

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF THE CAUSES AND
EFFECTS OF FAMILY DISINTEGRATION IN MEMORY CHIRERE'S SELECTED
SHORT STORIES FROM THE ANTHOLOGY *SOMEWHERE IN THIS COUNTRY*

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RUMBIDZAI SIBANDA

201605178

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SUPERVISOR: DR N. MLAMBO

ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the literary representation of the causes and effects of family disintegration in Memory Chirere's selected short stories namely "Keresenzia", "Beautiful children", "An Old Man, Eyes of a Buck", "Plastic and Cardboards" and "When Passions Gather" from the anthology *Somewhere in this country*. The literary presentation of the causes and effects of family disintegration is an area which has not been thoroughly explored by African writers. The six short stories were selected using purposive sampling. These have been selected because they present themes and characters which were of interest to the researcher as they express the central concern of family disintegration. A qualitative research design was adopted to analyse the literary representation of the causes and effects of family disintegration in Memory Chirere's selected short stories. The six short stories were read and critically examined using family systems theory. As a desktop literary research, there was no field work but a literary analysis. Content analysis was used to analyse the data collected by analyzing and examining the causes and effects of family disintegration as well as its effects on children, parents and the society. An analysis of the short stories was done by identifying themes and characters relating to family disintegration and the findings were presented in narrative form. The study indicated that behavioural problems of the characters, loss of morality, death, cultural fragmentation and poverty are some of the causes of family disintegration as portrayed by Chirere in the selected short stories. The study further noted that family disintegration turns children into vampires and killing machines due to lack of guidance from the family members who are no more. Furthermore, the society has no hope in the future generation because children are growing up with no peer role models. The study concluded that all the selected six short stories "Keresenzia", "Beautiful children", "An Old Man, Eyes of a buck", "Plastic and cardboards" and "When passions gather" provided useful

insights into the causes and effects of family disintegration and the objectives of the study were met. The study therefore recommends that other researchers can also do a study of the causes of family disintegration focusing in the Southern Africa since the beliefs are all African.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is for my mother, Elda Mutasa. You have never been to university, but you understood the importance of my education.

DECLARATION

I, Rumbidzai Sibanda, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study. The chapter discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, limitations of the study and the objectives of the study.

1.2 Background of study

The purpose of this research was to analyse the literal representation of the causes and effects of family disintegration in fiction as depicted by Memory Chirere in the selected short stories. According to Teachman (2009), the family is the bedrock of the society in the sense that it refers to all the descendants of a common ancestor comprising of a group of parents and children living together in a household. Furthermore, Murdock (2009) defines the family as a social group characterised by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. Family disintegration is a social problem where the members of the family split because of numerous problems or reasons (Amato & Keith, 2012). Unfortunately, family disintegration has been a long-standing problem. The society, throughout history, has witnessed so many social and cultural problems (Kelly & Joan, 2012) and there are still problems that threaten the growth and development of the family (Amato & DeBoer, 2010).

Even though the concept of family disintegration seems under-researched in literary studies, it does not mean that there are no creative works on that subject where the authors bring new ideas. The challenge therefore is on how to define this multifaceted concept in the given context using creative works. David, Acock and Demo (2011) argue that it is a challenge to define the concept of family disintegration in the African context given that the boundaries of what constitutes family disintegration are influenced by cultural and other contextual factors, that change over time. The study therefore focused on the family in the Zimbabwean context.

Thus, the study analysed how Chirere (2006) portrays the causes and effects of family disintegration in the short stories, “Keresenzia”, “Beautiful children”, “An Old Man”, “Eyes of a Buck”, “Plastic and Cardboards” and “When Passions Gather” in the anthology *Somewhere in this country*.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Family disintegration is a private tragedy but on a wider scale, it is also a matter of public concern, (Relationships Foundation, 2010) since the family is the basic unit of the society. In many African settings, it plays a major role in the development of every family member in conformity with the norms and values of the society. Though not from a literary point of view, (Ziwira, 2013) looked at the various human experiences related to family disintegration. Therefore, the study sought to analyse the causes and effects of family disintegration from a literary perspective as portrayed in the selected short stories. Muponde and Chihota (2005) assert that family disintegration turns Chirere’s children into “vampires”, which is in opposition to the often touted “childhood innocence” (Ziwira, 2013). Therefore, the study aimed further at problematising such thoughts as it analysed the causes and effects of family disintegration, as it appears to be a gap in literature focusing on this specific area.

1.4 Research objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- to explore the forms and causes of family disintegration as projected by Chirere (2006) in the selected short stories, and
- to examine how family disintegration affects children, the parents and society as presented in the selected short stories by Chirere (2006).

1.5 Significance of study

The study contributes nuanced and fresh ideas to the body of existing literature on family disintegration and it makes a contribution to the body of knowledge on African cultural beliefs with regards to the notion of the family and family disintegration, which are critical areas of concern in an ever-changing Africa in the 21st century.

1.6 Limitations of the study

This study was limited to the analysis of the causes and effects of family disintegration as presented by only one author and only six short stories, therefore the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the causes and effects of family disintegration in general Zimbabwean literature, neither can the results be generalised to all the works by Chirere.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

This proposed study is limited to six short stories so as to allow for research manageability and in consideration of the limited scope of the research.

1.8 Outline of the chapters

The study comprises of five chapters. The first chapter provides the introduction, background, statement of the problem, significance, objectives and limitation of the study. Chapter two reviews literature on the definition of the family and family disintegration, family disintegration in African literature, how other authors portray the causes and effects of family disintegration. The Family systems theory is discussed and analysed to find out how its ideas portray the causes and effects of family disintegration. Chapter three presents the research methodology used for the study. Chapter four discusses and presents the causes and effects of family disintegration and how it affects children, parents and the society as it is literary

represented in Chirere selected short stories namely “Keresenzia”, “Beautiful children”, “An Old Man”, “Eyes of a Buck”, “Plastic and Cardboards” and “When Passions Gather”. The final chapter presents conclusions and offers recommendations.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study. It presented the background of the study; the problem statement; research objectives; the significance of the study; and the limitations of the study. The next chapter discusses the literature that was reviewed for this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

The study explored the causes and effects of family disintegration as represented by Chirere (2006) in the selected short stories. This literature review discusses the different perspectives on the causes and effects of family disintegration. The research further explored how family disintegration affects children, parents as well as the society at large. It also reviewed the salient tenets of the Family systems theory which the researcher used to analyse the causes and effects of family disintegration as portrayed by Chirere (2006) in the selected short stories. Finally, the literature review concludes by identifying the gaps in literature in the selected short stories namely “Keresenzia”, “Beautiful children”, “An Old Man”, “Eyes of a Buck”, “Plastic and Cardboards” and “When Passions Gather.”

In today's society, there are many types of families. Some include intact, non-intact, single families, stepfamilies and a variety of others. Along with these different varieties of families, there is one common case that can cause the family structure to change. Family breakdown is an unplanned event in a family's life. It is something that affects each member of a family at different times and in different ways. About half of all marriages end up breaking, leaving one million children each year to deal with the process of family breakdown (Metalor, 2015).

2.2 Overview of family patterns in Africa

Despite the changes taking place in family structures in this modern era, the family remains the prominent nexus in the social life of Africans. Contemporary African family patterns are subjected to changes that emanate from ameliorated economic conditions associated with improved education and health opportunities as well as migration (Kalu, 2010). In support of this view, Caldwell (1996) further argues that these factors continuously exert a tremendous

impact on contemporary family patterns in the sub-continent of Africa to such an extent that traditional African family patterns that were the norm in traditional rural African societies are gradually being altered and substituted by modern values. Sub Saharan Africa has one of the fastest annual population growth rate (Merrick, 2002, p.41). Kalu (2010) notes that;

The transformation of societies in the sub-continent from rural to urban settings has immensely contributed in triggering changes in the family structure to such an extent that contemporary family patterns in the contemporary Sub Saharan Africa are increasingly subjected to transformation and the need to adapt to changing times in reference to the process of acculturation and urbanisation (the movement from rural to urban areas), which have helped to shape modern family structures, as well as fostering the prevalence of demographic changes. (p. 353)

The main interest throughout this research is that of exploring the forms and causes of family disintegration as projected by Chirere (2006) in the selected short stories as well as to examine how family disintegration affects children, parents and the society as presented in the selected short stories.

2.3 What is the family?

According to Murdock (2005), the family is a social group characterised by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. Murdock (2005) further stresses that “it includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually co-habiting adults” (p. 326). Moreover, Murdock (2005) adds that the family is not universal but varies from society to society. According to Amoateng and Heaton (2007) “a family is an integrational social

group organised and governed by social norms regarding descent and affinity, reproduction, and the nurturing socialization of the young” (p. 13).

As a literary theme, the family offers a fascinating and complex area of research. Barnes and Hampson (1993) argue that in the contemporary postcolonial literatures in the Zimbabwean context in English, the theme of family is particularly rich and diversified. As the locus of tradition, the family in these literatures may be explored as the place where the core values of the preceding generations and the ancestors are transmitted and lived, so that continuity and growth are ensured. Mbae (2005) asserts that at the same time, the family, as a reflector and indicator of social change, offers a wide area of research for themes of conflict and reconciliation in the Zimbabwean context. Therefore, the present study in recognition to this gap in literature seeks to provide insights on the family in fiction.

In addition to what family is, Edwards-Juach (2010, p.14) defines family as “an intersecting network of relationships. These relationships can be biological, economic, social, emotional and psychological”. Family breakdown is not an intended event in a family life. It is something that can affect each individual of the family differently and at different times. According to Doherty and Needle (1991), today the chance of a family getting broken is of high percentage. Since this is an event that is not intended to happen, many factors need to be considered when children are involved. However, the present study focused not only on how family disintegration affects children, but parents and the society as well since when families fall apart, the society falls into social and cultural decline.

The family is a group of people affiliated by consanguinity (by recognised birth), affinity (by marriage), or co-residence and/or shared consumption. Members of the immediate family

may include, singularly or plurally, a spouse, parent, brother, sister, son and/or daughter. Members of the extended family may include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces and/or siblings-in-law. Whiting and Whiting (2009, p. 13) offer a useful working definition of a family: “A family is an integrational social group organised and governed by social norms regarding descent and affinity, reproduction, and the nurturing socialization of the young.” Although this definition is not all-encompassing, considering changes in society such as same sex families and so on, it is useful for the purposes of this study.

The shift from the African traditional beliefs have caused a rift between family members thereby causing family disintegration as they cannot adhere to new changes As previously argued by Kalu (2010), African family patterns are increasingly faced with the challenge and pressure between traditional and modern family values and structure characterised by the abandonment of traditional practices for modern ones (western). In addition to those pressures and challenges, Shimkin (2008) as well as Barnes (1993) further argue that the widespread variations in technology, education, politics, religion and culture and macro-economic issues have continued to exert more challenges that have affected the African family as a unit of production, consumption, reproduction, and accumulation.

However, in an attempt to broaden the understanding of the family, the concept in modern day sociological understanding there is need to note the numerous other forms that the concept of family has encompassed, at least not in the sense in which it has always been understood (Mbae, 2005). For instance, single parenthood cannot be excluded in the consideration of family. Due to the influence of globalisation, new types of families now exist. For instance, single parenthood is now common in most urbanised areas. It is therefore evident that the term family no longer means the same to all people. The exact definition may

vary from time to time and from culture to culture. How society defines family as a primary group and the functions it is expected to perform continue to be dynamic.

According to Rodgers and White (1993), the traditional family organisations are founded on collective relationships. Thus, when the term “family” is used, it does not usually refer to the nuclear or extended family based on the husband-wife relationship but to the extended family based on ancestry. Whiting and Whiting (2009), further argues that the family was a central unit of social organisation and that men and women had defined roles that gave them authority within the family and society. In traditional patriarchal societies, some men married multiple wives. Having multiple wives provided enough labour, which ensured food self-sufficiency especially in drought years. The traditional value of hospitality and social cohesion was manifest in the collective efforts of the family.

In this respect, the extended family is thus fundamental in monogamous families. Social relations of kinship that existed in African families were cultural rather than biological. From sociological, anthropological, and historical perspectives, early hunting-and-gathering societies appear to have lived first in small nomadic bands and later, in some locations, in larger, more settled, and hierarchically organised communities (Wenke, 2007). Although marital partnerships were formed, hunter-gatherer bands valued compatibility among their members more highly than continuous co-residence with a single band, and individuals might fluidly move from one related band to another (Quale, 2008).

According to Quale (2008), polygamy, as a family form, is well suited to a shifting agricultural system using abundant low-yielding communal land farmed by labour-intensive technologies. Each additional wife and her children permit the family to farm more territory and to achieve economies of scale in domestic labour and trade. The more wives and

children, the larger and more affluent this unit can become. Societies with this family form appear to place the highest cultural and religious value on child-bearing, (Caldwell, & Caldwell, 1996.)

According to Sweet (2009), a monogamous family is another form with strong cultural safeguards for the sexual fidelity of women, is important for the maintenance of traditional subsistence agriculture on privately owned farms. Historical and current records indicate, however, that both former and present-day institutional farming families do not usually live in large residential units. The most common dwelling arrangement still is mother, father, and their children; or mother, her children, and others. These small traditional units differ from modern families in part in their economic interdependence with nearby family and community members, and in part in their attitudes towards family life (Hareven, 2001).

According to Wenke (1984), family and community evolve, structures adapt to the physical and social conditions of production.

Similar evolutionary forces lead to changes in family practices dynamics. Parents adjust their child-rearing behaviour to the risks that they perceive in the environment, the skills that they expect their children to acquire as adults, and the cultural and economic expectations that they have of their children (LeVine, 2004; LeVine). There is a powerful interplay between a society's technology, family structure, and social values as we see in the short stories “Keresenzia”, “Beautiful children”, “An Old Man”, “Eyes of a Buck”, “Plastic and Cardboards” and “When Passion Gather” by Chirere (2006).

According to a research by Stone (2008), the presence of the modern family is emphasised on emotional bonds between husband and wife set in the modern family. The modern family is expected to be emotionally self-sufficient. Other relatives become peripheral, while the bonds

among nuclear family members grow more intense and emotional (Burgess & Locke, 2009; Dizard & Gadlin, 1990). The modern nuclear family is shaped by three sentiments: romantic love between spouses rather than marriage arranged for reasons of property and social status; maternal love, or the idea that women have a maternal instinct and a need to care for young children; and domesticity, or the belief that relationships within the family are always more binding than are those outside it (Elkind, 1992). As a family based on the personal satisfaction of its individual members, the modern family also has been termed the psychological family; its chief value is satisfaction (Doherty, 1992) and this is a critical concept of concern in Chirere's (2006) fiction as demonstrated in the short story "Plastic and cardboards" where the children are the helpless victims and onlookers of the behaviours of the adults such that brother and a sister set out to do the unthinkable in order to right the wrongs of their mother who is portraying a bad behaviour in the society.

In addition, the modern family evolved in concert with industrialisation, science and technology. Even without significant industrial growth, the expansion of global markets, the mass media, the civil service, and other services such as health care, education, and transportation led to the formation of modern families in developing countries. Caldwell and Caldwell (1996) described this change as;

a movement toward monogamy, a strengthening of the conjugal bond over all others, a strengthening of the parent-child bond over all relationships external to the nuclear family, and ultimately an emphasis on what parents owe children rather than what children owe parents.

2.4 What is family disintegration?

Central in the present study is the concept of “family disintegration” in literary works set in contemporary Zimbabwe. However, to bring the literary examination into perspective it is important that the term “Family disintegration” be explained from diverse disciplines so that the idea of family disintegration can be analysed from different contexts. Family disintegration is a social problem where the members of the family split because of various problems or reasons (Amato & Keith, 2012). Block, Jack, Block and Gjerde (2011) argue that family disintegration basically, is the destruction of the family life, where parents or children separate from each other. It is when the family members no longer feel secured and happy with the family. This means that the members no longer find the family or household a place where they can be loved, be happy and grow as an ethical individual. According to Caldwell and Caldwell (1996), the family is the basic unit of society and it plays a major role in the development of each and every family member in conformity with the norms and values of the society amongst various social issues prevailing in our modern society, the breakdown of the family alarming.

According to DeBord (1996) family breakdown is a point in which the family members union comes to an end and it happens when parents decide to separate, divorce, and/or the death of a parent or parents. This trend has attracted attention because of the family's primary role in the production of upright individuals to society (Amato & Keith, 2012). The effects of family disintegration to the society are as varied as the numerous causes which should be analysed independently from the others as each cause is distinctive in its degree of effect to the breakdown of the family unit. Accordingly, family disintegration is a private tragedy but on a wider scale it is also a matter of public concern (Amato & Keith, 2012). Hence this study sought to explore how a literary artist like Chirere (2006) projects the voice of the African

family in a world where cultural and many other problems are breaking families. According to Beattie (2005), disintegration of the family structure contributes to a myriad of social problems causing distress for individuals, families and communities. Amato and Keith (2012) further argue that “In modern times, parental conflicts and domestic violence often cause a feeling of alienation or neglect in children”. According to Caldwell and Caldwell (1996), this feeling of alienation or neglect in children gives rise to juvenile delinquency that causes great harm to the society. Murdock (2005) also purports that it is a fact that the more the frequent conflict the more the child is hurt emotionally. This continuous domestic violence and family unrest within the families thus leads to family disintegration.

Urbanisation has to some extent negatively affected traditional norms largely viewed as central in fostering togetherness. Amato and Keith (2012) cite social networks such as reciprocal work parties ‘*nhimbe*’, ‘*jakwara*’ and rainmaking ceremonies (*mukwerera*) in Shona tradition which is the main linguistic setting of Chirere’s (2006) short stories, as an example of life customs which foster family togetherness, and cohesion. Hypothetically, social networks allow families to meet and work together, as well as assist each other in activities such as maize shelling, planting or harvesting of crops.

The participation of families in these reciprocal work parties is through social contracts and it is based on mutual trust. Reciprocity is required to ensure continuity of the party cycle. In all these traditional leaders are instrumental in gathering people for the social activity. Amato and Keith (2012) further highlight that though the main objective of these social activities is to assist each other in reducing the workload, they are also enjoyed as a form of entertainment. The only social activity that requires a sombre atmosphere was the rainmaking ceremony (*mukwerera*), which is intended to appease the spirits into providing rains for the

people (Schoffeller, 2010). These ceremonies formed a vibrant form of labour wherein members could, based on mutual trust and positive reciprocity, engage in farm labour for each other especially during planting and harvesting of the fields (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). And of interest in this study is how the literary artist, Chirere (2006) crystalises these social norms into narratives which allow the literary critic to explore the various social norms, values and how they affect and get affected by different life forces, family disintegration being one of them.

Despite the above social networks that enhance social ties for the extended families in the rural areas, a development of individualistic values has led to the breakup of the traditional large domestic units (Metalor, 2015). For example, the above stated traditional reciprocal work parties, once a characteristic of the rural family units, are slowly fading out as a result of the disintegration of ties in these units. Thus, family based networks, occupation based groups of mutual help, rotating schemes and other associations to which the traditional family belonged are no longer sources of transfers in cash or kind in the event of calamity or failure by some members of the family to provide for their welfare (Narayan, 1999), as we observe in Chirere's (2006) short stories "Plastic and Cardboards" and "Beautiful Children". Moreover, the ties that existed in rural and urban areas are no longer based on reciprocity and mutual trust. This situation curtails systems of social organisation, which is a fundamental precondition for building enough social capital for rural development (Narayan, 1999).

Beattie (2005) cites a breakdown in the autocratic patriarchal family structure. The extended family system is no longer intact. Where it exists, it is premised on weak relationships amongst families. For example, in Chirere's (2006) short story "Eyes of the Buck". At times, stronger networks only exist between two families united in a marriage family. For instance,

sons are no longer as obedient as they used to be and they no longer build their homes in or near their father's compounds as in the past. Many of them now assert their independence and go off on their own, to start a nuclear family (Bourdillon, 1993). Even in the rural areas there is a new economic order in which a husband and wife must work together. They therefore feel that they have an obligation to each other and not with their kin, perpetuating individualistic tendencies that have characterised the modern family.

Though befitting of a modern economic dispensation, the nuclear family is somewhat self-centered in that it disregards preexisting norms that governed traditional societies. Like in Chirere's (2006) "Plastic and Cardboards" Eliza is resistant to the African traditional norms that is why she behaves immorally in the eyes of the children and the society. Dizard and Gadlin (1990), reviewed extensive sociological literature in support of the premise, that the very success of capitalism entails the steady erosion of the "moral legacy" on which capitalism has rested, including the high levels of social responsibility found in the traditional family. Modern family relationships have moved away from traditional cooperative endeavor towards modern personal goals of emotional fulfillment thereby leading to commoditisation family life by a drive towards expanding the sphere of needs that can be met through market-mediated exchanges by rendering more of the repertoire of human activity in commodity forms, thereby creating more opportunities for profit (Dizard & Gadlin, 1990).

The process goes on at the expense of traditional socio-economic ties, social support structures and personal relationships and these are the core aspects at the heart of Chirere's fiction where the family members have abandoned the traditional beliefs as exemplified in the short story "Plastic and Cardboards". Therefore, this study furthered this perspective from a

literary perspective by looking at some of the behaviours as well as the causes of family disintegration in the selected short stories.

According to Ocholla-Ayaya (1997), another factor that seems to be undermining kinship based family structures is the prevalence of single parenthood, particularly among young urban males and females. As increasing numbers of women have joined the labour force, single and female-headed households have become a discernible pattern on the African family landscape as shown in Chirere's (2006) "Plastic and Cardboards" Eliza as a single parent makes decisions which are not favourable to the children thereby creating a rift between them.

While there may be evidence to show that the multi-generation African family is not on the decline, economic downturns and increased urban poverty have undermined the institution of fosterage that for long sustained the ties between rural and urban households. Fosterage constitutes part of the trend where the welfare of rural dwellers depends on their solidarity ties with urban kin families (UN, 2003). A key component of this practice is the channeling of remittances from urban workers to rural areas through educational support. By conferring parental responsibilities to their urban relatives, fosterage guaranteed the mobility of children from rural families. Over the years, the fosterage of children had important demographic and economic consequences. It subsidised high fertility among rural and poor families and gave poor families the means of defraying child-rearing costs (Mkandawire, 2002). In addition, when poor and large families transferred the guardianship of their children to smaller and wealthier families, fosterage mitigated inequalities in resource endowment among children. Recent research, however, shows that the prolonged economic reversal witnessed throughout Africa in general, has weakened fosterage networks, jeopardising the welfare of rural families

and the strength of rural-urban relationships (Nyathi 2005). Whiting and Whiting (2009) found out that the most altruistic, which is defined as behaviour and actions meant to benefit another person and egoistic behaviour as actions to benefit the children. Whiting and Whiting (2009) argue that the most altruistic children were from the most traditional societies in rural Kenya and the most egoistic from the most complex modern society in the United States. It has also been identified that issues of maintaining discipline and moral training in the presence of modern education and urban life are a major concern, particularly for grandparents who often are actively involved in bringing up their grandchildren (Aina, Oloke, Jonathan & Olawuyi, 2012).

The impact of HIV and AIDS has also caused major changes on the family structure and composition (Baylies, 2000). HIV infections cluster in families in which both parents are often HIV-positive, placing enormous strains on the capacity of families to cope with the psychological and economic consequences of the illness (UNAIDS, 2002). Consequently, there has been a progressive disintegration of families, as they become ineffective social and economic units. As HIV and AIDS devastate the traditional support systems for older persons, the latter are forced to take on the burdens of child care under conditions of increasing personal impoverishment (UN, 2003).

Losing parents to AIDS means the structure and organization of the traditional family has been severely hit. HIV and AIDS orphaned children are then left to assume new roles and responsibilities within the nuclear as well as the extended family. Traditional roles, duties and responsibilities of family members become blurred, as AIDS places additional economic demands and pressures on orphans, particularly economic uncertainty, stigmatisation and emotional insecurity. Children whose parents die of AIDS in towns are usually taken back to

the rural areas. They have to adapt to the loss of parent(s) as well as to new life in the rural areas. The security and stability of their family life is disrupted and there is no social safety net or mechanism to help children through this transition period. Education ceases, thereby increasing risk behaviour among the older orphans especially girls. If both parents have died, the orphans may or may not be shared among relatives and this has been a major preoccupation of novelists like Chirere yet there has been a gap of literary criticism on this phenomenon hence the present research focused on filling up this gap in knowledge.

The disintegration of the family often means that children may not grow up in a family and will not receive attention and guidance from relatives. Grandparents might find it difficult to look after, discipline and control young adults. And we see this in Chirere's (2006) "Keresenzia" where grandmother Matambudziko finds it difficult to control Keresenzia's behaviour. In extreme cases, some orphans have run away from home or from the extended family home to escape the poverty that AIDS-afflicted and affected families are subjected to (Bourdillon, 1993). This has serious implications on the livelihood options available for the family in both urban and rural settings. The institution of family has thus been grappling with the challenges caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other problems associated with the economic decline. Hence the literary artists like Chirere (2006) provide a useful artistic vision about such issues as is demonstrated in the short story "Beautiful Children" where Andrusha and the brother flee from their country because of war and poverty.

According to Berman (2008), socio-economic changes which are responsible for family disintegration in most African societies, are multifaceted and an ongoing reality as a result of the influences of the Western money economy, industrialisation, migration and urbanisation

among others, have certainly transformed the African traditional family from what it was fifty to hundred years ago (Shorter, 1995).

According to Mkandawire (2002), Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* explores the disturbing issues of family disintegration, the results which allows Dangarembga (1986) to title her novel *Nervous Conditions*. It is evident that education has already alienated Tambu from her family, as it has also alienated her brother. She relates: “[My] father, as affably, shallowly agreeable as ever, was insignificant. My mother, my anxious mother, was no more than another piece of surplus scenery to be maintained, but all the same superfluous, an obstacle in the path of my departure” (Dangarembga, 1986, p. 58). Nhamo is no longer Jeremiah’s son since Babamukuru has taken him to the mission to be educated. On the one hand, education is depicted as a process of achievement and access to control and transcendent subjectivity to Nhamo, who thinks his education has lifted him above his siblings, is told that “You will still be our father’s son. You will still be my brother. And Netsai’s. Even if you don’t like it. So, you better stop being proud for nothing” (Dangarembga, 1986, p. 49).

Therefore, it is the education that has influenced family disintegration in Dangarembga’s (1986) *Nervous Conditions*. However, Chirere’s characters’ relationships in the selected short stories have no attachment to education, their relationships are affected by moral behaviours, the past, poverty, identity crisis to mention a few.

2.5 Family disintegration in Sub Saharan Africa

To further narrow down the concerns in literature about the subject of family disintegration, it is necessary that the present review concentrate on Sub-Saharan Africa as it is a further

microcosm of the setting of Chirere's (2006) short stories. According to Adams and Mburugu (1994), the widespread variations in geography, socioeconomic structures, and culture, cannot conceal the common opportunities and challenges that have affected Sub Saharan African families in the last ten years.

The family as a unit livelihood has been profoundly impacted by broader sociopolitical and economic environments that transformed the environment in which families make their decisions thereby providing the contexts for understanding changes in Sub Saharan African family structures. Opportunities have arisen from some of Chirere's (2006) short stories which considerably depict socioeconomic changes responsible for ensuing alterations to the structure of the traditional African family structure to new ones generated by the expansion of education, health care, employment, and migration. Yet the same forces that engender significant views for families have also produced multiple constraints and these contradict have largely remained uninvestigated in literary studies particularly in Chirere's (2006) fiction.

Sub Saharan African families, according to Adams and Mburugu (1994), are embedded in political and socioeconomic circumstances that are characterised by long-standing domestic dynamics of economic fragility, debilitating poverty, poor governance and civil conflicts. Throughout the 1990s, the scourge of HIV/AIDS has put additional pressures on the sustainability of families and households.

Similarly, the new demands unleashed by forces of globalisation have had mixed outcomes for African families, simultaneously enhancing the chances of families to seize the opportunities for participation in larger economic exchanges while at the same time

heightening their vulnerability to these forces. As a result, the state of African families is clouded by the competing strains of social regeneration and economic constraints.

2.6 The impact and role of the society in the family life

According to Amato (2009), it is argued that the definition of family is changing throughout the years and society determines what constitutes a family. In some cultures, a family includes a large extended family. On others, it is just the nuclear family. According Keith and Amato (2011) it is unjust to place all the blame on the factors of family disintegration without looking into the role of the society and its agents in the family life and how they shape households. Keith and Amato (2011) argue that social institutions come in many forms such as media, educational institution, the church and even government. Although they have their specific functions in the society, they play a great role in shaping the family life.

Changes in the structure of African families still reflect the enduring tensions between traditional and modern values and structures (Hareven, 2001). Although there have been widespread accounts of families abandoning key traditional practices in favour of modern ones, the major trend remains the creation of systems of marriage and family organisation that draw on both traditional and modern norms. The dominant feature of African families, as one notes, is its ability to “make new things out of old,” and to draw forth new solutions from the traditional resources of family institutions (Mbae, 2005).

The family of today is not more or less perfect than that of the old: it is different, because the circumstances are different. It is more complex, because the environment in which exists is more complex. In Chirere’s (2006) short story “Plastic and Cardboards” Eliza’s family is different from what a normal family is expected to be and this is further explored in

“Beautiful Children” where the family members are displaced or dislocated there is no what is called the intact family.

Eccles (1999) asserts that financial strains are a major factor in family breakdown. Families are spending less time together and the inability of various family members to communicate effectively with each other is an outcome of this. This is exacerbated by some employers who refuse to recognise that workers have family responsibilities. This therefore becomes the driving force to family disintegration as family members flee to other countries for greener pastures. This is also portrayed by Chirere’s (2006) short story “Beautiful Children”, where Andrusha and his brother flee from Mozambique in search of better living standards at young ages. The present study focused on the presentation of family conflicts in fiction.

Furthermore, cultural themes are one force driving to the disintegration of families (Eccles, 1999). In terms of cultural issues, the redefinition of gender roles has had a major impact on marriage and the family. In the wake of the women’s movement, women now have a radically new view of their role and status in society and many men are still uncertain how to respond to this change. Submissions on this theme came from a diverse range of groups and included the following comments: “Some proponents of radical feminism have been quite hostile to the institutions of marriage and family . . . feminism sees divorce as liberation from an oppressive institution, not a break up of a sacred trust.” (Fields and Lynne, 2001, p. 42).

Individualism is one of the causes of family disintegration according to Fields and Lynne, (2001). Several submissions suggested that many couples enter marriage believing that individual rights and needs should override the good of the marriage partnership. Such couples, it is argued, have been poorly trained or equipped for a lifetime of commitment.

They often have unrealistic expectations of the challenge of marriage and the media images of blissful relationships contribute to high expectations without necessarily the concurrent skills. Bane (1996) states that, “Marriages and relationships are directly affected by the couple's ability to communicate. Where communication is poor, couples experience emotional isolation, uncertainty, neglect and sexual difficulties and sometimes seek intimacy outside the primary relationship.” (p. 32). It is against this background that the present study stretched in investigating causes of family disintegration from a literary perspective.

It is generally assumed today that the modern family has undergone significant transformations in its structure. According to Bane (1998), societal changes have contributed to a sharp reduction in the percentage of classical “typical” families, principally "nuclear" families. Replacing these, we are made to understand, are childless families, one-parent families, other family configurations, and quasi-family units based on non-marital cohabitation. This argument of the decline has been advanced for a number of decades, but little research has been conducted to test the premise. Bane (1996) disagreed with that conclusion and pointed out that family sizes were getting smaller and mobility was splitting up some families, but the family remained as a functional social institution.

2.7 Family disintegration in Zimbabwean literature

In order to further narrow down the present literature review to the topic of concern, it is important to review on the literature of Chirere's (2006) setting of the short stories. One of the land markers of Zimbabwean literature Charles Mungoshi has been preoccupied with the idea of the family in an ever-changing Zimbabwean setting. In Mungoshi's representations of families, conflict springs, amongst other things, from the subordination of certain members of the family, unfulfilled social roles, desires and expectations as well as spurned or unclaimed

rights. The family is presented as a “place of suffocation, emotional intensity where beneath the surface, a nightmare of complicated webs ensnares the members in complex and painful patterns” (Leonard & Hood-Williams, 1992, p. 5). This means that a family has its ups and downs, and sometimes challenges can bring up undesired experience due to various problems those family members face. Therefore the study focused on what caused suffocation, complications amongst family members in Chirere’s (2006) fiction.

Finnegan (1994) offers a helpful observation and argues that “In extended families, members of different generations or a number of family units live closely together. They may not live within the same family home but, they do have strong emotional bonds and feel responsible for each other” (p. 64). In Mungoshi’s (1975) representations of the family, there are usually three generations, the grandparents as in the Old Man in *Waiting for the Rain*, fathers and mothers as in Tongoona and Raina in *Waiting for the Rain*, and children typified by Garabha, Lucifer and Betty, all Tongoona and Raina’s children. The families are mostly patriarchal, in which fathers have normative authority over and primary responsibility for the welfare and propagation of this social unit.

The social dominance of males appears to be culturally given, which nonetheless is contested and threatened by some women’s voices of discontent. In Mungoshi’s fiction, patrilineal kinship is the norm. One notices for example that when Mrs Pfende’s first husband dies in the story, “The Day the Bread Van Didn’t Come”, Mungoshi (1980), her children are taken away from her by her late husband’s relations. Sekuru (grandfather) in “Who Will Stop the Dark” (Mungoshi, 1980) reminds Zakeo’s mother, “Children belong to the man, *you* know that” (Mungoshi, 1980, p. 38). Therefore, the patriarchal norm becomes a driving force to family disintegration as portrayed by Mungoshi. The same idea has been portrayed in Chirere’s short

story “An Old Man” where Chirere (2006) provide some insights into the representation of ideal pre-colonial fatherhood in the literature comparing these to literary representations of fatherhood in the colonial era so as to show how the colonial experience feminised African fathers turning them into tragic nomadic subjects.

These are critical comments which have a penetrative force in Zimbabwean literary criticism. However, the present researcher observes that since the 1980s Zimunya and 90s Kahari there has been dearth of literary commentary on the same phenomenon hence the present study’s endeavour has been to arrest these gaps in knowledge. Many critics agree on the centrality of the family trope in Mungoshi’s work. Ziwire (2015, p. 85) views *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) as a novel about “the disintegration of the African family.” Kahari (1990) describes the same novel as “a protest against the disintegration of the nucleus of the human race, the family” (p. 170). Both critics view family as the core of social life and a major preoccupation of most Zimbabwean authors in discussing Zimbabwean literature and the dominance of the family trope writes: “One principal motif running through most, if not all of these works of Zimbabwean literature is that of the African family. It is generally accepted that the African outlook begins with the traditional family: the family with its complex unifying extensions. The fate of the individual, child or elder, and that of the family are regarded as one.”

Most of the conflict in Mungoshi’s work is centered on some of the assumptions Ziwire (2015) highlights about family above. The ideals of stability, succor and genealogy are destabilised by Mungoshi who portrays strained, distorted and violent family relations.

Barring religion, the family is the most popular and formally developed social institution hence Chiwome’s (1996, p.136) remark that “the family is the microcosm of Shona society.”

The family institution in this thesis is used to mean “a set of relationships and /or practices

which are expressions of mainstream social values and beliefs, and have the support – explicit and implicit – of other social and cultural institutions” (Waring, Stavropoulos & Kirkby, 2003, p. 14). As such, the mentioned scholars aptly observe the family as an institution tends to define and exclude different formulations, “with the consequent disapprobation of those who cannot or will not participate.” As an institution, the family is supported, through economic and other institutional advantages, by the general populace although not unanimously. In other words, the family is a fluid construct with historical, social and economic determinants whose definition and practice differ from one epoch to another and between cultures. Therefore the study explored the family as an institution from a literary perspective.

As an institution, the family is supported, through economic and other institutional advantages, by the general populace although not unanimously. In other words, the family is a fluid construct with historical, social and economic determinants whose definition and practice differ from one epoch to another and between cultures. Hence it has been critical to thus explore such familiarities as referred by Chirere through the short stories selected in this study. Through its inclusion and exclusion mechanisms as well as its internal conflicts, the family itself is a vexed concept and troubled institution. It is as Alanen (1988) points out “the frequent reduction of the family to a natural or biological unit” which is responsible for a theoretical view of family as unitary, fixed and unproblematic. In focusing on diverse familial units with their largely gendered conflicts, Mungoshi raises critical questions about the “hoods” that make up family namely childhood, brotherhood and sisterhood, motherhood, fatherhood and grandparenthood.

2.8 Family relationships and parenting

Family dynamics, such as death, divorce and parental re-partnering, imply a change in family structure. Family dynamics can thus affect family relationships and parenting practices. According to the family process paradigm (Cavanagh, 2008), changes in family status can change family roles and family functioning. The process of family dissolution including the transitional period following it can often be chaotic and stressful for parents and their children (Finnegan, 1994). Therefore this might disturb parenting.

Time is a necessary condition and resource for parenting. According to parental resource theory (Metalor, 2015) parents provide their children with two key resources: money and time. On the one hand, parents use money to supply their children with the necessary living conditions (food, clothing, shelter, etc). On the other hand, time offers parents the opportunity to demonstrate support and control to their children. Parental separation or divorce is associated with a decline in both parental resources (Amato & Keith, 2012).

2.9 Relationships with other adults and between siblings

Family structures shape family relationships beyond those between parents and parents and their children. The literature on disadvantaged African-Americans often emphasised the positive roles of other family members, such as grandmothers and uncles (Mutchler & Baker, 2009). Studies looking at co-residing grandparents have shown that the presence of grandparents in single-mother families has positive effects on children's outcomes (Mutchler & Baker, 2009). Siblings can support each other during a period of parental absence. Looking at the social instability shows that disintegration of the family structure contributes to a myriad of social problems causing distress for individuals, families and communities.

2.9.1 Family inheritance and reciprocal relationships

According to Edwards-Juach (2010), matrilineal inheritance systems practice in many southern African countries has become a bone of contention because of the disinheritance of women and children. According to Izumi (2006, as cited in Edwards-Juach, 2010), research in Zimbabwe has shown that the rights of the widows and children are not only violated by in-laws but also by the society at large. It is evident that the death of a family member can create a rift between those who are left and they end up splitting because of inheritance. The idea of death has been portrayed by Chirere (2010) in the short story “Keresenzia” where the deceased’s remained loved ones cannot have peace after the death of their relatives as Keresenzia always fight with her own parent grandmother Matambudziko. Therefore, the present study explores the literary presentation of such causes as death and its effects to the family, children and the society.

According to Webner (1998), in some societies the wife is allowed to stay on the land particularly if she is deemed of good character and conforms to culturally constructed forms of femininity. However, in other instances she is no longer given a year’s grace period to vacate the land, but is chased away within days of her husband’s burial since inheritance is not passed. The researcher therefore questions Eliza’s family in Chirere’s (2006) “Plastic and Cardboards”. Why does Eliza stay in a plastic and cardboards shack? Where is the husband? Was she chased away by the in-laws from her husband’s home now that she is staying with a children and boyfriend? Those are unanswered questions which the study seeks to explore from a literary perspective.

Moreover, Matsikidze (2015) explores the issue of inheritance which stimulates wars between family members. The inheritance wars which Merrick (2002) skillfully exposes are a cause

for concern as they are one of the reasons behind the predicament that most children find themselves in on the death of their parents. Madora's family converge on his Borrowdale house, and share among themselves whatever they believe to be theirs, without giving a hoot to Themba, his son and rightful heir. This clearly shows how the desire of material things can split family members, hence the present study looked at the literary presentations of the causes and effects of family disintegration as portrayed by Chirere (2006).

The literary perspectives in Chirere's (2006) short stories were analysed to further problematise literary thoughts from such scholars such as Amato and Keith (2012), Furstenberg and Teitler (2010), Mitchell, Wister and Burch (2009), Morison and Ruane (2013) who have looked at the effects and causes of family disintegration in Africa by focusing on human experiences related to family disintegration and also try to identify gaps in literature in literary studies focusing on this specific area.

When many members of family are involved, there is a possibility for disagreement. "The high degree of conflict occurred due to vague family relationships, small family and changing developmental tasks" (Amato & Keith, 2012, p. 59). Therefore, conflicts among family members occur due to the presence of various thinking abilities that may consist of various goals and evaluative beliefs. Hence the present study also looked at some decisions made by certain family members and how they have led to family conflicts. For example, in the short story "Plastic and Cardboards", Eliza's decision and behaviour is not favourable to anyone around her except the Jerard.

2.9.2 Review of Chirere's fiction on family disintegration

Magosvongwe (2010) reviewed on Chirere's fiction in the short story 'Keresenzia'. The idea of Keresenzia killing Matambudziko the grandmother is being questioned. "Should they kill in order to discover themselves? (Magosvongwe, 2008, p. 8). According to Magosvongwe (2010) no child should ever be associated with killing or should not be put in a position to kill. Amato and Keith (2012) concur with Magosvongwe (2010) as they argue that it is the strangest thing for a child to kill especially a girl. Therefore Chirere's (2006) fiction is being questioned.

According to Mlambo (2010), the question of human relationships takes the centre stage in Chirere's (2006) short stories. In the story 'Keresenzia', the question of what has been lost that cohesive force that results in social fragmentation as Muponde and Chihota (2005, p. 6) argue that "the disease of the society has grown to the epidemic levels and it has begun to create vampires out of children". This clearly shows that children's personalities are moulded by their jaundiced childhood experiences where pillars of cultural and moral orientation are visible by their absence.

2.10 Theoretical framework: Family systems theory

A literary review of six out of the twenty-one of Memory Chirere's short stories is of significant relevance to this study in that it helps to untap the family system theory as applied from a literary perspective. The Family Systems Theory propounded by Dr. Murray Bowen suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family, as the family is an emotional unit (you can't have one without the other). People are best understood in the context of their mutual interactions and systematic relationships Family Systems Theory claims that the family is understood best by

conceptualising it as a complex, dynamic, and changing collection of parts, subsystems and family members.

Constantine (2013) and Schffeller (2010) are some of the scholars who have utilised the Family systems theory to evaluate its critical effectiveness as a literary construct, using as a test case the early fiction of Philip Roth. In the study of the impact that non-intact families can have on adolescent relationships, Metalor (2015) has proven the family systems theory to be very powerful.

In the literary review of six of the twenty-one of Memory Chirere's short stories, only four out of Bowen's eight theoretical concepts (The Nuclear Family Emotional System, emotional cut off, triangles, differentiation of self, societal emotional process, Family Projection Process, Multigenerational Transmission Process and Sibling Position) were of relevance in exploring the forms and causes of family disintegration as well as to examine how family disintegration affect children, parents and society as presented in the selected short stories by Chirere (2006). To achieve this, the following four of Bowen's eight theoretical concepts were used during the analysis of the literary presentation of the causes and effects of family disintegration in Memory Chirere's (2006) selected short stories.

1. Triangles concept, or "interdependent triads," explains the tendency of individuals to relate to each other in systems of three (Bowen, 1966). Triangles occur because a dyad, or two-person relationship, is unable to contain, or manage, much anxiety before a third member or thing is needed to absorb the excess anxiety. Kerr (1992, p. 21) explains that a triangle "is considered the building block or "molecule" of larger emotional systems because a triangle is the smallest stable relationship system. A two-person system is unstable because it tolerates little tension before involving a third person" ("One Family's"). "Paradoxically," adds, "a triangle is more stable than a dyad, but a triangle creates an odd man out, which is a very

difficult position for individuals to tolerate. Anxiety generated by anticipating being or by being the odd man out is a potent force in triangles” (Bowen, 1966, p. 34). Because dyads are so delicate, couples often will involve a third party in order to avoid the original relationship problem. While the most frequent form of triangling is between parents and one or more children, the third party can be filled by anyone from a grandparent to a lover and anything from work to drugs and alcohol.

While the psychoanalytic community often views men, who talk daily to their mothers as entangled in the Oedipus complex, interpret adultery as the action of an uncontrolled (by the ego) id, and view alcoholism as a genetic disease, (Bowen, 1966) instead proposes that each of these (and other) behaviours is actually a form of triangling that is only a natural course when unable to cope with the anxiety of a two-person relationship. This is not to say that Bowen (1966) condones such acts; it is only that he is able to put them in a more “human”. In Chirere (2006), Keresenzia depicts a clear illustration of the (Bowen, 1966) triangle and how it can lead to emotional disturbance.

2. Differentiation of self this tenet is based on the idea that the independence of isolation from others. Individuals choose between being guided by their own feelings or thoughts. They act according to their beliefs, being mindful of Aristotle’s view that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Differentiation of self is “the degree to which one self fuses or merges into another self in close emotional relationships” (Bowen, 1966, p. 200). By “self,” Bowen (1966) is referring to that which cannot be traded or lost when with others. It is not the divided psyche that Freud characterises with the id, ego, and superego. Also called the “basic self,” it is the ability to adhere to one's own principles and stay goal driven no matter the degree of emotional pressure or anxiety. The differentiation of the self helps to fully account for the behaviours of such characters as Keresenzia who does not believe in at list

one parent that she is left with but rather to her feelings and her demands. Keresenzia is anxious to know the whereabouts of her parents.

3. Emotional cutoff is the act of reducing or cutting emotional contact with family as a way of managing unresolved emotional issues. This is also evident in Keresenzia's behaviour that cares only about her.

4. Societal emotional process-the emotional system governs behaviour on a societal level promoting both progressive and regressive periods in a society. This is also evident in Eliza's behaviour that cares only about her. Eliza ignores the fact that her behaviour affects both the society and the children

As Knapp (2003) explains, the family system becomes the source of the matrix of identity, rather than only the individual character. Thus, the "causes" of a given problem in growing up (and beyond) in fictional and real families is much less the person construct or single event, and more the emotional process that links people and events. To understand a member(s) of a fictional family, one needs to understand the family system. It is therefore the researcher's objective to explore the literary presentation of the conflicts in Chirere's portrayal of family using the above mentioned tenets of the family disintegration theory.

Family systems theory, while a relatively new development in the literary field, offers much potential for doing literary criticism beyond the psychoanalytic framework, if not in conjunction with it. Therefore, Murray Bowen's (1966) theory, allows the researcher to literary understand characters read as members of a family, suffering from living within the strained patterns of an anxious family and societal system. And because of that family systems pays to individuals as both unique selves as well as products of their environment, it

provides an awareness that is more akin to cultural criticism and race and gender studies than might initially be believed. Therefore, this theory is relevant to the present study

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the review of relevant literature related to the study. The researcher discussed literature related to the family systems theory in analysing the causes and effects of family disintegration as portrayed in literature. The family systems theory was discussed with its four components which are related to family disintegration. A gap in literature was that the other researchers have focused on family disintegration in its realistic perspective while the present study focused on fiction.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study. It focuses on the research design, the population and sample, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research design

This study was conducted in order to explore the forms and causes of family disintegration and how family disintegration affects the children, society and parents as portrayed by Memory Chirere (2006) in the selected short stories. Burns and Grove (2003, p. 195) define a research design as “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings”. Pilot, Beck and Hungler (1993, p. 167) define a research design as “the researcher’s overall for answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis”. Moreover, according to Johnson and Christensen (2008), a research design is an outline, plan or strategy one intends to use to seek an answer to a research problem. It focuses on the end-product by determining the type of study being planned and the required results. In this section of the chapter, the qualitative approach is discussed, followed by the strengths of qualitative research.

3.2.1 Qualitative approach

This research study employed a qualitative approach. Amora (2010, p. 2) states that “qualitative research is used to go deeper into issues of interest and explores nuances related to the problem at hand”. According to Bui (2014, p. 14), “... qualitative approaches collect

non-numerical data to answer research question(s). Non-numerical data are narrative data (i.e., words)". This means that a qualitative approach employs words to answer the research questions, as opposed to data or numbers. This study therefore being based on fiction thus critically analysed the characters and themes of the selected short stories to come up with the results.

Bui (2014) further explains that qualitative research is a system of inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of social or cultural phenomena and the cultural phenomenon in the present study is the behaviour of children in Chirere's (2006) selected short stories. Anderson and Asernault (1998) concur with Bui (1995) and add that qualitative research is "... a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them" (p. 119). The aforementioned authors in their definitions also state that in a qualitative approach, the researcher studies elements or phenomena as they are in their natural settings (Bui, 2014; Anderson & Asernault, 2001). Therefore, the six short stories were examined through qualitative literary approach which is hinged upon literary criticism which is a way of exploring fiction in the short stories.

3.2.1.1 Strengths of qualitative research

Bui (2014, p. 14) argues that in qualitative research, inductive reasoning is often used, which is moving from the specific to the general. A qualitative researcher starts with specific situations, finds patterns or themes in the data, establishes a tentative hypothesis, and then develops theories or conclusions. As such the present study identified themes and characters and linked with the family systems theory to find the causes and effects of family disintegration.

The sample in a qualitative study is small. Here, a small sample gives the researcher the time and opportunity for an extensive interaction with participants or the text being studied (Bui, 2014). Therefore, qualitative research allows the researcher “to investigate the topic in depth, to interpret the outcomes based on the participants [sic], not the researcher’s perspectives; and has created a holistic picture of the situation” (Bui, 2014, p. 15). This means the data obtained through qualitative study are reliable and valid as they are not from the perspective of the researcher, but rather conclusions that are drawn from the situation at hand and the whole picture of the situation is taken into consideration. In the present study a sample of six out of twenty-one short stories was selected. The six short stories were analysed critically to come up with the findings.

3.2.2 Desktop study

The research was conducted as a desktop research study because the researcher used the anthology *Somewhere in this Country* (2006) to analyse the causes and effects of family disintegration and how it affects the society, children and parents.

According to the Education and Training Unit (1997, p. 23), desktop research refers to seeking facts, general information on a topic, historical background, study results that have been published or exist in public documents. This information can be obtained from libraries, newspaper archives, government, universities, websites, NGOs etc. In other words, in desktop research, a researcher does not conduct interviews or use questionnaires. The researcher only reads and analyses various sources which are already available or published to draw conclusions. This approach is applied to this study in order to examine and answer the research questions.

Thus, this study used the primary source, *Somewhere in this Country* (2006). Primary sources are first-hand information, the information which is written by the author and not by someone else interpreting the work (Bui, 2014). In this study, the six short stories that were studied are all original works of the said author.

3.3 Population

Bui (2014, p. 241) defines a research population as “the abstract idea of a large group of many cases from which a researcher draws a sample and to which results are generalised”.

Creswell (2012, p. 142) concurs and proffers that a research population is “a group of individuals [sic] who have the same characteristics” Parahoo (1997, p. 218) defines population as “the total number of units from which data can be collected”, such as individuals, artifacts, events or organisations. Burns and Grove (2003, p. 213) describe population as all the elements that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study. In this case, the population is twenty-one short stories from Chirere’s (2006) *Somewhere in this Country*. *Somewhere in this Country* (2006) is an anthology (collection of short stories) which has in total 21 short stories and in their totality, they therefore formed the population of the study in agreement with the criteria defined by the numerous authors cited here.

3.4 Sample

According to Creswell (2012, p. 142), “a sample of the study is a target population or a group of individuals with some common defining characteristics that the researcher can identify and study”. Parahoo (1997, p. 243) also defines sample as “a small set of cases a researcher selects from a large pool and generalises to the population”. Polit et al. (1993, p. 234) define

a sample as “a proportion of a population”. Purposive sampling was used in this study. Parahoo (1997, p. 232) describes purposive sampling as “a method of sampling where the researcher deliberately chooses who to include in the study based on their ability to provide necessary data”. Purposive sampling was used to select the six short stories. These have been selected because they present themes and characters which were of interest to the researcher in that they express the central concern of family disintegration. The theme which was central in this study is that of family disintegration and in order to come up with this theme, the researcher had to examine the characters from all the twenty-one short stories.

It was only from six out of twenty-one short stories that the researcher found relevant information on family disintegration. The six short stories that form the sample of the study are namely “Keresenzia”, “Beautiful Children”, “An Old Man”, “Eyes of a Buck”, “Plastic and Cardboards” and “When Passion Gathers”.

3.5 Procedure

The six short stories were read and critically examined using family systems theory. As a desktop literary research, there was no field work but literary analysis. An analysis of the short stories was done by identifying themes and characters relating to family disintegration and the findings were presented in narrative form. This investigation was informed by literature that focused on the causes and effects of family disintegration as well as its effects on children, parents and the society. All other secondary sources that contributed to the discussions regarding family disintegration were scrutinised.

3.6 Data analysis

Data was analysed through content analysis as informed by the family systems theory. This was done through examining the characters and themes which emanated from the short stories as guided by the research objectives. A narrative report was composed and presented. The content analysis method was used to analyse the data collected by analysing and examining the causes and effects of family disintegration as well as its effects on children, parents and the society. Krippendorff (2013) states that the term “content analysis” first appeared in Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language in the 1961 edition.

This means that the term is one of the more recent methods of data analysis. According to *WebsterD of the English Language* (1961, as cited in Krippendorff, 2013, p. 36), content analysis is an “analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material (as a book or film) through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effects.” Krippendorff (2013, p. 40) further defines content analysis as “... a systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not necessarily from an author’s or user’s perspective” Therefore, the results of the present study were obtained from critically and systematically reading and analysing the selected short stories.

Parahoo (2007, p. 361) argues that “in a content analysis study you gather and analyse the content of text. The content can be words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any communicated message”. Therefore, content analysis is the study of content of a text, which is already written. This is the approach that was applied to this study as the content of the six selected short stories were analysed.

The content analysis method has both weaknesses and strengths. According to Parahoo(1997, p. 36), content analysis “cannot determine the truthfulness of an assertion or evaluate the aesthetic qualities of literature. It reveals the content in text, but cannot interpret the content’s significance”. However, the present researcher’s view is that literature offers a myriad of perspectives and when a novel or text is analysed using content analysis and as informed by a theoretical framework, then it is possible to indeed provide enriched and enriching insights into a specific phenomenon, in this case family disintegration.

On the other hand, content analysis has its strengths, such as that it can show the author how different people from different cultural backgrounds understand and receive the message communicated in the text. The content analysis method can also help to make the message communicated in the text clear by linking it with the same situations that are taking place in real life situations, and through it one is possibly able to attain a very similar appreciation of the piece of art (short stories).

Krippendorf (2013, p. 2) states that the researcher can also link literature to theories as usually this method requires one to link the content studied to the already existing theories. This method does not limit the interpretation of the text, as researchers are free to come up with different interpretations of the content as long as it is supported by the text. Content analysis thus enables researchers to plan, execute, communicate, reproduce, and critically evaluate their analyses whatever the particular results.

This means that this method gives freedom to the researchers to critically study the text. By implication, the researcher also employed discourse analysis to shed more light on the causes and effects of family disintegration as well as its effects on women, children and parents.

Krippendorf (2013, p. 22) states that “discourse is defined as text above the level of sentences. Discourse analysts tend to focus on how particular phenomena are presented”.

This was relevant in this study because the study looked at what is communicated beyond the sentences written in the short stories.

This is also in agreement with Neuman (2011, p. 361) who defines a text as “anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication”. Therefore, in this context the texts are the six short stories namely “Keresenzia”, “Beautiful Children”, “An Old Man”, “Eyes of a Buck”, “Plastic and Cardboards” and “When Passions Gather” from the anthology *Somewhere in this country* (2003), which were purposively selected from a population of twenty-one short stories.

The causes and effects of family disintegration were analysed in relation to the Family Systems Theory and they were presented under emerging themes and characters.

3.7 Research ethics

The researcher avoided personal biases in the analysis of the six short stories by being objective in analysing the causes and effects of family disintegration. The information was therefore presented as it was obtained from the analysis of the six short stories. All the sources which were used in this study were acknowledged. The researcher was as objective as possible by focusing on the truth discovered by the research in the six short stories and not by what the researcher personally believed to be true. No section of the six short stories was reproduced for personal gain, but they were used strictly for study purposes. In addition, before conducting the study, the research ethical clearance from the University of Namibia’s research and ethnic committee

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology used in this study. It focused on the research design, the population and sample, the research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations. The next chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from Chirere's (2006) short stories. The causes and effects of family disintegration are discussed and presented. The findings are presented under various themes and characters, as directed by the research objectives. Chirere's (2006) short stories have characters who seem predictable at first glance, but who actually possess many intricacies in their complicated psychological situations. The intensions of the characters cannot easily be achieved as members of their immediate family structure seem to act in ways which tend to disrupt family harmony and continuity. The postcolonial setting under which Chirere writes sees ordinary African people living in a country facing economic hardships, especially for the ordinary members of the community in both rural and urban societies (Beattie, 2005). Therefore, the chapter is presented in two sections. The first section critically and literary analyses the causes and effects of family disintegration in Chirere's (2006) selected short stories. In this section, firstly the summary of the short stories is given. Thereafter the effects of family disintegration on children, parents and the society are critically analysed.

4.2 Brief synopsis of the six short stories

This section gives an overview of Chirere's (2006) selected short stories namely "Keresenzia", "Beautiful children", "An Old Man", "Eyes of a Buck", "Plastic and Cardboards" and "When passions gather". The section is meant to provide the reader with the causes and effects of family disintegration in the above named selected short stories.

4.2.1 “Keresenzia”

“Keresenzia” is a story of a young orphaned girl who resides with her elderly grandmother in a contemporary rural society in Zimbabwe. The story depicts how the young girl continually pesters her grandparent for attention as well as for performing tasks which the old woman can barely perform. Ultimately, the girl kills her old grandmother in cold blood, after the old lady has apparently failed to please the whims of the seemingly uncontrollable youngster.

4.2.2 “Plastic and Cardboards”

In “Plastics and Cardboard”, Chirere (2006) focuses on the problematic relationships among parents, children and the society at large. The story teases out the complex nature of the notion of parenting in a Zimbabwean context, which revolves around the roles of a father as being the “head” of the family, the principal decision maker and protector of the family unit, both within the nuclear and the extended family.

4.2.3 “Eyes of a Buck”

The story, “The Eyes of a Buck” gives a general insight with a hidden deeper meaning of the main issues being brought in the story. The story “The Eyes of a Buck” brings out issues of cultural entrapment through Shupikai which mocks alienation of those gifted with the African traditional practices extra sight or prophecy while trying to remind the audience how society has drifted away from the basic principles of the African tradition especially considering that spirit mediums are viewed as having played a vital role in the Chimurenga/Umvukela. Of great interest to the story “The Eyes of a Buck” by Chirere (2006) is the focus on incest as we see brother (Mavhuto's late father) bedding sister (Mavhuto's mother) which has impacted negatively on children in society such as Mavhuto who in this case suffers from identity crisis. Of interest is how Mavhuto rejects to be forced to have an affair with Zvorwadza only

to trace through his memory for Shupikai. Thus, two people who were rejected by their societies will find each other as they understand each other. Immorality is clearly portrayed through Tasara who beds Zvorwadza in an effort to force Mavhuto to engage the latter by probably voluntarily support that he is responsible for impregnating her.

The theme of non-belonging is present in Mavhuto's life through how he is always segregated by Tasara (his Sekuru/grandfather) and also how his mother chastises him for his in capabilities which things are expected of a man enticing women however one has to bear with Mavhuto in a society that has rejected him remembering he did not grow up with a father as such he had no one to copy from rather than himself (Mavhuto).

4.2.4 “An Old man”

“An Old Man” explores and exposes the challenges and brutality of life in the jungle that Harare's cityscape has become. The heartlessness of the life on the streets of Harare is shown through the demarcated turf that the street children have to religiously observe. For street children like Raji, Sami and Zhubawo, the city turns out not to be an Eldorado, but a jungle where only the vicious can survive. One feels a chill when Zhubawo, “identity-less” with no kin except Sami, with whom he shares the same turf, is run over by a van whilst crossing a busy street to invade Raji's turf in one of his bread scavenging escapades. Zhubawo's death leaves Sami totally exposed and at the mercy of Raji, whose motivation for life seems to be geared to seeking revenge against any person who might have crossed his path. Raji's presence in the story bespeaks of a trail of violence because he is convinced that everyone owes him a living.

4.2.5 “When passions gather”

In the story “When Passions Gather”, Chirere (2006) seems to be saying all hell breaks loose, when returnees from war, popularly known as ex-combatants in Zimbabwe, who seek to rediscover their lost souls and the moral decadence prevalent in societies where incest has become the order of the day. Chirere (2006) re-engages the narratives of the frontier in the story, “When Passions Gather” where the black man is presented as having assumed a new status especially in the wake of having reclaimed his land. Chirere (2006) used frontier in broader context in “When Passions Gather” to embrace the psychological, socio- economic and even cultural space of engagement between people of different races especially blacks (natives) and whites (settlers). In this way Chirere (2006) uses frontier as defined by the conditions that ensue when the settler and the native meet. Often times the conditions on the frontier are anything, but hostile. Even the narratives of the frontier are characterised by confrontation.

4.2.6 “Beautiful Children”

The story depicts the life of a refugee family and their imminent repatriation back to Mozambique from Zimbabwe. Having fled the then war-torn countryside of Mozambique, the refugee family survives by working for the local communities for a living. Facing poverty, illness and ill-treatment from the local residents, the refugees face many strains towards their family structures as they live in foreign environments. Initially, young Andrusha feels ashamed at being an “alien” living in a foreign country. He endures the taunts and jeers of the local Korekore children, who call him names such as “Moscan”, in reference to his Mozambican background. This consequently leads the young boy to associate his “home” with negative images such as war, disease, poverty and “children with swollen tummies, women who cannot harvest their maize, men who strip other men of the coins left in the dark

corners of their pockets.” (Chirere, 2006, pp.16-17). In addition, the young boy runs away from his mother, fearing the prospect of returning to a country which he associates with bad things. However, the young boy realises that only his family are capable of giving him a sense of security in a foreign land. Despite feeling ashamed at speaking his local Chikunda language amongst the Korekore people, Andrusha feels proud of the language when his two sisters join other Mozambicans in singing a song praising the “Beautiful Children of Mozambique”. After reassurances that rumours of “fighting that will never end” (Chirere, 2006, p. 17) are actually false, and that Mozambique now enjoys peace, Andrusha reluctantly follows his sisters as they lead the way “home”. This is despite that “they were not asking him anymore to come along or remain behind.” (Chirere, 2006, p. 17)

4.3 Behavioural problems as the driving force to family disintegration

Chirere (2006) in *Somewhere in this Country* highlights how society plays a part in the creation of its own enemies. Through its own incessant conflicts, society spews out products that will come back to haunt it (Finnegan, 1994). But children, as children, will always remain children, as long as all of us are willing to treat them as children and accord them the love and opportunities that will make it possible for them to be redeemed.

In the short story “Keresenzia”, the character of Keresenzia manifests behavioural problems of children who lack parental care and parenting during adolescence. Keresenzia’s disrespectful tendencies towards Matambudziko her grandmother emphasises how a fragmented family structure exacerbates violence and unbecoming behaviour associated with violence and crime, depression, and thoughts about suicide as is the case with Keresenzia. Conflict might there with be an important mediator of the effect of lack of parental guidance

on children's behavior. The notion that for a family to be seen as "whole" and functional there must be a male presence is up-ended in this story. Present in the family is only Keresenzia and Matambudziko the grandmother who is facing Keresenzia's tantrums. From an Afrocentric point-of-view, Keresenzia's behaviour shows disrespect and contempt towards a person who rightfully deserves the opposite kind of treatment. For example, instead of showing concern for the tired and frail old woman, the young girl demands that she "Fetch the lilies for me!" (Chirere, 2006, p. 1). On top of that, she "wants" peanut butter, cries to be told a tale, "wants" some milk, and also "wants" some pumpkin porridge. Keresenzia's demands are all about wants not needs considering the fact that the family is poor.

These demands are all made despite the apparent poverty faced by the single guardian of the child, who says "There is no milk child. I have no cows, you know" (Chirere, 2006, p. 2). The poor living conditions may be due to the fact that the parents of the girl are deceased, thus their role in taking care of Keresenzia is left to the old woman, whose failing health makes it difficult to provide for the demanding child.

African tradition demands that a young person should always show respect towards his/her elders. The fact that Matambudziko is the young girls' real grandparent means that Keresenzia should ideally be living in harmony with the only apparent relative she has left, instead of constantly nagging her all the time. Keresenzia's demands, no matter how inconsiderate or unnecessary, are met by the hapless woman who struggles to pacify her little grandchild. Matambudziko ignores her own physical discomfort to appease Keresenzia, fetching her extra lilies for her head, pounding the peanut butter to suit her tastes, and going out into the night to fetch pumpkins from neighbours to prepare her some porridge.

In Keresenzia, Matambudziko's avoidance of the issue of the girls' parenthood also contributes to the mental and emotional imbalances faced by the little girl. When Keresenzia

asks about the whereabouts of her parents, her grandmother avoids the issue by telling her that she would answer her “sometime before you are married” (Chirere, 2006, p. 2). However, the young girl shows that she knows of her orphanhood from other sources, and this leads to the further distress of the old woman, who actually threatens Keresenzia with a beating in order to avoid answering the pertinent question of where the girl’s parents are. In some African traditions, it is morally wrong to deny a person the right to know his/her parentage or origin (Sims, 2002) and Matambudziko’s avoidance of explaining where Keresenzia’s parents are leads to the young girl acting “abnormally”, with the gruesome killing of the old woman becoming the inevitable consequence of this.

It may be argued that Matambudziko’s death at the hands of her own grandchild may have been averted if she had fostered a relationship based on traditional African values. For example, by being too passive and lenient towards Keresenzia, Matambudziko eventually struggles to control the child when she misbehaves. By giving in too easily to the demands of the small child, Matambudziko shows a weakness which is fully exploited by the emotionally unstable girl, who ends up making requests which her grandmother increasingly finds harder to fulfill.

According to Mlambo (2010) the question of human relationships takes the centre stage in Chirere’s (2006) short stories. In the story “Keresenzia”, the question of what has been lost that cohesive force that results in social fragmentation as Muponde and Chihota (2000, p. 6) argue that “the disease of the society has grown to the epidemic levels and it has begun to create vampires out of children”. This shows that children’s personalities are moulded by their jaundiced childhood experiences where pillars of cultural and moral orientation are visible by their absence.

The issue of behavioural problems is also depicted in the short story “An Old Man”. Children’s children are turned into killing machines as some young boys own guns. In the story, for street children like Raji, Sami and Zhuwawo, the city turns out not to be an Eldorado, but a jungle where only the vicious can survive. Raji's presence in the story bespeaks of a trail of violence because he is convinced that everyone owes him a living. Raji turns out to be a bully because of his background of poverty and homelessness. Life on the streets is survival of the fittest where Raji torments other children and controls half the city and their parking lanes in the city (Chirere, 2006, p. 34). He comes across more as an animal than a human being, thus turning the whole city into a moral jungle. Zhuwawo's death leaves Sami totally exposed and at the mercy of Raji, whose motivation for life seems to be geared to seeking revenge against any person who might have crossed his path. Raji's presence in the story bespeaks of a trail of violence because he is convinced that everyone owes him a living.

Shorter (1995) argues that the issue of street urchins is a thorny one, especially when it is weighed against a community that is too busy fighting against itself, as individuals are always on their marks in a rat race against time. Shorter (1995) asserts that

Yes, they might be foul-mouthed, lice infested drug addicts, who do not think twice when they feel that their territory is encroached upon, but who really is to blame for this proliferation of urchins on our streets? Street kids, we might call them, but do they belong to the streets? Did the streets beget them? Are they not monsters of our own creation as a society? Every child is born a saint, and remains one, until society corrupts him or her; but when that same society denies responsibility, then the monsters that it creates, will haunt it ceaselessly.

In the case of children like Raji, Shorter (1995) clearly points everything to the society whom in other words says they have created monsters out of saints.

Chinodya (2005) also purveys the societal ills which culminate in the littering of the streets with children whom everyone wants to chide, forget about, sneer at, exploit and strangle. This is especially apt in "Chairman of Fools" (2005), "Tale of Tamari" (2004) and "Tavonga" (2005).

Therefore, against the background of the many faces that street urchins wear, the reasons for their increasing numbers on the streets and the solutions that may be proffered to mitigate their plight, becomes both revealing and informative (Metalor, 2015). The book bares societal folly which is central to the collapse of the family unit that should be responsible for moulding the individual and pampering his or her dreams. In Metalor's (2015) short story "The Suppressed Voice", Themba Madora, a brilliant boy from an affluent family, finds himself on the streets after the death of his parents. Madora, Themba's father, is a self-made man who through determination and hard work, changes stations in his life - from abject poverty to extreme wealth. However, as is the case with most men, his wealth got to his head and eventually to his carnal desires, which could no longer be satiated by one woman.

He succumbs to AIDS, and within a short period of time, his wife Susan also dies, leaving behind, a 13-year-old son to face the vagaries of an extended family which believes that Madora owed them a favour for being born one of them and for dying. Therefore, Metalor, (2015) like Chirere (2006) chronicles the plight of children living on the streets by giving voice to their gagged murmurs.

In “When Passions Gather“, Rich’s stature symbolises the subdued settler presence in the “new” frontier. He is described as “scarce and weak and discouraging” He cannot even satisfy his wife sexually. His impotence symbolises the death of the “empire” in Africa. Rich’s impotence is juxtaposed with the vibrant and commanding presence of Rex, a thoroughbred pedigree African full of virility and life as Africa itself. He is an imposing figure. Anna’s description of him is in exhaustively revealing to quench the pain which Rich can’t reach at becomes unbearable. Rex is portrayed as having the unfailing strength of a gorilla his sexual prowess portrayed in the light of Rich’s seeming insignificance denotes a shift in the frontier narratives. It is clear Rex is a representation of a new family which defies the dictates of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 in the pre-independence Zimbabwe. Through this Act, many blacks lost their fertile lands to the “new occupants” and were dumped in reserves that could not sustain their family’s livelihoods since they depended on land for survival.

4.3.1 Identity crisis and fragmented identities

Chirere’s (2006) characters do not deal with colonial ascriptions per se but are well developed in a way that explores clearly all the nuances that shape their identities.

“Keresenzia” is a story which symbolises the harsh reality facing many Zimbabweans in the wake of death. Keresenzia’s constant demands for attention are indicative of her psychic and spiritual yearning to know her roots and to belong. Beneath the seething anger and antics of brutal emotional hurt she directs at Matambudziko is a deep spiritual void and yearning for rootedness and identity that Matambudziko cannot keep pushing into oblivion. From the moment Keresenzia names the cause of her distress, opharnhood, she assumes subjectivity by naming her grandmother Matambudziko which is translated to mean troubles. Her desire to know the history of her current status of marginalization through opharnhood, and to know

about her biological lineage drives her berserk. Her quest is indicative of a burning desire for rootedness and connectedness. This girl's demands for material things (such as porridge, milk or flowers), are a mere reflection of an unspoken demand to know and understand her own history and position in life. This is what Magosvongwe (2010) refers to in her description of Keresenzia's problem, "Keresenzia wants to know her real identity, where she hails from, who she really is and how she connects with the present in terms of both time and space. This knowledge will help her psychologically in discovering herself." (p. 182). Because of bitterness, she kills her only remaining parent. This brings to light the vital point that much as children occupy a position of subordination, they are also agents in the negotiation of their allotted status (Mungoshi, 1980).

Moreover, the story "Beautiful Children" depicts how there is an in-born sense of wanting to "belong", which is seen in how young Andrusha initially rejects his own family in favour of wanting to be identified with the more popular Korekore children in the area.

However, he finds out that his home in Mozambique is where he really "belongs", along with his mother, sisters and other fellow countrymen living as refugees in foreign lands. He therefore associates his "home" with negative images such as war, disease, poverty and "children with swollen tummies, women who cannot harvest their maize, men who strip other men of the coins left in the dark corners of their pockets" (Chirere, 2006, p. 16). In addition, the young boy runs away from his mother, fearing the prospect of returning to a country which he associates with bad things. In this case the family is broken as one figure flees away because of poor background. Violence breeds violence, children who grow in a war environment are subjected to violence and in turn they internalise and export the violence to fellow creatures.

In in “Eyes of a buck”, the theme of non-belonging is present in Mavhuto's life on how he is always segregated by Tasara (his sekuru/grandfather) and also how his mother chastises him for his in capabilities which are things expected of a man for instance enticing women but however one has to bear with Mavhuto in a society that has rejected him remembering he did not grow up with a father as such he had no one to copy from rather than himself.

In “An old man” the behaviour of Raji reflects a schizophrenic attitude which echoes the fragmentation of his identity. He comes across more as an animal than a human being, thus turning the whole city into a moral jungle. He is the epitome of colonial capitalist tendencies. Through him it is clear that children’s personalities are moulded by their jaundiced childhood experiences where pillars of cultural and moral orientation are visible by their absence. The impact of war, homelessness and poverty on children has created street monsters such as Raji. For the children there is a sense of going nowhere in particular in the vicious cycle of violence. Raji is ruthless to other street children such that he is well known for what he is and no one crosses his path. Raji is responsible for the death of Zhwawo and like a typical monster, he has no regrets. Raji’s behaviour portrays the nature of his society. Raji grows up in an uncaring and violent society which affects his behaviour negatively. Raji goes on to kidnap his former employer’s baby, whom he wants to be crushed to death by a train. Amato and Keith (2012, p. 28) note that “Childhood is a social structure, constituted in symbols that reveal the nature of the nature of the community that makes use of the childhood”.

In the story “Eyes of a Buck”, brother (Mavhuto's late father) bedding his sister (Mavhuto's mother) which has imparted negatively on children in society such as Mavhuto who in this case suffers from identity crisis. Furthermore, birds of the same feathers flock together this is true of how Mavhuto rejects to be forced to have an affair with Zvorwadza only to trace

through his memory for Shupikai. The theme of non-belonging is present in Mavhuto's life through how he is always segregated by Tasara (his Sekuru/grandfather) and also how his mother chastises him for his in capabilities which things are expected of a man enticing women however one has to bear with Mavhuto in a society that has rejected him remembering he did not grow up with a father as such he had no one to copy from rather than himself (Mavhuto).

In their various quests for meaningful relationships with their family members, especially their parents (fathers in particular), children in Chirere's (2006) writing simultaneously acknowledge and challenge their identification as inferior or insignificant in the family set up. According to Holdnack (2011), they strike oppositional stances that problematise family roles, obligations and privileges, consequently forcing the reader to quiz the construction of "the family" and by extension, society in general. Children thus destabilise assumed cohesions and truths and their role as questing figures is underlined by Lazarus (1990, p. 43) who observes that,

we always strive for cohesion and structure and reach out for some meaning that can be imposed upon the bewildering flow of experience. But the comforting order we struggle to create can destroy us by its very stability. So, the presence of the questing figure who cannot find peace is vital.

The isolation of Eliza's children in "Plastic and cardboards" brings unhappiness and sterility into their home, and, eventually, grief.

One may conclude that Chirere's (2006) stories about children, portray how children are deprived of their childhood by society resulting in dislocated and fragmented personalities. For example, in the short story "Beautiful Children", "Andrusha is a victim, displaced,

despised and haunted as well as the gut rot poverty that the Korekore children are hogged in and even particularly striking is the economic exploitation of children” (Mlambo, 2010, p. 57). The decay of moral values has made it impossible for society to rehabilitate the marginalised children. Instead of viewing the family as political allegory and unitary, it is profitable to perceive it as consisting of a multiplicity of contesting voices and/or interests.

Through familial contestation and conflict, Chirere (2006) offer for critique of various matrices of power located within the family and affords us an opportunity to read a country and its literature from the “everydayness” of characters lived experience especially the confusions, anxieties and ambiguities. The society itself has been dismembered and disfigured by a deluge of slavery, colonialism, colonial capitalism and neo-colonial forces of killer machines. Children are now growing in the midst of violence and this is affecting their adult personalities in search of a redeeming vision. Even though they have been befallen by uncertainty they have found ways to get rid of their situation if this statement is anything to go for "sneak into plastic and cardboard shack" (Chirere, 2006, p. 38).

4.3.2 Death as a cause of family disintegration

Death seems to be the prevailing theme in Chirere’s (2006) short stories as it is another cause of family disintegration. Discussing child characters like Keresenzia, Magosvongwe (2010) asks, “Should they kill in order to discover themselves?” (Magosvongwe, 2010, p. 8). No child should ever be associated with killing, should not be put in a position to kill; in fact, the words “children” and “kill” should never be put in the same sentence. But these children kill. The death of Keresenzia’s parents becomes the driving force to the death of Matambudziko. At worst, the children, like Keresenzia, are turned into monster-like, disrespectful creatures, perhaps as a way of hitting back at a society they feel has done them hard. Therefore,

“Keresenzia” is a story which can be used to symbolise the harsh reality facing many Zimbabweans in the wake of deaths caused by the HIV and AIDS scourge in the country. With a number of the deaths poverty ultimately haunts the surviving family members who are mostly elderly members of the family unit as well as infants. Thus, Chirere (2006) may be attempting to highlight how dangerous it is, both economically and socially, to have most adults dying and leaving their young offspring vulnerable in an unforgiving modern world. Consequently, in a society where the family was perceived as the lynchpin of social cohesion, civilisation and order, and as a structure embodying the moral health of society as is the situation in the Zimbabwean setting in which the story *Keresenzia* takes place, concerns about the impact of parental absence in *Keresenzia*’s whose portrayal exhibits child moral decline associated with rampant individualism.

In the story “The Old Man”, the question of death is raised several times in the story, with the place a person dies being a cause for concern. For example, the nephews see no reason why the old man cannot just forget about his background and “let him die and be buried in the city” (Chirere, 2006, p. 32). However, they eventually give in to the old man’s demands, and seek the “hills” in order to pacify the suffering man. In the end, the two-brothers wonder “less and less why a man (would) not only die to see this but actually go to it” (Chirere, 2006, p. 33). This implies that the boys realise the value of re-connecting to their traditional roots and values, with the sudden and “miraculous” recovery of their uncle testifying to this fact. Moreover, in “Plastic and Cardboards”, the death of the father seems to be the driving force to family disintegration. The absence of a father figure in Elizabeth’s family has caused fights in the family because of the behaviour of the mother who has sexual intercourse with her boyfriend in the presence of the children as well as the society.

Through the death of Elizabeth's husband, the family fabric falls apart as she has nowhere to go with her children leaving her desperate for companionship. This leaves her with no choice but finding comfort in the hands of a homeless blind man who also has no permanent house a family but in temporary plastics and cardboards. Cloete and Mlambo (2010) seem to concur with the need for support and refuge in a family member in the likes of parents or spouse. In the case of Elizabeth seeks the assistance of a father figure in Jerard the blind man. This leaves us to conclude that Elizabeth has no family to fall back on as is asserted by Cloete and Mlambo (2010, p. 58) who note that "In most Southern African cultures it is always said that when a child suffers he should go to the house of his parents and seek their blessings" Eliza has no one to share ideas on what is the best for her children. She finds herself intimately involved with Jerard the blind man in her quest to quench her desire for family refuge and comfort which remains a mirage. Because of lack of a fortified family structure Elizabeth is left exposed to poverty, alienation and moral decadence as her relationship with Jerard the blind man does not epitomise a virtuous family model for the children.

4.3.3 Alienation as a driving force to family disintegration

Due to family disintegration children are turned into killing machines as some young boys own guns. Children in "Beautiful Children" seek refuge in the streets of Harare where they find it difficult to find food and shelter. According to Nyathi, (2005), the African resistance to colonialism and its divisions brought to the African family affected children who also got involved in the vicious struggle. The children, who had been turned into killing machines back home in Mozambique, continue to suffer in the streets of Harare where they fight each other for survival: the instinct of the war zone is replayed in their day to-day interaction with each other. The impact of war, homelessness and poverty on children has created street

monsters like Raji, and there is a sense of “going” nowhere in particular” in this vicious cycle of violence (Chihota & Muponde, 2000, p. 7).

The fact that the old man is assisted by the children of his late cousin, whilst his own son and daughter in America reject him, shows how the extended nature of the family unit in Africa leads to the continual cohesion despite alienation of other family members. The old man leaves for America but returns after yearning for the land of his birth. Facing emotional and mental distress, he is assisted by members of his family who had never even met him before, and tries to resolve his problems. In fact, the successful resolution of the old man’s troubles is achieved by the coming together of his relatives who help him to seek his “roots”, despite the expense and time consumed by the exercise.

The children in the story “Plastic and Cardboards” are portrayed as alienated due to 'bastardisation' as there is uncertainty on who their real father is, thus their future is under threat as they witness their disrespectful mother and Jerard and their sexual affair which knows no bound to the extent that the noise produced by the two seems to get to the surrounding community in a rummed shack households

4.3.4 Poverty and childhood destitution

The vicious circle of poverty plays a big role in the breaking up of a family. The pressure of having to meet the entire family's needs of everyday places upon the parent a heavy load and often caused neglect in caring for children and lack of attention given to one's spouse. This may lead to children to begin to distance themselves from the family unit.

Keresenzia's behaviour of disrespect and contempt towards a person who rightfully deserves the opposite kind of treatment is clearly caused by poverty. For example, instead of showing concern for the tired and frail old woman, the young girl demands that she "Fetch the lilies for me!" (Chirere, 2006, p. 1). On top of that, she "wants" peanut butter, cries to be told a tale, "wants" some milk, and also "wants" some pumpkin porridge. These demands are all made despite the apparent poverty faced by the single guardian of the child, who says "There is no milk child. I have no cows, you know." (Chirere, 2006, p. 2).

The poor living conditions may be due to the fact that the parents of the girl are deceased, thus their role in taking care of Keresenzia is left to the old woman, whose failing health makes it difficult to provide for the demanding child. This ungrateful orphan who verbally abuses her sole guardian and grandmother, Matambudziko, ends up killing her in cold blood. The woman in the story who is named Ambuya is shown to possess nothing of her own and solely rely on borrowing from 'relatives' such as Manyowa. This has rightfully earned her the name Matambudziko which suggest never ending challenges which continue to recur her life for instance, her son died in a fatal road carnage with his wife hence Ambuya has been left with the sole responsibility to take care of a spoiled and nuisance girl in the calibre of Keresenzia who is another additional challenge to an already 'tall pile' of problems

In "Plastic and Cardboards", the issue of begging by the city by Luka, Eliza and Pamhi-Jerard is a clear indication of the existence of poverty "all the money she got from begging by the road near fly over" and "He lived with his daughter, begging all over the city." There is an issue of different fathers but one mother (polyandry sort of) this is a clear contrast of what life is in Africa as purported by our own culture whereby children might have one father and different mothers rather than vice versa as is in this case Chirere (2006, p. 41) where it says

"You, your father came from the south" and "You, your father was a tall wizard from the north." The issue of "wizard" shows how everything has revolved as witchcraft seems to be thriving in our day today's lives as has been evidenced by the cases of witchcraft in the media.

Furthermore, the case of the mother crying for dear life also shows how children have turned into "vampires like and blood thirst thugs" (Muponde, 2005) that they no longer know the boundaries between a parent and an animal. This might be because of the stress of their situation which they are facing and unemployment just living at the mercy of well-wishers and getting food from "rubbish dumps".

"Beautiful Children" opens a can of worms, so to speak, in terms of civic education about the rights of the child and the general sympathy people must feel for each other as human beings. Chirere's story reflects the same theme of childhood destitution. Chirere's children also get space in 'Beautiful Children', where the narrator shows the ugliness of xenophobia in the way the Mozambican refugee child is exploited by a fellow black. One would want to find out what it is that makes these children strikingly beautiful when AyiKwei Armah writes about 'The beautiful ones who are not yet born'.

More so, the story, "Beautiful Children" focuses on the sordid existence of street kids in Harare. The street kids are homeless and roam the streets in search of food in dust bins. This kind of life dehumanises them. Their life is worse than that of squatters in the story "Suburb" because, at least, the squatters have make-shift homes, families and, in other cases, jobs in town. Therefore, poverty is presented in these short stories as the major cause of family disintegration.

4.3.5 Family quarrels and stepfamilies

“There is no genuine happiness separate and apart from the home. No service is greater than that which promotes and preserves family life” (Bane, 1998, p. 42). However, this is the opposite in “Plastic and Cardboards”. Conflict or family quarrel has caused the breakdown of the family system. Conflicts regarding family property, its income and expenditure, unequal distribution of work at home lead to the break-up of Elizabeth’s family.

In the short story “Keresenzia”, the quarrels between Keresenzia and Matambudziko the grandmother ends up breaking the relationship between these two who have only each as the other members of the family are no more. When Matambudziko tries to hold the girl and comfort her, the child roughly pushes her away saying “Go away. Go!” (Chirere, 2006, p. 2) to the only living person who cares for her.

Ultimately, when the grandmother goes to fetch some pumpkins to meet another of the girl’s demands, she comes back to the house and is fatally struck on the head by the girl, who selfishly says “Where were you? You should have hurried!” (Chirere, 2006, p. 2). It may be argued that Matambudziko’s death at the hands of her own grandchild may have been averted if she had fostered a relationship based on traditional African values. For example, by being too passive and lenient towards Keresenzia, Matambudziko eventually struggles to control the child when she misbehaves. By giving in too easily to the demands of the small child, Matambudziko shows a weakness which is fully exploited by the emotionally unstable girl, who ends up making requests which her grandmother increasingly finds harder to fulfil.

In “Plastics and Cardboards”, it is clear that presence of a step-parent can, however, also introduce more complex family relationships and conflict as is evidenced between the

relationship between the children and Elizabeth who is having a sexual relationship with Jerard the blind man and their sexual affair which knows no bound to the extent that the noise produced by the two seems to get to the surrounding community in a rummed shack household. Furthermore, some scholars have argued that it is the number of family transitions that matters, and that stability within a family is an important predictor for child outcomes (Sun, 2010; Quale, 2008).

The entrance of a step-parent would mean another period of adjustment for children. The story “Plastics and Cardboard” opens in an urban wasteland, a rubbish dump area, where a disabled mother lives with two teenage children, who, in their dreams and in reality, beat her viciously for her (to them) obscene sexual encounters with a blind man. Here the children attempt to discipline and punish the sexuality of their damaged, but more fully human, parent figures. It is because of the absence of the father figure that the mother does not respect her children and sleeps with the blind men in their eyes.

The fact that Keresenzia is raised in non-biological family set-up, in this case by her grandmother is of interest by itself since it provides insights into the mechanisms that connect child outcomes and union dissolution of parents. The addition of an adult to the household can provide extra financial resources and time for monitoring. The presence of a step-parent can, however, also introduce more complex family relationships and conflict as is evidenced between the relationship between Keresenzia and Matambudziko. Furthermore, some scholars have argued that it is the number of family transitions that matters, and that stability within a family is an important predictor for child outcomes (Sun, 2010). The entrance of a step-parent would mean another period of adjustment for children.

Although the present research suggests that children from non-biological parenting may experience a variety of problems ranging from psychological disturbances to diminished social relationships, the type, severity and persistence of these problems may be mediated (or moderated) by a number of factors such as socio-economic status of the custodial household, and child rearing skills; as well as situational characteristics, such as parental absence, conflict, support systems and environmental changes.

Step-children in stepfamilies are affected more than their half-siblings (the biological children in the same household). In "Plastic and Cardboards", Lukas and his brother's relationship with their mother is destroyed because of the presence of the stepfather Jerard. They feel as intruders in their own family as they find it hard to adjust to life of having another father as their mother makes the situation worse by describing their fathers in a bad way as she says "You, your father came from the south" and "You, your father was a tall wizard from the north" "You, your father came from the south" and "You, your father was a tall wizard from the north" (Chirere, 2006, p. 41).

Furthermore, Chirere's (2006) representation of children does not fit the "paradise lost" script. At the same time, he does not present children as meek acquiescent victims. Instead, like other African writers, Chirere shows that "African childhood is not always absolute submission to parental will or willingness to allow others to dispose of his life. Conflicts are sometimes complex in nature; arise between father and daughter or son or more rarely between mother and daughter (Ocholla, 1997, p. 34). Although Chirere (2006) does not portray completely joyless childhoods, strained and distorted family relations produce angry, broody and disenchanting children. Some of the children exercise brute force on their parents in a manner that suggests a burgeoning hyper masculinity. For example, the children in the

story “Plastic and Cardboards” fight their mother. This brings to light the vital point that much as children occupy a position of subordination, they are also agents in the negotiation of their allotted status. Chirere’s (2006) “Plastic and Cardboards” evinces many instances in which children challenge adult authority both openly and discretely.

There is a profound alienation between children and their parents in Chirere’s (2006) work. Physical distance and silence become metaphors for the emotional rift between the family members. The mother-child dyad is not without its problems either. The salient point to be made here is that Chirere (2006) does not deploy children for the achievement of grand political objectives such as decolonisation but rather, for social commentary at the lower level and central to this commentary is the basic unit of the Zimbabwean society, the family.

In the words of Muponde (2005, p. 100) the children Chirere portrays do not have a “Christ like significance” although they may make us think about wider society beyond family given that childhood is a “site of multiple emotional as well as political investments” (Burman, 2008, p. 13).

As such, Muponde (2005, p. 2) suggestion that “instead of seeing childhood in romantic or idyllic terms, it is possible to see it as a contested terrain, one in which the larger tensions and conflicts of the society manifest themselves” is exceedingly helpful.

Muponde’s (2005) comment springs from the realisation that the discord between children and parents in Zimbabwean creative texts has been read by a number of Zimbabwean critics, namely Kahari (1980), Ziwire (2015) and recently, Vambe (2010) as an expression of fragility, painful vulnerability and victimhood in both pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe.

However, Mungoshi (1980) acknowledges that conflict or contestation within the family is inevitable, normal and quite natural but what matters is the nature and magnitude of the conflict and most of all how that conflict is managed or resolved. Through the investigation of intra-family tensions, the study investigated ideas tied up with family, such as childhood, adolescence, femininities and masculinities.

4.3.6 Vulnerability of men at various levels in the presence of powerful women

Chirere's (2006) "When Passions Gather", opens up the possibility for a more nuanced understanding of gender relations and diverse masculinities and femininities which in effect spell out the salient forces that threaten the family. The character Rex is portrayed as defenceless after being turned into an alternative sexual object by his mother (Ellen) who adopted him. Chirere (2006) subjects gender relations and heterosexuality to scrutiny beyond the officiated oppression of men by women. By tearing apart ideologies of intimacies and their accompanying familial tensions, Chirere (2006) forces the reader to theorise further, power inequalities in the institution of family whose bedrock is heterosexist. Chirere (2006) suggests a fluid configuration of authority and power in the family institution. It is critical to note this as critics of Zimbabwean literature tend to overlook the vulnerability of women in Chirere's work and thereby produce a clichéd criticism of power inequalities that fails to go beyond acknowledging the structural oppression of men by women. In the various incidences of contestation that Chirere portrays, hardly offers a unified and predictable world view but rather, a clash of voices and positions located in the family, pointing to an inward-looking critique which suggests that the criticism of Zimbabwean literature itself must become self-critical.

In the story, the character Rex is portrayed as defenceless after being turned into an alternative sexual object by his mother (Ellen) who adopted him. The reason for this is that Ellen's husband Rich Leonards a world war veteran has been affected by war to the extent that he has lost his social obligations as a man and also his 'conjugal responsibility' and this has made Rex an adopted coloured boy to be 'unraveled' as the new sexual machine (a rookie).

In reading Chirere's (2006) short stories, it also becomes patently clear that his abiding concern is the family as a social institution with its internal dynamics and not as incongruent segments (children, mothers, and fathers) as the approach of critics to his works seems to suggest.

In any case, Chirere's (2006) most enduring concern, the family, has largely been ignored by most critics who have demonstrated a keenness to read his representations of this social unit within the grand narrative of Zimbabwe's liberation, nationhood and family "disintegration" occasioned by colonialism. There is nothing amiss in that approach per se, except that it is a limited and limiting enquiry.

This study recognises the painstaking detail with which Chirere (2006) offers subjectivities in diverse familial ties, roles and identities such as male and female children, parents (sole parents and married ones), grandparents and so on. That is why this study is a close reading and critique of Chirere's (2006) abiding concern – the subtle dramas of family life – intrapersonal, intergenerational and spousal conflict, especially the performance or non-performance of obligations in family constellations.

In this case Chirere (2006) used frontier in broader context in “When Passions Gather” to embrace the psychological, socio- economic and even cultural space of engagement between people of different races especially blacks (natives) and whites (settlers). In this way Chirere (2006) uses frontier as defined by the conditions that ensue when the settler and the native meet. Often times the conditions on the frontier are anything, but hostile. Even the narratives of the frontier are characterised by confrontation.

In “When Passions Gather”, Rich the white settler is portrayed as distant and emasculated. Frail and tired, dwelling in evasive and detached contemplations, Rich’s stature symbolises the subdued settler presence in the new frontier. He is described as “scarce and weak and discouraging”.

4.3.7 Cultural entrapment, cultural fragmentation and loss of morality

The story "The Eyes of a Buck" portrays cultural entrapment through Shupikai which ridicules alienation of those gifted with the African traditional religion extra sight or clairvoyance while trying to remind everyone through the use of a sombre tone how society has drifted away from the basic principles of the African tradition especially considering that spirit mediums played a vital role in the Chimurenga/Umvukela.

In “Plastic and Cardboards”, this is evidenced through Luka and Eliza who teamed up to fight their mother. It is immorality in that in the African culture it is taboo to fight or beat up your own parent even in the worst of all situations which in this case is the mother's bedding of Jerard, a blind man. To make it worse the mother seems to be enjoying having more children without having any clue of how she is going to look after the children with Jerard completely

incapable of providing the family as he also relies on the mercy of his daughter Pamhi who leads him all the way to wherever he wants to go.

The absence of the father figure in the family is a huge problem in Chirere's (2006) short stories. In 'Plastic and Cardboards', the children are the helpless victims and onlookers of the behaviours of the adults. A brother and a sister set out to do the unthinkable in order to do right the wrongs of their mother who is portraying a bad behaviour in the society.

There is an issue of different fathers but one mother (polyandry sort of) through which the mother disrespect her children by telling them about their kind of fathers. "You, your father came from the south" and "You, your father was a tall wizard from the north." The issue of "wizard" (Chirere, 2006, p. 41) shows how everything has revolved as witchcraft seems to be thriving in our day today's lives as has been evidenced by the cases of witchcraft in the media.

Similarly, a society in which the families themselves have disintegrated and in which the largest unit of effective organisation is the individual or the incomplete, single-parent, family, is even more clearly pathological. An example is that found in certain urban slums. According to Merricck (2002), the main social and psychological features of such a society include living in crowded quarters, a lack of privacy, gregariousness, a high incidence of alcoholism, frequent resort to violence in the settlement of quarrels, frequent use of physical violence in the teaching of children.

The character Rex is portrayed as defenceless after being turned into an alternative sexual object by his mother (Ellen) who adopted him and is exposed as an exhibition tool of moral

decay on a society haunted and skeptic of the ascendancy of women to influential positions. The diabolic practice spills further to cause another chain of 'rape' this time by the victim-cum-vampire who 'pounce' on his half-sister, an adopted European. Therefore, in summation women are shown as being perpetrators of moral decay and instead of being the shield of their children they seem to be the leading figures in 'victimising' children especially through sexual abuse though it can be justified as an escape route to 'quench their appetite' which has been exposed through their 'pathetic husbands' in the caliber of Rich Leonards. Immorality is clearly portrayed through Tasara who beds Zvorwadza in an effort to force Mavhuto to engage the latter by probably voluntarily support that he is responsible for impregnating her.

In "Eyes of a buck", two people were rejected by their societies. The theme of rejection is present in Mavhuto's life on how he is always segregated by Tasara (his Sekuru/grandfather) and also how his mother chastises him for his in capabilities which is things expected of a man for instance enticing women but however one has to bear with Mavhuto in a society that has rejected him remembering he did not grow up with a father as such he had no one to copy from rather than himself.

4.3.8 Escaping home

According to Metalor (2015), home is a very vexed notion in Chirere's work, more so in his English than Shona works and it is through the adolescent or young adult that this notion is dramatised. Home is a multidimensional concept and in Chirere's literary representations it is conflated with house(s) and family. Home is more than just a physical dwelling place or structure(s) for a family. It also denotes more than a place where one hails from; it signifies an interaction between place and social relationships. It further implies community and not an enclosed private space but an expression of social meaning and identities. The most important

factor in the discursive construction of home is emotion, whether it is positive such as intimacy or negative, such as anger. However for characters in Chirere's short stories home is not an exciting place if it is flooded by poverty and other problems. For example in the short story "Beautiful children", Andrusha associates his "home" with negative images such as war, disease, poverty and "children with swollen tummies, women who cannot harvest their maize, men who strip other men of the coins left in the dark corners of their pockets." (Chirere, 2006, pp. 16-17). In addition, the young boy runs away from his mother, fearing the prospect of returning to a country which he associates with bad things.

Metalor (2015, p. 83) gives a succinct summation of home as an "emotional environment, a culture, a geographical location, a political system, a historical time and place, a house etc. and a combination of all of the above." Home for Chirere's (2006) characters, is a challenging physical and emotional space, from which the youth feel a dire need to escape. For example in "Beautiful children" Andrusha and the brother have no hope of going back home. To them their home is not an ideal place to go. For them home and family does not have a relationship if home is associated with a poor background and wars. Escaping home is a common theme in Zimbabwean literature in English as typified by the first line in Marechera (1986, p. 1), "I got my things and left."

Chirere's presentations of the causes and effects of family disintegration in the selected short stories overlap and have simultaneous ideas. For example death as a cause of family disintegration in the short story 'Keresenzia' is also an effect of family disintegration in the same short story. Keresenzia is affected by the death of her parents which results in her bad behaviour and ends up killing her grandmother Matambudziko. More so, the tension between Keresenzia and Matambudziko has brought up an effect of family quarrels in the short story

Keresenzia. Therefore, all Chirere's six selected short stories present a cause as an effect of family disintegration

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the causes and effects of family disintegration as presented by Chirere's (2006) selected short stories under various themes and characters. Some of the causes of family disintegration as presented in this chapter are poverty, death, immorality, identity crisis, behavioral problems, escaping home, cultural fragmentation, family quarrels, child destitution, stepfamilies and vulnerability. The next chapter is a discussion of findings, as well as some recommendations and conclusions. The themes and subthemes and summary of major findings as related to the research questions, were addressed. This was followed by recommendations, and a conclusion of the research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter concludes the study and it summarises the findings regarding the literary presentation of causes and effects of family disintegration as portrayed by Chirere (2006) in the selected short stories. Basing on the study findings, conclusions were made and areas for further study were made. In order to achieve the aim of the study, two objectives were proposed (see section 1.3); the findings are presented in the following subsections organised according to the research objectives, to indicate in which ways the aims of the study were met.

5.2 To explore the forms and causes of family disintegration as projected by Chirere in the selected short stories

From Chirere's (2006) short stories, the forms of family disintegration are divorce which leads to children being raised with one parent. More so, parental separation due to economic conditions, death and divorce were also some of the forms of family disintegration depicted in Chirere's short stories. Chirere's (2006) short stories have a host of characters who seem predictable at first glance, but who actually possess many intricacies in their complicated psychological beings. Death has been raised several times as one of the causes of family disintegration. Thus, Chirere (2006) may be attempting to highlight how dangerous it is, both economically and socially, to have most adults dying and leaving their young offspring vulnerable in an unforgiving modern world. Death has left the surviving family members to face severe hardships. More so, the behaviour of elders has caused family members to split. In some African traditions, it is morally wrong to deny a person the right to know his/her parentage or origin and Matambudziko's avoidance of explaining where Keresenzia's parents

were leads to the young girl acting “abnormally”, with the gruesome killing of the old woman becoming the inevitable consequence of this.

Also, the lack of morals amongst family members has led to the destruction of relationships in the family. In “Plastic and Cardboards” the behaviour of the mother destroys her relationship with her sons.

Identity crisis is one of the causes of family disintegration. The story “Beautiful Children” depicts how there is an in-born sense of wanting to “belong”. Andrusha runs away from his mother, fearing the prospect of returning to a country which he associates with horrible things. Moreover poverty plays a big role in the breaking up of a family. The pressure of having to meet the entire family's needs everyday places upon the parent a heavy load and it often causes neglect in the caring for children.

Cultural entrapment, escaping home, cultural fragmentation, family quarrels, child destitution, stepfamilies and vulnerability are some causes of family disintegration as depicted in Chirere’s (2006) selected short stories

5.2.2 To examine how family disintegration affects children, parents and society as presented in the selected short stories by Chirere

Family disintegration has instigated behavioural problems on children like Keresenzia and the children in “Beautiful children”. Keresenzia manifests behavioural problems of children who lack parental care and parenting during adolescence. Children have been turned into killing machines due to lack of guidance from the family members who are no more. Muponde and Chihota (2000) assert that family disintegration turns Chirere’s children into “vampires”,

which is in opposition to the often touted “childhood innocence”. More so, society has no hope in the future generation because children are growing up with no peer role models, especially looking at Elizabeth’s behaviour in “Plastic and Cardboards” who has sexual intercourse with her boyfriend in the presence of children as well as the society.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

Quale (2008) asserts that literature is a representation of reality. Since it might not be easy to observe and study the forms and causes of family disintegration from a sociological point of view, the researcher provides the following recommendations:

- That more literary studies, regarding family disintegration as portrayed in other forms of literature be conducted with more emphasis on the assessment regarding how families, especially children are affected by the aftermaths of family collapse.
- More studies to be conducted specifically on how Southern Africa literary authors portray the effects of family disintegration in their writings.
- Another is that of a study that needs more focus on the causes and effects of family disintegration as portrayed by writers from Southern Africa.

5.4 Conclusion

The chapter presented the forms and causes of family disintegration. The effects of family breakdown amongst children, parents and the society were also presented. The study concluded that the forms of family disintegration are divorce, separation, and alienated families. The causes of family disintegration are poverty, death, immorality, identity crisis, behavioral problems, escaping home, cultural fragmentation, family quarrels, child destitution, stepfamilies and vulnerability. The study concluded that family disintegration mainly affects women and children, death being the irreparable cause. Most characters who

are victims of family disintegration throughout Chirere's (2006) selected short stories remain vulnerable to social vices as a result of lack of family support networks. The selected stories are "Keresenzia", "Beautiful Children", "An Old Man", "Eyes of a Buck", "Plastic and Cardboards" and "When Passion Gather" in his *Somewhere in this country* (2006).

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