend a chunk of our wages on very expensive after care. Furthermore, we all value our children's education, so we do not let each other down, there is someone to mind your children even if you want to go shopping or run some errands. It is extremely difficult for us single mothers living alone away from kinships* (Respondent V).

This type of arrangement could be very difficult to replicate in Ireland where one cannot afford to render their services for free (especially when one must "send money home to help other family members"), as many have migrated for better economic opportunities (Britannica 2018; Colclough et al. 1990; AfDB 2019; WRC 2021).

> *The services that I used for me to be able to work takes up most of my finances in relation to childcare. The latter then becomes meaningless to attend work. However, if I do not attend work, I am unable to perhaps have a sense of purpose in life which to a very large extent has an emotional impact on myself and the children. With regards to myself, I am demotivated and to a very large extent depressed. I am hopeless as there is nothing to look forward to and my interaction is now limited to interaction with the children. In relation to my children, they are deprived of the opportunity of me purchasing perhaps even a bit of food, the school meals, clothing and attend any leisure activities* (Respondent L 2021).

There are similarities and differences in the childcare experiences of all these lone parent mothers, but those in Mabelreign have more coping mechanisms than their Crumlin counterparts, the example could be exhibited in the following case.

> So, these exorbitant charges these organisations demand for childcare make our lives very difficult and causing hardship unnecessarily. The financial burden was just too much ah, now we can breathe ease, because our problems have been halved, we are paying each other with time instead of money that could have fed and clothed your children. Things are no longer the same, we are still facing other problems, but we can breathe, it's better now (Respondent V 2021).

A significant amount of research has revealed that lone parent households experience significantly higher levels of financial difficulties than other family types, especially within marginalised communities and women tend to be the most detrimentally affected (Fanning et al., 2011; Hannan and O'Riain 1993 in Bryne and Murray 2017; SP301 Lecture, 2020). This observation is borne out by Respondent V:

> *Em childcare for me is not just school fees and money for their extra lessons. It's almost like everything, from clothes on their backs, the food they eat and the roof over their heads. So, yes, a greater part of my salary goes to them* (Respondent V).

Similarly, Respondent L confirmed that she feels the:

> financial impact as childcare is expensive, I find it difficult to pay for the services on the income that I receive. I work as a carer and the rates are particularly low. They do not reflect the high rates that are required for childcare (Respondent L).

On the other hand, Respondent S reminisced on the structure of society that was described to her by her older siblings. This is no longer the case, as the sanctions that were imposed by America, Britain and the European Union have hindered progress, causing unnecessary economic hardship to the most vulnerable population, (Britannica 2018; Colclough et al. 1990; AfDB 2019).

> *Em, I would love and appreciate if our government would provide free education for all as well as free healthcare, because, am as I understand from my older siblings who were born way before I was born, they always tell me that these things were free back in the day, am, so many people were not always sick, because you could freely go to the hospital for a check-up if you are not feeling well, but nowadays am, because hospitals are very expensive, and not many people can afford to go to the hospital to get treated, they are now suffering at home taking homemade concoction trying to cure their ailments, because they have no money for the doctor or to buy medication.*

> *Em, same goes for pregnant women, one needs money to register for delivery and the money these clinics are asking for is too much. So, women are now giving birth at home, because they cannot afford to go to a maternity hospital, it is very expensive. Am, having your baby at home is no longer a*

41

matter of personal choice. It is the only option and a danger for some women and their babies who are dying unnecessarily. So, I think if our government could help us access those services for free, it will help us a great deal and making life better for us (Responded S 2021).

The Work Relations Committee failed to realise that some desperate cases are doing each other a great deal of service by filling in the employment and childcare gap, despite the connotations of some informal situations – in this case, two individuals in a desperate situation (WRC 2021).

Yeah so, my babysitter is from […], and I can't afford to pay for a more qualified babysitter. I can't afford to pay her the going rate, but at the same time I feel so guilty because what I am giving her is so little even though she said she is grateful, she has two kids herself and from what I am giving her she is feeding her own kids (Respondent Y 2021).

Chapter two explained that such arrangements of working for another individual without pay is discouraged, as many adults have household bills to pay (Millar et al. 2016; Bryne and Murray (2017), and in Respondent Y's case, their mutual agreement seems to buffer further inequalities of access for lone parent migrants.

Both Respondents in diaspora are aware of kinship childcare arrangements in their countries of origin which are impossible in their new environment.

Well, over there we, there is, growing up there is nothing called childcare, because we're all, it's all at community we all look after each other we look after our kids for each other you don't have to pay anybody even if when you need to go to work, or you need to go to town for a little bit you can just tell your neighbour, look I'm going this such place my child is here they would be happy to look after your child they will not ask you for anything, they would even mind the whole house and make sure no thieves come to break in and yeah it's, it's, just, that's the norm for us. And then when I came here obviously things change (Respondent Y 2021).

Another finding is that there are childcare schemes that had been designed by the government to encourage labour market activation, reduce child poverty, enhance affordability etc., but they are oversubscribed (Bryne and Murray 2017), therefore defeating the purpose as the affordable community childcare facilities are outnumber by the profit-oriented ones (Pobal 2011; Wayman 2018; Bryne and Murray 2017).

> *Right, ah, I would love if they could provide some sort of, if they come up with some strategy on childcare, As for instance say my kids the ones that goes to school maybe there will be some sort of an after school they can go to that is provided by the government for single parents, because we literally want to work, we don't wanna stay at home, we want to work, So, if that kind of burden is lifted off us that means we'll be able to at least, you know juggle everything else although it's hard* (Respondent Y).

Another major finding is that much research often make lone parent mothers' issues more prominent, thus taking out of the picture the fathers who are also responsible, therefore making poverty impact women significantly.

Since he, their father left, I would say that everything to do with these children is my responsibility as their mother. I am encountering so many problems and hurdles in my life journey, because I am not receiving any help whatsoever from the father of my children.

I have tried to pursue the matter through the family court, but to no avail. So, I dropped the case, as the process was too exhausting, I just got tired of it and in the end, I left it alone and I do not receive any assistance from our government either (Respondent V 2021).

Similarly,

[…] *everything is very expensive, and we've got the rent again, I'm literally just living on the overdraft really* (Respondent Y 2021).

This exclusion of men is expressed in the bitter response by Respondent S:

Ah, I will be happy again if our government would have strict laws when it comes to child maintenance payment, it should hold these fathers accountable for not paying and for abandoning their responsibilities. Even if it means throwing them in jail to show that the law is serious when it comes to maintenance payments. Because at the moment no one is taking it seriously or conduct a proper follow up on these things and people take it as a light thing, like a useless thing, that is why I find it heart-breaking. I just wish the government could strengthen these laws in terms of maintenance payments, so that fathers who don't come through with that payment are forced to come up with some kind of payment, which will help many mothers out there who are struggling with the kids by themselves, it will make things better for us (Respondent S).

Lastly, another finding is that the discourse surrounding poverty of lone parent mothers may sometimes put more emphasis on the parent rather than the children involved (Alderson 2008: 81 in Morrow and Pells 2012: 910), maybe if the child is placed at the centre of these issues, they could be resolved better.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown some important findings that emerged throughout the study of lone parent mothers of African origin in Crumlin and Mabelreign. The qualitative biographical semi-structured interviews have provided an in-depth and very important insights for this research. It has also revealed how the same problem can be experienced differently and how the child and the father who are both central to the issue of parenting alone, are often written out of lone parent mothers' literature.

The importance of kinship network of care has been highlighted and emphasised throughout this research, as it provides all mothers peace of mind, when they 'truly' know the person who is minding their children. However, it was also revealed that the law, insurance and mob justice (in the Global South) provide some degree of comfort, even though the

mothers were apprehensive about the safety and/or quality of their children's childcare services. Nevertheless, the absence of childcare, especially amongst disadvantaged lone parent mothers outside of the 'Welfare States' is a hinderance that plunges one to the depths of poverty, when one does not have some form of network of support of any sort.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Lone parent mothers who are unavailable for work are often projected as if their sole purpose of having children is to avail of welfare benefits. The research that shows otherwise in abundant. And, judging from the individuals in this research, the stereotypical assumptions in the popular media and political discourse surrounding lone parent mothers' limited engagement in the employment market, is absurd. These presumptions excuse the structural causes of their experiences, in this case the unavailability of affordable, adequate childcare facilities due to the commodification of these services. Secondly, the precariousness of the job market that does not pay wages that are enough to sustain a one parent household, which would lead to child poverty (Fraser 1994; Morrow and Pells 2012: 917). Thirdly, the gender inequality that is highlighted by the overrepresentation of women in caring positions in and outside the home (CSO 2016; Clark and Hamplova 2013:1522).

Finally, there is the structural discrimination that is skewed towards the stereotyping of people with certain characteristic (Joseph 2019; Giddens 1993:276), and the global inequalities that are exacerbated by outside forces, such as the imposition of sanctions that prevent the sub-Saharan region from trading with other countries, thus keeping lone parent mothers in that region impoverished (ILO 2019; Britannica 2018; Colclough et al. 1990; AfDB 2019). The inequities and the socio-economic status of lone parent mothers in Zimbabwe and of those living in diaspora in Ireland have been discussed in the literature review in chapter two.

Unfortunately, it is unwittingly assumed that lone parent mothers in diaspora (for example, those in Direct Provision, as well as undocumented migrants, etc.) also have access to relevant resources available to their documented counterparts, and the general population of Irish-born citizens. Furthermore, while there is also a growing assumption that working and non-working lone parent mothers experience greater financial difficulties, as well as being at risk of poverty than their coupled counterparts, lone parents in sub-Saharan Africa and in diaspora may have different experiences.

APPENDIX A

Consent form

I appreciate that you have allowed me to take some of your time in participating in my research project for Maynooth University.

My study is aiming to identify and explorer the factors shaping experiences of lone parent mothers of African origin living in Crumlin, Dublin South-Central, in comparison with their counterparts in Mabelreign - a North-Western suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe.

This Zoom interview will be conducted in two half hour sessions and with your permission I shall write notes and record our audio conversation.

The research conversation is confidential, and I will not give it to anybody. I shall not disclose your name or anything that will easily identify you, but I may share this information with my supervisor in that Maynooth University. All the documented information generated from our conversation will be safely stored and it shall be available to you upon request.

Taking part in this research is voluntary and you have a right to change your mind at any point of the research. You may stop me from recording or refuse to answer my questions if you wish to do so.

If you have any queries in relation to this research, please feel free to contact me on my personal mobile number which I have given to you.

"I have read the description above and consent to participate."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AfDB (African Development Bank). 2019. "Joint Needs Assessment for Zimbabwe: Identifying Challenges and Needs". The African Development Bank, the United Nations, and the World Bank.

Akinyemi, Joshual O. and Stephen O. Wandera. 2019. "Family Changes and Their Implications for Child Health Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Multivariate Decomposition Analysis." Pp. 199-221 in *Family Demography and Post-2015 Development Agenda in Africa*, edited by Clifford O. Odimegwu. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. 2018. "Southern African Development Community." Retrieved April 4, 2021 (https://www.britannica.com/topic/Southern-African_Development-Community.).

Bryman, Alan. 2012. *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: University Press.

Bryne, Delma, and Cliona Murray. 2017. "An Independent Review to Identify the Support and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education and to Examine Measures to Increase Participation". Technical Report. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.

Central Statistics Office. 2016. "Census of Population 2016: Profile 4 Households and Families". Retrieved December 1, 2020 (http//www.cso.ie).

Chant, Sylvia. 2003. "Female Household Headship and the Feminisation of Poverty: Facts, Fictions and Forward Strategies". London School of Economics. Gender Institute

Clark, Shelley and Dana, Hamplova. 2013. "Single Motherhood and Child Mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Life Course Perspective". *Demography* 50: 1521-1549.

Clark, Shelley, Midanna De Almada, Caroline W. Karibu, Stella Muthuri and Milka Wanjohi. 2018. "Balancing paid work and child care in slums of Nairobi, Kenya: the case for centre-based child care". *Journal of Family Studies.* 1-20.

Clarke, Allan, Aoife Cartwright, Ciara Flanagan, Ela Hogan, Enda Shevlane, Fiona Brennan, June Simmonds, Patrick Collins, and Peter Dowie. 2019. "Annual Early Years Sector Profile Report - 2018/2019". Pobal

Coleman, Marilyn J., and Lawrence H. Ganong. eds. (2014) *The Social History of American Family: An Encyclopaedia.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Colclough, Christopher, Jan-Ingvar Lofstedt, J Munduvi-Moyo, Obert Edward Maravanyika, and W, S Ngwata. 1990. "Education in Zimbabwe: Issues of Quantity and Quality". Stockholm: Swedish International Development Authority - SIDA.

Connolly, Linda. 2015. *The Irish Family*. ed. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé K. 2019. *On Intersectionality: The Essential Writings of Kimberlé Crenshaw.* The New Press.

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2011. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* 4th Edition. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Fanning, Bryan, Trutz Haase, and Neil O'Boyle. 2011. "Well-being, Cultural Capital and Social Inclusion: Immigrants in the Republic of Ireland." *Int. Migration & Integration* 12:1-24.

Fine-Davis, Margret. Ciara, O'Dwyer. Mary, McCarthy. Grace, Edge. Mairéad, O'Sullivan and Keely Wynne. 2005. "Men in Childcare: promoting gender equality in children". *The National Flexi-Work Partnership.*

Fleming, Sean. 2019. "These Countries Have the Most Expensive Childcare." World Economic Forum. Retrieved April 4, 2021 (https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/these-countries-have-the-most-expensive-childcare).

Fraser, Nancy. 1994. "After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State". *Political Theory* 22(4): 591-618.

Geraghty, Ruth, Jane Gray, and David Ralph. 2014. "One of the Best Members of the Family': Continuity and Change in Young Children's Relationships With their Grandparents." Pp. 258 – 288 in *The 'Irish' Family,* edited by Linda, Connolly. London: Routledge.

Giddens, Anthony, and Philip W. Sutton 2010. *Sociology: Introductory Readings.* 3rd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, Anthony, and Simon Griffiths. 2006. *Sociology.* 5th ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1993. *Sociology.* 5th ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

hooks, bell. 2014. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hammar, Amanda, JoAnn McGregor, and Loren Landau. 2010. "Introduction. Displacing Zimbabwe: Crisis and Construction in Southern Africa". *Journal of Southern African Studies.* 36(2): 263-283.

Hill Collins, Patricia and Sirma, Bilge. 2016. *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Holliday, Adrian. 2007. *Doing & Writing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

ILO - International Labour Organization. 2019. Extending Childcare Services to Workers in the Informal Economy: Policy Lessons from Country Experiences. ILO and WIEGO Policy Brief No, 3.

Joseph, Ebun. 2020. *Critical race theory and inequality in the labour market: Racial stratification in Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Joseph, Ebun. 2019. "Discrimination against credentials in Black bodies: Counterstories of the Characteristic Labour Market experiences of migrants in Ireland." *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling.*

Kufakurinani, Ushehwedu, Dominic Pasura, and JoAnn McGregor. 2014. "Transnational Parenting and the Emergence of 'Diaspora Orphans' in Zimbabwe". *African Diaspora*. 7(2014):114-183.

Lister, Ruth. (2010) *Understanding Theories And Concepts In Social Policy*. Bristol: University of Bristol Policy Press.

Lynch, Kathleen, John Baker, and Maureen Lyons. 2009. *Affective Equality: Love, Care and Injustice.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Madiba, Sphiwe and Nomsa, Ngwenya. 2017. "Cultural practices, gender inequality and inconsistent condom use increase vulnerability to HIV infection: narratives from married and cohabiting women in rural communities in Mpumalanga province, South Africa". Retrieved December 12, 2020 (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23121748).

Marco, Jesusa M. 1992. "Networks as Strategies of survival in urban Poor Communities: An Ethnographic Study in the Philippine Setting". *Loyola University of Chicago.*

Marvasti, Amir B. 2004. *Qualitative Research in Sociology: An Introduction*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Mill, Albert J., Gabrielle Durepos & Elden Wiebe. 2010. *Encyclopaedia of Case Study Research*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Millar, Michelle, Liam Coen, Henrike Rau, Michaela Donegan, John Canavan, and Ciara Bradley. 2016. "Towards a Better Future: Research on Labour Market needs and Social Exclusion of One Parent Families in Galway City and County". NUI Galway Child and Family Research Centre.

Moyo, Otrude N. and Seliwe M. Kawewe. 2009. "Lone Motherhood in Zimbabwe: The Socioeconomic Conditions of Lone Parents and Their Children". *Social Work in Public Health* 24 (1-2) 161-177.

Morrow, Virginia, and Kirrily Pells. 2012. "Integrating Children Human Rights and Poverty Debates: Examples from "Young Lives" in Ethiopia and India". *The Sociology of Human Rights.* 46 (6): 906-920.

Neckerman, Kathryn M. and Florencia Torche. 2007. "Inequality: Causes and Consequences". *The Annual Review of Sociology*. 33: 335-57.

Ntoimo, Lorretta Favour Chizomam and Nyasha Mutanda. 2019. "Demography of Single Parenthood in Africa: Determinants and Consequences." Pp. 147-169 in *Family Demography and Post-2015 Development Agenda in Africa*, edited by Clifford O. Odimegwu. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG.

Odimegwu, Clifford O., Nicole, De Wet., Sunday A. Adedini and Sathiyasusuman Appunni. 2019. "Family Demography in Sub-Saharan Africa: Systematic Review of Research." Pp. 9-56 in *Family Demography and Post-2015 Development Agenda in Africa*, edited by Clifford O. Odimegwu. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG.

OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) 2021 Work-Life Balance. Retrieved April 18, 2021 (http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance).

O'Leary, Zina. 2017. *The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project.* 3rd Edition. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Phillips, Deborah A., Miriam Voran, Ellen Kisker. Carollee Howes and Marcy Whitebook. 1994. "Child Care for Children in Poverty: Opportunity or Inequality?" *The Society for Research in Child Development.* 65 (2): 472-492.

Pobal. 2011. "Making it all Add up: A Sustainability Resource For Childcare Providers. Pobal, Early Education Childcare Unit with the support of the City/County Childcare Committees.

Pole, Christopher, and Sam Hillyard. 2017. *What is Fieldwork? In: Doing Fieldwork.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Reed, Kate. 2006. *New Directions in Social Theory: Race, Gender and the Canon.* Sage Publications.

Russell, Helen, Raffaele Grotti, Frances McGinnity, and Ivan Privalko. 2019. Caring and Unpaid Work in Ireland. Economic and Social Research Institute. Research Series.

Sociological Association of Ireland. (N.d.) "Ethical Guidelines." Retrieved December 14, 2020 (https://www.sociology.ie/uploads/4/2/5/2/42525367/sai_ethical_g uidelines).

Sweetman, Caroline. ed. (1996) *Women Employment and Exclusion: Oxfam Focus on Gender.* Oxford: Oxfam Publications.

Sweetman, Caroline. ed. (2007) *Gender, Development and Poverty: Oxfam Focus on Gender.* Oxford: Oxfam Publications.

Thomas, Gary. 2017. *How to Do Your Research Project: A Guide for Students.* London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Wayman, Sheila. 2018. Parents of preschool kids will have their voices heard at long last. The Irish Times. Retrieved December 10, 2020 (www.irishtimes.com).

Warwick-Booth, Louise. 2019. *Social Inequality.* 2nd ed. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

WRC (Workplace Relations Commission). 2021. "Employment Rights of Domestic Workers in Ireland. Retrieved February 18, 2021 (https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/publications_forms/domestic-workers-in-ireland.pdf).