



**BALANCING THE ROLES OF EMPLOYEE AND PRIMARY
CHILD CAREGIVER: EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE MOTHERS
FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN OTJIWARONGO, NAMIBIA.**

A report on a research study presented to

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**The Masters of Arts in Occupational Social Work by Coursework and
Research Report**

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DECLARATION

I Julia Ndeyapewa Markus (Student No.1644009), am a student registered for the MA in Occupational Social Work by Coursework and Research Report in the year 2017.

I hereby declare the following:

- The research report entitled, *Balancing the Roles of Employees and Primary Child Caregiver: Experiences of Single Mothers Formally Employed in Otjiwarongo, Namibia*, is my own unaided work. It has been submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in Occupational Social Work at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other institution.
- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else work without permission/without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
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Signature:  _____

Date: 28 December 2019

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ABSTRACT

The number of single mothers entering the workforce is an ever-increasing trend throughout the world, including countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Namibia. Usually, single mothers face many challenges fulfilling the roles of employee and primary caregiver simultaneously. Although the challenges experienced by employed, single mothers have been well researched in developed Western and European countries, there is a gap of knowledge regarding how formally employed, single mothers in sub-Saharan Africa, including Namibia, experience trying to balance the responsibilities of employee and primary caregiver of their children. Occupational social workers can play a meaningful role in supporting employees in the workplace, including employed, single mothers who are facing caregiving challenges that are negatively impacting on their work responsibilities. The main aim of this research was thus to explore how employed single mothers in Namibia experience trying to balance the roles of primary caregiver and employee, so that key role players within the workplace, especially occupational social workers, can gain more insight into how these challenges can best be addressed. To realise this aim, a qualitative research approach was adopted using the phenomenological research design. Fifteen employed mothers in Otjiwarongo, a small town of about 28 000 inhabitants in the Otjozondjupa region, were purposively selected as the research sample. Data were gathered by conducting individual interviews with the participants. The research tool was pre-tested with an employed single mother who met the sample selection criteria. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse data. The main findings based on data analysis were that fulfilling the role of mother is difficult when facing work pressure and working long hours. Stress experienced in the work environment is often carried over to the home environment, and vice versa. Focus on work activities can also be undermined when experiencing concerns about the well-being of their children, especially if they are young. Women try to balance their simultaneous roles by employing reliable caregivers to take on the responsibility of caregiving when they are at work. Based on research findings, it is recommended that occupational social workers work towards implementing policy and practice within the work environment that facilitates personal contact between mother and child.

Keywords:

Occupational social worker; work-life-balance, work-life-conflict; parenting stress, boundary/border theory; primary caregiver

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, women, are experiencing single motherhood (Cherlin, 2010). Stephen and Udisi (2016), as well as Mbanefo, Odimegwu and Nwogwugwu (2013) pointed out that most families are undergoing a transition from two-parent families to one-parent families, giving rise to the emergence of single parenthood, with the single mother usually taking on the role as the primary caregiver.

Contrary to popular belief, most single parents (including mothers) are employed. According to a blog post (Sceintist, 2017) citing the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014):

- 17% of children aged 0-14 live in single-parent households worldwide and
- Women head approximately 88% of these households

Mbanefo, Odimegwu and Nwogwugwu (2013) noted that the population of children living with single mothers differs from country to country. The largest increases in single-parent households have been in countries. For example, Denmark and the United Kingdom have the highest percentage of single parents. Single motherhood in sub-Saharan Africa is also widespread (Clark & Homplova, 2013).

Reasons, why families being headed by a single mother is on the increase, is hotly debated. Golombok, Smith and Freeman (2016) noted that single families are formed in several ways. Although they pointed out the common one, namely divorce and separation, they also acknowledged other ways: unplanned pregnancies (which is on the rise) as well as the newest trend of single heterosexual women who have chosen to parent alone and have had children through donor insemination. Their article, however, failed to recognise single mothers who are widowed or those that may be due to long-distance relationships. Mbanefo, Odimegwu and Nwogwugwu (2013), however, recognised the aspect of widowhood referring, to it as a natural phenomenon that leads to single motherhood. Premarital childbearing was another aspect of single motherhood that they looked at. Cherlin (2010) also highlights single motherhood as a

consequence of declining marriage rates, high levels of intimate partner instability, and the deinstitutionalization of family forms in Western societies (Cherlin, 2010).

Historically there has been an argument explaining why the phenomenon of single mothers is on the increase in sub-Saharan Africa. Throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries, the migrant labour system was intense; fathers moved away from structured family life in the countryside to secure employment. However, the migrant labour system is dying out, including in Namibia (Kamwanyah, 2014). Another reason attributed to women remaining unmarried despite their wish to be married is lobola or tribal wealth. Men's poor economic conditions can contribute to them delaying or eschewing marriage.

Work-life balance is an important aspect of a healthy work environment. Meenakshi, Subrahmanyam and Ravichandran (2013) state that work-life balance is different for every person as people have different priorities and different lives. Furthermore, they described it as satisfaction with one's entire life, professional and personal. The said authors also highlighted that work-life balance does not necessarily mean an equal balance, as life is or should be more fluid than that.

Stephans (2017) noted how the demographics and the culture of the workplace have changed significantly over the last century. He further stated that change came with rapid growth of the single parents, single mothers to be specific, therefore transforming the traditional family unit as more families are now headed by single mothers.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

Being a single, employed mother comes with its own different sets of challenges when compared to women who are married or have intimate partners accepting responsibility for the care and upbringing of the children. Sonubi (2010) as well as Stephens and Udisi (2016) established that single, working mothers experience some of the problems and pressures that women in dual-career couples experience; but on a higher level as compared to them. These include childcare, workload as well as role conflict.

The topic of conflict that arises between work and family has been extensively researched in organisational behaviour. It is generally assumed that individuals who participate in both work and family roles find it difficult to manage both roles satisfactorily, which ultimately leads to conflict between these two domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

The increased participation of single mothers in the workforce has also received considerable attention, but mainly in the developed Western world. Research has indicated that single mothers generally have very limited resources available to them and are confronted by various family and work demands as well as job insecurity (Son & Bauer, 2010)

According to Poduval and Poduval (2009, para. 5), a working mother can be defined as a woman with the ability to combine a career with the added responsibility of raising a child. Within this broad term, two different categories of working women are encompassed: the stay at home mother who works from home and the woman who works away from home while managing to fulfil her maternal duties. The single, working mother is a combination of these entities, working not only to run the family but also maintaining her position as a financially independent head of the family. Furthermore, research has shown that due to the nature of the roles of men and women in our society, the primary responsibility for family caretaking often falls on women, and such responsibility affects the working lives of women more than it affects the working lives of men (Poduval & Poduval, 2009, para. 6-7).

Single, employed mothers are also prevalent in Namibia. An article, 'Children and Single Parents' (2013) highlighted that single-headed families, which are mostly run by single mothers, is a common phenomenon in Namibia. It further detailed how fathers' contact with their children declines over time and the single mother is left to maintain the children by herself, even though her income is usually less than that of the male employee.

(Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), 2016) found that although there are Constitutional provisions that all people in Namibia are equal, statistical data shows different results; especially in the workplace. The same article revealed some data from The Employment Equity Commission for 2013-2014 stating that women fill only 22% of executive director positions and 32% of senior management positions. The article further made it clear that gender inequality in the workplace exists for many reasons. For example, Namibian cultural norms stress women taking on all child-rearing and family responsibilities, including household chores, despite them having full-time jobs.

An article titled 'Children and Single Parents' (2013) further found that small children in Namibia live primarily with their mothers because households in Namibia are mother-headed with only one income that is usually less than that of a man occupying a similar position. Moreover, Nyadenga (2013) highlighted that single households which are mostly headed by

mothers as the fathers usually ‘vanish’ after impregnating or due to divorce, is becoming a trend in Namibia. The single mother also sometimes takes up multiple jobs to make ends meet. Taking these steps leaves them with feelings of guilt and frustration for failing to spend more time with their children.

Occupational social work is slowly making its mark in Namibia. The roles and responsibilities of an occupational social worker are to make sure that the wellness and welfare of employees are taken care of on the micro, mezzo and macro level; as well as creating an interface between the workplace and the workforce (Van Breda, 2009). For example, they help by coming up with strategies for single, employed mothers to balance their work and motherhood, to ensure that there is a minimal interruption between the two worlds of existence and therefore benefiting the two parties; both mother and employer. A comprehensive literature review indicated that there is limited knowledge on how employed, single women create balance in their lives. It was therefore the researcher’s intention to investigate how single, employed mothers, juggle their two worlds, with the intention that findings would contribute to knowledge, especially in the field of occupational social work, to work–mother boundary within Namibia because, to date, research focusing on the topic imply that this challenge is predominantly in the West.

3. MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question underpinning this study reads: How do single, employed mothers in Otjiwarongo, Namibia, experience trying to balance the roles of employee and primary caregiver?

4. PRIMARY AIM AND SECONDARY OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

4.1 Primary Aim of study

The core aim of the study was to explore the experiences of single mothers in Otjiwarongo, Namibia, regarding trying to balance their roles as employee and primary caregiver.

4.2 Secondary Objectives of the study

- To investigate what challenges single mothers **experience at home** when trying to balance the roles of employee and primary caregiver.
- To explore what challenges single mother **experience at work** when trying to balance the roles of employee and primary caregiver.

- To explore what **coping mechanisms** single mothers implement when trying to balance the roles of employee and primary caregiver.
- To probe what single, employed mothers think **should be changed in the work environment, through policy and practice**, to enable them to manage the challenges related to balancing their dual roles more effectively.

5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In today's world, with people playing multiple roles in their lives, employees are confronted with the inability to separate their work from family time and their family responsibilities from their work. "The introduction of new ways of working has dramatically changed the nature of work and has led to fundamental changes in how families' function" (Fedakova & Istonova, 2017, p.68). Furthermore, the increasing technological advances have brought about a paradigm shift in the manner that people function both at home and at work. This has created a potential for interferences, conflict and demands between the expectations of the two domains.

Wepfer, Allen, Brauchli, and Bauer (2017) are of the opinion that *Boundary and Border* theory both conceptualise the work-non-work interference in terms of boundaries/borders that surround the different life domains. Furthermore, they stated that with the advancement of technology, employees tend to spend more and more time at work, and they tend to take work home or check work-related communications during their time off. Basically, work follows them almost everywhere they go. Individuals create, maintain and transition across these boundaries/borders to balance the demands of the work and non-work domains. There are, however, those that can welcome this flexibility as it gives them the freedom to integrate their needs and lets them craft the work-life balance they need. In the same light, there are also those that may find it difficult to integrate all this, therefore creating work-life conflict as explained earlier. The researcher focused on the latter cohort of women; women who are experiencing work-life conflict.

5.1 Boundary theory

A theory that was seen to be fitting for this research study was that of boundary and border theory. Boundary theory simply explains how people go through role transformation to fit into the context of their existence. In this study, single, employed mother-woman find themselves having to move from the employee context of life to the mother in the home context daily.

According to Lavassani and Movahedi (2014), the boundary theory perspective is based on the notion of separating the market (work) from the family, though it still recognises the fact that these two spheres are interdependent. Moreover, according to this theory, individuals are constantly engaged in role transformation; leaving one role in order to play the other role. Therefore, according to the context of a work-family relationship, everyone cannot fulfil different roles at the same time. In their everyday life individuals and especially single mothers, have to find a way of balancing their family life with their work-life so that one does not affect the other as well as to prevent burnout, stress and other illnesses relating to the imbalance of the two domains. Boundary theory therefore concerns itself with socially constructed lines of demarcation between work and family roles as well as the ways in which individuals maintain, negotiate and transition between these borderlines.

Allen, Cho and Meier (2014) looked at boundary theory in two dimensions, namely flexibility and permeability. They looked at flexibility as the degree that the spatial and temporal boundaries are pliable and permit roles to be enacted in a variety of settings. They viewed permeability as the extent to which an individual who is physically located in one domain is involved in a different domain behaviourally and psychologically. Furthermore, boundary theory uses the term role referencing, which is basically referring to the fact that individuals will acknowledge one role while in the domain of the other.

5.2 Border theory

Another theory relevant to the research is border theory. Allen, Cho and Meier (2014) looked at border theory as a theory that seeks to look at tangible boundaries that divide the times, places and people associated work versus family roles. This theory suggests that work-family balance can be achieved through various ways; however, it is dependent on factors such as similarities between the work and family domains and the strengths of boundaries between those domains. It is concerned with the satisfaction as well as the good functioning at home and at work, with a minimum of role conflict. Similarly, Fedakova and Istonova (2017) stated that border theory is in reference to the transition that occurs between the two domains of work and family life. This is in relation to the physical, psychological as well as temporal borders. Physical borders represent the material demarcation line, referring to the ability to distinguish between physical space of work and home. The temporal border is in reference to the arrangements made between a period of time dedicated to working, whereas psychological borders are in reference to the behaviour, emotions and thinking patterns appropriate for one

domain. This goes on to say that when a single mother is going to work, they cross the border of home to work bringing a change in the physical, temporal as well as the psychological borders she has to change in order to fit into the new domain that she is entering into. One can then say that the focus of border theory is that work, and family borders should be managed properly in order to create and maintain balance.

Fedakova and Istonova (2017) differentiated between boundary theory and border theory, stating that boundary theory was initially created as a general cognitive theory of social classification, while border theory was created as a response to dissatisfaction with the current state of work-family theories.

6. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

6.1. Occupational Social Work:

Occupational social work is the practice specialization in which programs and interventions are targeted specifically to the population of the workplace (Danto, 2017).

6.2. Work-life balance

Work-life balance is defined the allocation of time and psychological energy in a balanced way in work and non-work life while deriving much satisfaction from both work and non-work life (Sirgy & Lee, 2018, citing Greenhaus et al. 2003).

6.3. Work-family conflict

Work-family is a form of inter-role conflict that occurs when the energy, time, or behavioural demands of the work role conflicts with family or personal life roles. A work-family conflict is a specific form of work-life conflict. Work-family conflict is of growing importance in society as it has important consequences for work, non-work, and personal outcomes such as productivity, turnover, family well-being, health, and stress. Work-family conflict relates to critical employment, family, and personal life outcomes (Kossek & Lee, 2018).

6.4. Primary caregiver

Care, also known as custody, involves the provision of a suitable place to live that encourages the child's health and development. The parent with whom a child is permanently residing is called the primary caregiver and has the right to care for that child and supervise his/her daily life (Legal Wise, 2017).

6.5 Social support system:

The support system refers to a network of people who provide an individual with practical or emotional support.

6.6. Single mother:

In this study, the concept ‘single mother’ refers to a mother who has a dependent child or dependent children and who is widowed, divorced, or unmarried.

6.7. Elder Children

In this study elder children refers to children or a child above the age of 12 in the house that was given the responsibility to care for the younger siblings in the house while the mother is at work.

7. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach to research and the phenomenology research design. The sample of participants for the study consisted of 15 single mothers in professional careers. A snowball sampling method was adopted, as this was difficult to reach population. The researcher thus needed to be referred to in order to get the participants to be interviewed that matched the selection criteria. Data were gathered by means of semi-structured interviews conducted on a face-to-face basis. Thematic analysis was used in analysing the collected data.

8. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Qualitative methods are highly appropriate when the aim of the study is to learn from the participants in a setting or a process the way they experience it, the meanings they put on it, and how they interpret what they experience. However, the main disadvantage of qualitative approaches is that their findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can. This is because the findings of the research are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance (Atieno, 2009, p. 17). Thus, the researcher is not able to generalise findings to all single mothers employed in the Otjiwarongo region. However, as discussed above, efforts were made to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

9. STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This report is structured into five chapters.

Chapter 1 discussed the background of the study, the problem statement and rationale for conducting the study. The main research question was presented as well as the primary aim and the secondary objectives of the study. After presenting the theoretical framework underpinning the study, a brief overview of the research methodology was described. Thereafter limitations of the study were highlighted and finally, the structure of the research report is described.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of the phenomenon explored, based on a rigorous literature review of how single-employed mothers strike a balance between their motherhood responsibilities and those of work responsibilities. It further looks at the organisational constraints that may, or may, not make it possible for them to attain this work-life balance.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Research Design and Methodology of the study. This chapter describes the roadmap that guided and directed the study in order to answer the main research question. The chapter explains the approach and design that was taken for the study, followed by sampling procedures. The research tool is discussed, followed by the explanations of data collection and analysis. A discussion of efforts made to enhance the robustness of the study is presented. Lastly, the chapter outlines the ethical considerations that were employed throughout the study.

Chapter 4 Presents and critically discusses research findings. In this chapter, the gathered data are categorised into themes, and trends explained based on the aim and objectives of the study.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of findings, conclusions reached and recommendations made. This chapter summarises findings in accordance to the purpose of the study; to explore how single mothers in Namibia, Otjiwarongo try to balance work and mother responsibilities, and how this affect them in trying to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as both employees and mothers. Recommendations are then made, based on conclusions reached.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

Legal, educational and cultural practices restricted women's entry and participation in the workforce in the past. In the modern society more women are entering the workforce due to opportunities given. A higher number of women are now graduating from universities as compared to their male counterparts. An article by Ashipala (2019) stated that 63.3% undergraduate women graduated at the University of Namibia's northern campuses whereas only 36.6% of graduates were males. Another article by Namibia Press Agency (2019) indicated some staggering statistics where women represented 72% of those who graduated at the International University of Management. This is, therefore, proof that women are slowly making their mark in institutions and defying traditional beliefs of a woman's place in society.

However, Lituchy, Galperin and Punnett (2017), citing Punnett (2016) pointed out that "Women are improving their status in the workplace, but that they continue to face major challenges in all countries. Interestingly, the literature suggests that the challenges facing women in varying locations differ in degree, but not in kind – stereotypes are common, and women's role is seen primarily as caring for the family. A major concern for women seems to be a work-family balance, and having a supportive family is often mentioned as critical to a successful career.

Career opportunities for women, especially for black African women, were previously limited by apartheid laws. Taking into account the fact that Namibia has the same apartheid history to that of South Africa, the negative consequences of apartheid is also applicable in the Namibian context. According to "Namibian Struggle for Independence" (2015), the apartheid laws of South Africa were extended to Namibia, which prevented black Namibians from having any political rights and economic freedoms. Furthermore, under the apartheid law, all women were discriminated against (Andrews, 2001).

Currently, women are still viewed as inferior to men or not capable of taking on the tasks of having a career. However, discrimination has now taken on a subtler form. This is especially apparent when the woman employee bears a child. "One of the many problems facing women in the labour market is discrimination that is entrenched in organisations' recruitment and

employment policies.” says (Sonubi, 2010, p.23). The author further argues that this is because of the possibility of them getting married. Turner and Norwood (2013) believe that working mothers are expected to separate their maternal from their professional life as part of the organisational values. Women are also highly discriminated against when it comes to promotion opportunities or managerial opportunities due to the stereotypical connotation of women in a leadership position. The assumption is that a woman cannot be a leader without emulating masculine traits and suppressing her feminine side (Sonubi, 2010).

The world of work has historically been separated from the domestic domain and built upon masculine norms and values (Turner & Norwood, 2013). It is for that reason that women in organisations have been finding it hard to fit in; especially when looking at the single mothers. After giving birth, a mother is usually faced with some challenging decisions to make of who will stay with the baby while going back to work among other things. As one can imagine, this would certainly not be an easy decision to make and even more when the single mother does not have an adequate support system by her side. Dillaway and Pare (2008) state that most women need to decide whether to work for pay while mothering or alternatively, make mothering their social role.

2. CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SINGLE MOTHERS

Parenting on its own is challenging, let alone having to do it single-handedly (Srivastava, 2017). She further stated that there are a number of personal circumstances that may lead to an individual having to go through parental duties alone, having to cope with all the care-giving, nurturing, role-modelling, challenges, rewards and even the joys meant for a partnership of two.

Further, Stephens (2017) reported that single mothers experience several challenges, which include household labour demands, child-rearing responsibilities, childcare, inflexible work schedules as well as the lack of support from both inside and outside of the home. However, the challenges are not limited to those alone and of course, these challenges differ from one individual to the next. He further stated that a high level of conflict is experienced when trying to combine the two domains of work and home.

On another note, Turner (2007) stated that single mothers suffer disproportionately higher rates of major depressive disorder and substantially elevated levels of psychological distress, compared to married mothers. In addition, there is the added demand and pressure associated

with parenting and the stereotypes of what a good mother ought to be. Sandberg (2015) agreeably elaborated that due to this socialisation of the stereotypes; a working mother may experience separation anxiety due to feeling guilty and immoral about their choice of going back to work. Furthermore, Nyandenga (2013) noted that society puts pressure on single mothers to be hard on their children in installing discipline, not taking into account that they too are just mothers susceptible to motherly instincts. However, the absence of a man, who is traditionally seen to be responsible for the discipline of the children, puts the burden on the women. As a way out, the mothers tend to be overbearing and harsh on their children, which may result in feelings of resentment.

Moreover society places further judgment on them for not always being there for their children. Consequently resulting on these working mothers to entertain self-blame and see themselves as bad mothers for their choices. Stephens (2017) also revealed that women struggle with maternal instincts and feelings of guilt concerning competing priorities with their work and family roles.

Consequently, bringing about parenting stress at the time one must devote to parenting responsibilities are limited (Turner, 2007). They are also more likely to experience work-home spillover stress as work demands impinge upon time and energy spent in the parenting role. Despite that, Turner (2007) further pointed out the fact that employment is associated with self-esteem which may then contribute to parenting skills and positive perceptions of children. This may also reduce social isolation as well as have an increase in resources and support for dealing with children, therefore reducing perceived stress.

On a different note, Turner (2007) noted that the effects of employment for mothers is dependent on a variety of contexts, such as what is perceived to be the rewards of work as well as the extent to which employment is perceived to be in conflict with other roles. This may then bring forth the question of who then will provide financially should this single mother decide not to work for the sole purpose of being home with the children. Shouldn't the fact that they are the sole providers and caretakers of the children then weigh more than the general stereotypes?

Lenehan (2016) challenged the conventional thoughts of what it entails to be a "good mother." She stated that the question should not be whether a parent should stay at home but rather whether children turn out any differently if the mother's works. Agreeably, Schulte (2015)

believed that it's not about how much time the parent spends with the child, but rather the quality in the time they spend together. He further stated that many parents feel guilty about not spending enough time with their children due to the widespread cultural assumptions. Whereas his study found that there is a key instance when parent time can particularly be harmful to children; that is when parents, mothers to be specific, are stressed, sleep-deprived and having feelings of guilt and anxiousness. In contrast, Hill (2011, cited in Stephens, 2016) indicated that economic factors affect the cognitive development of the children, poverty-level, living conditions, and quality childcare. Additionally, he indicated that a lot of other factors ranging from the lack of support from fathers, the behavioural problems of children as well as the misconceptions about single mothers from society also affects the single mother population.

According to Ortiz and Roscigno (2009), women have always struggled for employment equality long before feminist movements in the 1970s. At this juncture, it is worth bringing to light the fact that discrimination in the workplace based on gender, is highly apparent. This is in the sense that women get discriminated against on the basis of being women and therefore should there be a promotion at the workplace, women are mostly side-lined due to the stereotype and perception that they have too many responsibilities on their hands associated by simply being a woman, as discussed by Sonubi (2010).

Ortiz and Roscigno (2009) acknowledged the fact that progress in this regard has been made. However, it is not sufficient as inequality still continues to persist in the sexual division of paid and unpaid work, sex segregation across industry and occupations, sexual harassment, sex labelling of jobs and sex differences in earnings and mobility. Sonubi (2010) also noted that single mothers experience several challenges as compared to their partnered counterparts. Some of these challenges include a restricted opportunity for personal growth and development, stress due to work, family pressures from trying to be good enough, being accepted as a mother while still staying on top of their career/job, poor organisational support, financial pressure and social isolation. Financial challenges are challenges that these working single mothers face on a daily basis, especially those in low-income earning jobs. Stephens (2017) highlighted the fact that single mothers in low-income employment reported high levels of work-family conflict as compared to those with higher-income. Moreover, according to Jackson, Books-Gunn, Huang and Glassman (2000) and Lockwood-Rayermann, (2000, as cited in Stephens, 2017), single mothers with financial strains can experience depressive

symptoms. This can negatively affect their parenting skills and consequently affect their children's behaviour.

Ezawa (2016) stated that finding adequate childcare is one of the challenges faced by single, employed women. He further elaborated that meeting the intense demands of the workplace and at the same time trying to fulfil their expectations of what it means to be a good mother is challenging. Additionally, he explained how difficult it is for women who do not have flexible public sector jobs, those that left the labour force, or those with no family support, after having children. Stating that it makes it even more difficult for them to secure employment and strike the balance between childcare and work making it seemingly impossible. Equally important in his study, he found that the more highly educated women with greater resources are the ones who maintained full-time employment, compared to women with working-class backgrounds. Son and Bauer (2010) determined that the most pressing concern of employed single mothers was finding accessible and quality childcare, which is especially the case for those in the rural areas.

Bernstein (2004) and Heymann et al. (2002, as cited in Son & Bauer, 2010) believed that managing the responsibility of both family and work can be a challenging experience for working parents. They emphasised low income, single mothers as they are less likely to provide a decent income benefit and flexibility. They further related it to the fact that single mothers have the sole responsibility for caring for their children and typically have limited resources.

At this point it is necessary to point out that an understanding of work-to-home interference is important to get a clear view of the life of a single working mother; therefore, bringing about the discussion around the table on how they should be supported. Additionally, important, working mothers must potentially master the art of having multiple roles in order to carry out their responsibilities relating to work and family, so as not to neglect one over the other (Sonubi, 2010).

Running around between work and home and trying to be on top of the game in both places is something that could really be stressful and cause fatigue/burnout, which may, in turn, affect the attitude towards the children negatively; thus, putting the mother-child relationship in jeopardy. Son and Bauer (2010) established that many mothers were fatigued from combining family and work responsibility as single parents. They also found that not having adequate time for family and work, as well as tiredness created a lot of stress that contributed to the mother's

distress. Moreover, missing work due to the child being sick or other unexpected family demands poses a big threat to job security. For that reason, being a single working mom with no social support could course a lot of challenges for the home environment as well as to the work environment. Son and Bauer (2010) further focused on low-wage workers who they believed to belong in the blue-collar sector or service workers. They, therefore, stated that these low-wage earners have less autonomy and work for small employers that are unlikely to pay adequate wages and benefits, nor do they offer support, thus further increasing the stress level. It is therefore worth noting that small employers may not have adequate finances or manpower in order to give single mothers the support they may need, be it adequate maternity leave or workplace daycare for the employee's kids.

3. POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Although being a single, employed mother presents many challenges, research has determined that fulfilling this dual role is also associated with positive experiences. Employment increases mothers' self-efficacy and support and mothers with jobs tend to cope with stress better than those who are not employed (Tunner, 2007).

Furthermore, Turner (2007, p.184) stated that "employment may instead foster positive personal and social resources that buffer the negative effects of parenting, financial or other forms of chronic stress on psychological distress." Segal (2013) noted that people gain their identities through their work roles. Employment can enhance the employee's sense of self-esteem; contributing to the society as well as being able to provide and contribute to the wellbeing of their children financially.

Sonubi, (2010) agreed that employed, single women are able to develop some positive attributes as well as characteristics, like strength and independence. In his study Sonubi (2010) also found that although some single, working mothers deem work as secondary to their home, they still view it as a significant place in their life. This is because work offers stimulation, gives them a sense of belonging/affiliation. It, therefore, remedies the boredom making them feel worth it and important as well as offering them an opportunity to express their independence.

4. WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Work-family conflict is therefore defined by Allen et al. 2009 (as cited in Son and Bauer, 2010) as the inter-role conflict that comes about when people have incompatible role demands from

family life as well as work-life. Mohanty and Jena (2016) similarly stated that work-life conflict occurs when time and energy demands imposed by the many roles one play become incompatible with each other, which they viewed as one of the biggest problems experienced by professionals. They further looked at two major issues when it comes to trying to give a solution to the work-life conflict issues. The understanding of the role-overload, which is having a lot on one's plate with too little time, as well as role-interference which is referred to as when either family demands are affecting the work or vice-versa.

Mohanty and Jena (2016) further noted that it is not the sole responsibility of the individual employee to fight this issue alone, however, the employer needs to play a part through advocating, setting norms and conditions in facilitating the work-life balance issue. Therefore, Stephens (2017) believes that there is a lot of potential work-family conflict for single mothers, mainly because they carry the sole responsibility of reconciling the competing demands of work and family.

Mkhize and Msomi (2016) stated that majority of African women, especially those in the South African context, are domestic workers or employed in the informal sector. Their research has also shown a decline in marriages in South Africa. Moreover, they highlighted the fact that most of the African women work out of economic necessities. They especially see this as posing a challenge for domestic workers who leave their house in the morning hours to look after another person's house and children while leaving their own children at home with no adequate childcare. It not only leaves them feeling inadequate themselves, but could also bring about unpleasant feelings towards their own job and possibly affect the care given to the children and the house in general. Kaga (2012) pointed out that domestic work is generally not considered as "real work." Hence why, although maternity protection and work-family balance are essential and their benefits are broadly recognised, they are not extended to domestic workers. The majority of domestic workers are women who have their own children and households to care for, or for those who may want to start their families. Mbugua (2014) added that domestic workers work from dawn to dusk, either on a full-time basis for one employer or part-time basis for one or more employers in order to provide for their families.

Hours of work is another factor that may considerably increase work-family conflict. For instance, there may be some activities at school that the mother should attend, however, due to work relations she may not be able to make it,, therefore, missing out on the child's school activities. Presser 2013 (as cited in Son & Bauer, 2010) stated that single mothers are more

likely to have jobs with non-standard hours, therefore, causing more work-family conflict. It is, of course, worth pointing out that the author is talking from the American perspective and that this may be a little different in the African context due to the concept of Ubuntu. This basically means that single mothers with this kind of jobs may rely on their neighbours or extended family to help with the childcare, should they have irregular work hours.

Plutzer and Kierse (2012) were of the view that mothers have the sole responsibility of taking care of the health needs and behaviour of their children. However, due to rapid and ongoing societal change, this is no longer the case as a mother's role in society has changed from a traditional model to mothers also being breadwinners. This is especially evident for single mothers in comparison to married mothers. Furthermore, Albelda (2011) is of the opinion that in most countries women's earnings and paid work opportunities have been shaped by the economic and social conventions surrounding mothers' time devoted to unpaid work. Furthermore, Albelda (2011) agrees with Plutzer and Kierse (2012), stating that when mothers have employed their childcare and household responsibilities are given less time and fewer paid hours and wages are also less.

Albelda (2011) also spoke about how most of the time a lot of single mothers do not have the necessary support, as well as cannot support their families; therefore, there is a need to build on already existing state-level programs. According to Nabvi and Shahryari (2012, as cited in Stephens, 2017), the conflict between the two domains may alter the employee's perception regarding the quality of work-life and that of family life. Stephens (2017) further pointed out that work-family conflict that is not well managed, leads to poor parenting, as stated before. Consequently, there is a decrease in productivity at work, increased turnover and decreased life satisfaction. This interconnectedness of the different variables is better understood with the systems theory; that explains the reciprocal transactions of how one element of a system may affect another.

5. Organisational constraints for single mothers and the role of the occupational social work practice.

When it comes to organisational challenges, the organisation will have to go through numerous changes in order to accommodate the vulnerable groups of the organisation through rendering quality service, manage the work-family conflict and in turn optimise profits. Stephens (2017) stated that as a way of responding to the work-family issue, hence reducing the decreased productivity and turnover, it is imperative that employers identify their role and responsibilities

in the matter. Additionally, Sensenig (2011, as cited in Stephens, 2017, p.32) conceded with that stating that “companies that have a strong work-life balance are optimized for success, and that top-performing life balance organisations have an atmosphere that produces happier employees who are retained longer and tend to be more productive over the long term”. Furthermore, Meenakshi, Subrahmanyam and Ravichandran (2013) pointed out that work-life balance has to do with creating and maintaining a supportive and healthy environment that will allow employees to have a balance between work and personal responsibilities, therefore strengthening employee loyalty and productivity. This can then be the responsibility of the occupational social worker to make sure that managers or human resource are well inlined with this notion which will then lead them into prioritising policies that speak to the employee narratives.

Mohanty and Jena (2016) believe that due to a high increase in stress levels and demands in the workplace, the attrition rate in the organisation is increasing. Thus, nowadays organisations are required to create flexible environments that help employees with the management of their work and family simultaneously. Sonubi (2010) wrote that the organisations, as well as employers, need to put organisational systems in place in order to support single mothers with managing their personal pressures, work demand, role conflict, and time for family life as well as difficulties that come with childcare.

Mohanty and Jena (2016) agreed that the government can support family reconciliation through policies and programs that apply to all types of workers and are independent of workplace size or profitability. They further looked at programs beyond the workplace, such as childcare, crèche at the workplace, health care and counselling. Mohanty and Jena (2016) further pointed out the urgency for organisations to develop policies as well as practices that provide support for the demands of both families and work. They, however, acknowledged the fact that all this is dependent on the goodwill of the manager as well as the economic circumstances of specific workplaces. Mohanty and Jena (2016) asserted that an employer showing concern for their employees through work-life balance programs could be beneficial to the organisation as it can enhance and stabilise employee’s perception about their employer.

An individual’s career, mental, stress levels as well as life satisfaction and the choice to balance life and work is also dependent on the degree to which organisations assist in these endeavours (Segal, 2013). Therefore, the organisation ought to make stress associated with work-life balance bearable in order to support and care for its employees. Sonubi (2010) agreeably stated

that the role of an organisation in providing resources to mitigate negative effects becomes very important (e.g, social support from colleagues and supervisors). It is therefore essential to have resources available to meet the multiple role demands and thereby increases the perception of work-life-balance for the single employed mothers.

Occupational social work is one of the newest fields of policy and practice. Evolving in the mid-1960s in the Western world, it is now a dynamic arena for social service and practice innovation. Focusing on work, workers, and work organizations, occupational social work provides unique opportunities for the profession to affect the decisions and provisions of management and labour. Professional occupational social workers have leverage both to provide expert service and to become agents of progressive social change. The challenges experienced by single mothers in the workplace can thus be a central focus for organisations employing single mothers (Kurzman, 2013).

6. POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Mkhize and Msomi (2016) believe that because of the educational opportunities that women are currently having, it changed the role that women play in the employment industry, especially now that more and more women are getting employed. However, they further posited that despite the legislative changes, several factors linked to the apartheid era are still showing face in the work environment. Although the author is looking at the South African context, one could actually apply it to the Namibian context as well because Namibia had been under South African rule for 24years and after gaining its independence, adopted most of the South African Acts and legislations.

According to the National Gender Policy (2010), the Government of the Republic of Namibia saw the importance of improving the status of women in society, as well as eradicating injustices of the past. For that reason, the Government has since put measures into place to ensure equitable access to economic pressures and opportunities, as well as social justice for both women and men. With such efforts Namibia became signatory to a number of declarations for the promotion of gender equality, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADAC) protocol on Gender and Development; The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA); The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1997) and its optional protocol; as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, although Namibia has been doing what it could in terms of legislation and policies when it comes to Affirmative Action and issues relating to women in the workplace, the country still has a long way to go. A report by the Economic Association of Namibia (2017) revealed statistics from Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA), stating that women are mostly affected by unemployment as compared to their male counterparts. Female unemployment stood at 38.3% in comparison to their male counterparts which was 29.8% in 2016. Moreover, the report stated that this gap has risen from 7.6% in 2014 to 8.5% in 2016. Additionally, it further stated that unemployment in the rural area is at 39.2%, exceeding that of the urban area at 30.3%. Reasons as to why these statistics are the way they are have not yet been documented. However, one could assume it is related to discrimination.

Below is a brief overview of the Law, Acts and Legislations related to women in the workplace, they are there to ensure that women are seen and treated as equals to their male counterparts when it comes to institutions, to make sure that they are not left behind by development as in the past:

❖ Constitution

The Namibian Constitution is the supreme law; therefore, whatever it says overrules any other legislation or policy. The Namibian Constitution (Chapter 3, Art 10, sec 1) states that all persons shall be equal before the law. Additionally, (Chapter 3, Art 10, sec 2) asserts that no persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status. For that reason, an Occupational Social Worker can potentially use the Constitution to her benefit and make sure that there are policies in line that prevent women from being discriminated against in the workplace. Making sure that they have equal rights to promotions and everything related to work as that of their male counterparts, irrespective of how many children they care for, or any responsibilities they may be having outside the workplace.

Moreover, Chapter 3 Art 21 of the Constitution states all persons have the right to practice any profession or carry out any occupation, trade or business. Again, it can be the duty of the Occupational Social Worker to make sure that women in organisations/companies have their rights protected and are allowed to practice whatever profession they choose to.

Art 23, (3) states the following: “In the enactment of legislation and the application of any policies and practices contemplated by Sub-Article (2) hereof, it shall be permissible to have

regard to the fact that women in Namibia have traditionally suffered special discrimination and that they need to be encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation". It is therefore up to every company/business/organisation or occupational social workers of those companies. to ensure that all these articles are reflected in every policy, laws and daily life most, especially in the workplace.

❖ Labour Act, (Act No. 11 of 2007)

Chapter 2 of the Act (section 5) focuses on the prohibition of discrimination and sexual harassment in employment. Basically, nobody should be discriminated against based on sex, marital status or family responsibility, previous, current or future pregnancy. Section 5(c) talks about family responsibility. It states that it the responsibility of an employer to an individual, who is a parent, spouse, son, daughter or dependent of the employee; regardless of age, needs the care and support of that employee. Chapter 3 is all about the basic conditions of employment. Under this Act, in part D, 26 and 27, maternity leave and extended maternity leave are focused on. It states that a female employee who has worked for six months continuously is entitled to not less than 12 weeks of maternity leave. Furthermore, a medical practitioner can extend the leave days of the pregnant women or one that had just delivered should he/she deem it necessary due to complications that may have arisen during pregnancy or delivery.

❖ The National Gender Policy (2010)

This policy is solely designed to contribute to the attainment of the objectives of vision 2030, in an attempt to create a society where women and men enjoy equal rights and access to basic services. In this policy, a framework is provided to guide the implementation of programmes aimed at meeting expectations of the Namibian people, especially women, to attain fundamental freedoms and to be equal to their male counterparts with regard to participation in all developmental programs and national building efforts.

7. CONCLUSION

In summary, the world of work was initially built upon masculine norms and values as it was initially seen as a male domain. In modern society, however, this is slowly starting to fade as more and more women are graduating from universities and making their mark in this very domain that was initially seen as that of men. With this change in roles, came several challenges

for these women, especially for single mothers who do not enjoy adequate social support. Challenges such as discrimination, inadequate resources, parenting stress, financial challenges; especially those in low-income earning jobs, which then leads to high levels of work-family conflict as compared to those with high-income jobs. The chapter further looked at the concept of adequate childcare, especially for those women with no social support and inflexible work hours. However, from a positive perspective, employment gives some of the single women a sense of living; enhancing the employee's sense of self-esteem, since they can look after their children with whatever little they may be getting as compared to women with no jobs. Finally, this chapter focused on issues related to work family-conflict, organisational constraints, as well as policies that were put in place in order to undo the social injustices that women went through in the past when it came to employment.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1 INTRODUCTION

De Vos (2012) defined the research design as the decisions that a researcher will undertake in planning the study; they are the strategies, inquiries and approaches the researcher takes in order to come to the findings that answer the central research question. This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the research design and methodology adopted when conducting the research study.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative research approach was adopted to gather in-depth, data of how single mothers cope with being an employee and a parent at the same time, as well as how it affects their work and home life on a daily basis. In essence, the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to explore the lived experiences of employed, single mothers who make the effort in attaining work-life-balance.

As discussed by Maree (2012), qualitative research is research that aims at collecting in-depth descriptive data of a phenomenon to develop an understanding of what is being observed. It focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences. The researcher employed this by having face-to-face interviews with participants, through the use of semi-structured interview guide as the research tool to guide and direct the questions; probing further that assisted in making information shared, clearer and more concise.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study was based on exploratory research design in a natural setting. The type of qualitative research chosen was phenomenology. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2012) pointed out that a phenomenological study is one that describes the meaning of the lived experiences of a certain phenomenon by different individuals. Creswell (2009) adds that whereas some methodologies strive to determine opinions and a generalization through hypotheses, phenomenology seeks to explore contextual meaning through the situational knowledge of those being researched (Creswell, 2009).

3.1 Population and sampling procedures

The general population in this study were employed, single mothers living in Otjiwarongo, Namibia. Non-probability, purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to select participants. Maree (2012) explained purposive sampling as selecting participants with defining characteristics as they have the data needed for the study. The snowball sampling method, also known as chain referral sampling, was used by the researcher as she requested participants, she had interviewed to refer other employed, single mother to her as potential participants. De Vos et al, (2012, p.393) noted that “snowball sampling involves approaching a single case that is involved in the phenomenon to be investigated.” The researcher initially selected an employed single mother she was acquainted with, which then initiate the snowball sampling method.

Fifteen single employed mothers were selected, interviewed and audio-recording was done for each participant. Criteria used for selection of research participants were adult single mothers, with one or more children; These single mothers should be employed on a full-time basis for at least one year, at any organisation in the Otjiwarongo district.

3.2. Research paradigm, instrument and tool

In qualitative research, the researcher is usually referred to as the research instrument (Xu & Storr, 2012). The said authors explain that the researcher as an instrument is an accepted and acceptable stance. This means that it is imperative that the qualitative researcher be fully aware of how his/her ontological and epistemological position underpins the research (Xu & Storr, 2012, p. 3). Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality, in other words, what is. Researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work. The researcher adopted an interpretive paradigm (Scotland, 2012, citing Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). The interpretive epistemology is one of subjectivism which is based on real-world phenomena. “The world does not exist independently of our knowledge of it” (Scotland, 2012, citing Grix, 2004, p. 83).

The researcher found it difficult to gather data at the outset of data gathering, probably because she did not take time to make participants interested in the topic being researched, explore feedback provided in more detail and obtain clarity when needed. This led her to disqualify certain interviews. However, she managed to gain good insight into the phenomenon being explored as the study progressed because she became more effective in implementing her social

work skills of building a rapport through empathy, unconditional positive regard in order to gain the trust and so elicit data.

De Vos et al., (2012) noted that semi-structured interviews are used in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perception or account of a particular topic. She used a semi-structured interview guide to help her focus on particular issues (See Appendix A). The guide consisted of semi open-ended questions. This facilitated the ability to allow flexibility during the interview process as well as allowing the researcher the opportunity to ask questions relevant to the interview and the phenomenon at hand to gain more clarity. The interviews were conducted in a safe, private place that the participants chose and felt comfortable at.

3.3. Pre-testing of research tool

The research tool was pre-tested on a woman with the same characteristics of the study population. This then helped the researcher to redevelop the research tool by making questions clearer that was initially unclear. De Vos et al., (2012) stated the importance of pre-testing the research tool; stating that the purpose is to determine whether the relevant data can be obtained from the respondents. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to focus on areas that may have been unclear previously.

3.4 Data analysis

The thematic analysis took place after data had been gathered the audio-recordings transcribed. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) define thematic analysis as a process that involves identifying patterns or themes within the qualitative data. They further outlined six steps to be used when doing this analysis and the researcher followed these steps accordingly.

The researcher began the process off by firstly becoming familiar with the data that was collected. She attained this by transcribing the data she collected while carefully noting down similar patterns that's images. Step two then involved the generating of the initial codes. As the researcher was transcribing and going through the data collected and her notes, she then began to reduce it into small chunks of meaning, that she felt was answering the research question. Furthermore, the search of meanings of themes, which involved her going through the codes she created and determining what themes emerges from them. Step 4 involved reviewing the themes. This was possible through going through the codes and themes over and over again, and then through the transcripts in order to modify and develop preliminary themes. Definition of themes was the other thing that the researcher did. This was basically the

identifying of the essence of what each theme is about as well as looking at what sub-themes interact and related to the main themes. Finally came the writing-up of the findings of the research document, which included verbatim quotes of participants under themes identified.

4. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Maree (2012) explained that qualitative research is not about testing hypotheses as done in quantitative research. Rather it is more about engaging in research that probes for deeper understanding. Maree (2012) uses the notion of crystallisation, which simply suggests that the researcher tries to bring to light the fact that people's worlds are constantly changing whether they like it or not. It further enables individuals to shift their perspectives from things being fixed, rigid or two dimensional towards the idea of a crystal that allows an infinite variety of shapes, substance transmutations, dimensions and angles of approach.

De Vos et al. (2012) documented four constructs that Lincoln and Guba (1999) believe reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm more accurately. They spoke of credibility which is the ability to demonstrate that the research was conducted in a way that has accurately identified the subjects as well as described them. In this regard, the researcher has clearly outlined the selection criteria that were used to purposively select participants. The data she gathered provided thick descriptions of the participants' experiences. The researcher also audiotaped the interviews so that all communication was captured in full.

The second construct of trustworthiness is transferability; the ability for the findings of the research to be transferred from a specific situation or case to another. To enhance the transferability of findings, the researcher provides comprehensive information on the problem-statement and rationale for conducting the study. She also provides detailed profiles of the participants.

Dependability is the third construct, and this refers to the extent to which the research document is logical, well-documented as well as audited; it is where the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the study. To do so, the researcher followed the data analysis process step-by-step and compared her findings with other research findings on the topic.

The last construct is that of confirmability; this being the ability of the findings to yield the same results should someone else carry out the same exact study. By providing a

comprehensive description of the research design and methodology, the researcher enhanced the possibility that research findings can be confirmed.

5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethics are described by Resnik (2015) as norms for conduct that distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Ethics are basically meant to guide the researcher on how to conduct their research in a way that is safe and not harmful to the participants and to make sure that the results are true and used in the right manner.

5.1 Informed Consent

McLaughlin (2007) and Babbie (2010) are in agreement that informed consent is when participants are fully informed about a research project before they agree to take part. This means that all the participants are provided with the information regarding the purpose of the study, what they are required to do, the risk that may be involved, what it is required of them, the sponsors and so forth. Equally important, they are both in agreement that informed consent also has to do with voluntary participation.

The researcher made sure that before conducting the research she informed the participants about the nature and purpose of the study and approximate time and procedures involved (See Participant Information Sheet – Appendix B). Should the study have evoked some emotional or psychological needs (which it did not) the researcher had made plans for referring the participants to the social workers in Otjiwarongo district. In addition to that, she stressed that the participants were free to stop the interview whenever they felt uncomfortable and allowed to skip some questions that they may not be comfortable with. The consent form that they were invited to sign, clearly spelt out their rights when agreeing to participate in the study. (See Appendix C)

5.2. Anonymity and Confidentiality

According to Babbie (2010), anonymity refers to the phenomenon as when the researcher and people who will be reading the research are not able to identify a given response with a respondent. However, McLaughlin (2007) is of a slightly different opinion, stating that anonymity will be realised when those outside the research team will not know the identity of participants. This simply means that people who are not involved in the research study will not be able to identify the responses of those who participated in the study. To achieve this end, the researcher uses pseudonyms when discussing research findings in Chapter 4.

Babbie (2010) and McLaughlin (2007) explained confidentiality as ensuring that the responses and the participants are not matched to each other; people will not be able to tell which response comes from who. The researcher was able to maintain confidentiality by ensuring that the recordings could not be matched to the transcribed work or linked to specific participants. As mentioned, the interviews were conducted at a place of participants' choice. Efforts were made to ensure that the venue selected offered privacy.

5.3. Protecting participants from harm

The researcher acknowledged that some of the participants' might be exposed to psychological risk. She thus reminded them that they were free to stop the interview at any point in time or to skip certain questions or disclosure of information that could make them uncomfortable. The researcher further made arrangements for referring participants to an appropriate counsellor should the need arise.

6. CONCLUSION

The chapter provided an overview of how the research was conducted and why the phenomenological design was selected. Furthermore, the researcher explained why she used non-probability, purposive and the snowball sampling methods in order to select the participants. She also described how, after pre-testing the research tool, fifteen participants meeting the selection criteria were personally interviewed using an interview guide. Data analysis was then discussed. Finally, the researcher elaborated on how trustworthiness and ethical considerations were into account when conducting the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

1. INTRODUCTION

Within this chapter the researcher presents the research findings based on thematic analysis.

2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 1: Demographics of participants.

Pseudonyms	Job Title	No. of children	Ages. of children	No. of years working while single
1. Sieba	Administrative officer	3	4, 12 and 14 years	12 years
2. Adel	Public Relation Officer	2	6 and 17 years	6 years
3. Miriam	Social Worker	2	5months and 6years	6years
4. Enny	Human Resource	1	7 months	7months
5. Berlin	Economist	1	10 years	5years
6. Old Mutual	Finance Consultant	2	2 and 9 years	11months
7. Namcal	Instructor	1	7 years	
8. Selma-Lee	Social Worker	1	3 years	
9. Panda		1	9 years	9years
10. Nangula		1	2 years	2years
11. Pona	Police Officer (Sgt)	2	5months and 5 years	1year
12. Ndapewa	Secretary	1	4 years	2years
13. Johanna		1	9 years	9years
14. Ndapandula	Taxation Officer	2	5 and years	6years
15. Elena	Public Prosecutor	1	8 years	3years

The table above presents the demographics of the participants in the study. It indicates the number of years that they had been single and employed at the same time.

3 PRESENTATION OF THEMES

Below are the themes and sub-themes that emerged based on thematic analysis of interview transcripts. The 6-step data analysis process proposed by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) was followed (see Chapter 3)

3.1 THEMES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE 1:

The first objective of the study was to explore the sort of challenges that single employed mothers experience at home when trying to attain balance work responsibilities and that of primary caregiver.

Theme 1: Caregivers of children at home are not always responsible or trustworthy

Responsible, trustworthy childcare was the major pressing issue that every participant emphasised. Due to these single mothers' work responsibilities, they are either forced to take their children to daycares from a very young age, leave them with family members or in the care of their neighbours, hire nannies or alternatively on some days take them with to work.

Participants felt anxious about using nannies to care for their children. They questioned their reliability and trustworthiness considering recent negative events that had been aired on social media and personal experiences.

Mupetami (2014) narrated that the search for the right nanny is a difficult task for any working parent and an important decision. One have to choose between a strict aunty or a young timid emotional nanny that is unsure of herself. She added that it is even more difficult when one is trying to balance a full-time job together with the many other responsibilities of life. Furthermore, leaving one's child at home in the care of someone else is never an easy thing to do.

This was one of the key issues that all the participants agreed upon. They stated that nannies are not always reliable in the sense that they can disappoint you at the last minute, especially when it comes to day nannies that come and go. They further stated that they sometimes show up for work late or at times not show up at all. Consequently, one will have to also show up late at work or alternatively go to work with the child, which is not effective or efficient. This

is because the workplace is not child-friendly. Participant No. 5 had this to say regarding this issue:

Participant 5:

Ja, there are days, I am not gona lie, ... there are days I would uhm have to bring my child to work you know because there is nobody at home to take care, and it's not a good thing, it's not a good thing when you come to the office and a client comes into your office and your child is seating there. It's not a professional look but sometimes you have to do things like that, sometimes you have to intertwine the two, bring your child at work, seat her in the corner have her do her homework, while you are trying to serve your clients as well at the same time. (Participant 5)

Similarly, Participant 8 stated:

Okay, my baby-sitters are sleeping in, so I don't have nannies that are coming in, in the morning sometimes they will go for holiday and they don't come back. Like of recent my nanny went for a weekend and then she was supposed to come back on Sunday, which she did not do, and she did not communicate. So, uhm, I had to Monday.

Participant 12 had the following to say regarding this issue:

Mmmh, I have gone through a series of nannies, like probably I have gone over 10 now, ever since she was born, ja so it's really a struggle to keep one fixed as in like, maybe for over three months, like the maximum you can have probably is just a year or so. So, they just change they keep changing every time.

Another participant who had a nanny stated that she goes as far as inspecting the children's bodies when she gets home to see if there are any suspicious marks on them. An article by Menges (2017) reported a babysitter caught on camera for attempted murder, assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, and ill-treatment of a child she was supposed to be looking after.

Participant No. 3 experienced the following:

He's confused, whilst the younger one, he stays with the nanny. The nanny is full time with your child, you also don't know what the nanny is instilling in the child. And sometimes the nannies abuse the children. Every time reading this thing on the internet, we are reading them on the news, nannies abusing the kids, when you are not there. So what I do when I get home really, I have to do inspections, I have to inspect all the bruises on the body, if there is an odd mark, I need to know if there is a bump on the head, you inspect you see what is happening, if the child is crying non-stop then you know something is not right, ja then you really really know something is not right. I had to fire a nanny, I had to fire, because the child was crying non-stop my first nanny with my five months, non-stop, every time you give when you come from work there's just, then I thought, something is not right because you also don't have a nanny cam, you don't have proof so rather let the person go.

Participant No. 11 also did not have a good experience with the issue of nannies. She narrated her experience as follows:

“Ja, the first nanny the difficulties were, one day I left my boy with her. When I got back to work, okay when I left the baby was fine, nothing, he was not showing signs of fever, sickness nothing but then that day when I returned from work, I found out or I discover that the child was having a high fever and he was having bruises, I don’t know in the mouth, I don’t know maybe the child fell but the nanny denied. She did not tell me anything, at least if the child fell or something you should inform the mother, but she denied she said she don’t know what happened to him so ja, its worrisome.”

The feelings shared by the participants in the study clearly draw attention to the importance of trust in the mother-nanny relationship, and how poignantly feelings related to trust can be experienced by mothers. As appropriately stated by Gottesfeld (2012, p. 130) “It is the keystone of the mother-nanny relationship, because without it, the relationship, and the caregiving system, is no longer stable.” Gottesfeld (2012) also established that eroded trust was central to every instance in which mothers fired previous nannies.

It became apparent in this study that participants tried to ‘control’ their nannies, in order to ensure the well-being of their children. It was obvious that trust did not exist, and this further exacerbated that stress experienced by the participants.

Although some participants expressed frustration when describing the negative, snowball impact of ‘unreliable’ nannies that do not arrive on time to take care of their children, many studies have revealed that that many nannies also face challenges which interfere with them arriving on time, such as lack of transport resources (Kanyoko, 2015). Nannies are also employed women and mothers with family responsibilities and finding it difficult to maintain a work-life balance

Theme 2. Elder child in the house acting as caregivers are at risk

Participant 2 did not have a nanny looking after her children. However, she has a nephew who is in grade 10 and responsible for staying with the younger cousin after school. She therefore had this to say:

“Well security wise, you know it’s a problem, I am so, you know sometimes, I am on urge coz you are thinking that are they fine, so I always ask them to lock the house or the doors. So I went to the extreme of installing camera’s in the house and also having an alarm system so I always couch them like if somebody comes at home, I would always call and say *“kutja there is somebody coming otherwise you don’t open, so for me, okay”* I am a little bit relaxed now, that we have a security system at home, but of

course in the beginning you will always. I would call frantically, I will call at home, are you guys fine? Is Shedel in the house? Did she not go out of the yard? Sometimes you so afraid of the child going out of the house, coz there are so many people building around us and you know with so many evil things happening.”

Furthermore participant 1 also had one of her eldest child (14 years) looking after the younger ones after school although most of the nurturing care responsibilities falls to the middle child (12 years), who she stated that is more responsible.

Actually the middle baby, the 12-year-old one, the girl, she is more like the elders, she is very matured she is basically taking care of both, the brother and the sister, she is very open minded she can cook she can do basically anything taking care of the sister as well, so I am really fine with them being home alone, I just tell them to lock up and what I tell my eldest is to make sure both his sisters are home when its five and they are in doors. Ja and then I leave one of my two phones at home so we just communicate, I just make sure everything is fine as well.

Participants expressed a general concern about the safety of their children if the need arose to leave them at home without an adult figure. These concerns are not unrealistic because after the murder of a young child in Namibia, the United Nations Children's Fund Namibian representative, Rachel Odede, stated that children are generally not safe in Namibia (Kahiurika, 2018)

Theme 3: Time constraints make it difficult to spend time with the children.

Participants pointed out that they regarded spending enough time with their children as essential, even if this sometimes, entailed financial sacrifice.

Sub-theme 1: Drop of earnings is necessary if wanting to spend time with the children

Participant 6 had to give up her employment position in order to accommodate her children.

... when I was an adviser, I got actually more money, like weekly S&T and the bonuses were more..., this side everything's okay, it's a bit less than that, but I just have to I had to accept it. I had to get used to that because the move was for the sake of my kids...I'm getting there.

Participant 5 explained that she had to go unpaid leave, just so she could attend her child's school activities.

... the only way one can really handle that is; I am not gonna neglect my child. There is no way, like I said, I have seen this, I have seen people who were neglected when they were young, I have seen them being 60-year-old adults, but still carrying that emotional burden with them and I try so much not to let that be my child. So, in any

case, my motherhood or my mothering responsibilities, becomes a burden on my work I will always choose my mothering responsibilities, always. I would rather get an unpaid. It's unfortunate but I would rather get an unpaid day at work and spend quality time with my child, I would rather be there for my child when they are sick then sit at an office and leave my child alone at home, so it's hard, it's a hard line because as a single parent you need the money but then your child always comes first, my child always comes first...

Sub-theme 2: Not spending enough time with children can negatively affect the mother-child relationship

Not being able to spend enough time with their children to build relationships was a pressing issue raised by most participants. They pointed out that they have little time to spend with their children as work gets demanding. Most participants explained that they tried to sneak in time during the early morning hours or before going to bed or alternatively on weekends.

Participant 9 had the following to say:

... You tend to leave some of the things; the issues that he is going through, or he may not feel comfortable telling you because you are not always there. Or even though you are there, most of the time for the prolonged time you are not there, you only see him in the morning and in the evening so the bond might be affected. You may not see it like instant but gradually it might be affected.

Similarly, Participant 4 noted that:

I feel like its maybe the time that you spend with the kids... It's not quite enough you understand; coz she gets to be raised by somebody else like on a full. Because just imagine you go to work at, 8 to 5, let me say 8 ja, let me say 7:30 to 5:30, you are not, that baby cannot see you so and you only have when you come back. Okay I go to gym; I have to go to gym. When I came back, when I come back from gym its late, you have to bath her, you feed her then she is already asleep. You just have a short time to spend with her which I think, it's a very, it's a big effect on the relationship between the time, you get, you don't get to bond so much and on weekends you only bond on Sundays ja and sometimes on Sundays there is also other things to do, you have to go shopping...ja, its, it's really difficult."

Participant 7 expressed stressed:

... because you know I don't have that much time with my son. Sometimes I end up when I go home maybe there are certain things for school. Him also, you know he needs time to talk every time, especially if it is exam. I say aaah I am busy now...so not that maybe I want it, but I am seeing maybe that's where we get our bread so, I have no choice sometimes I just have to, not really ignore him when he needs other things I will tell him not now, so that effects, the mother relationship. Sometimes it's not there that's why, he just switches on TV and starts watching cartoons because the mother is always busy.

Participant 3 had the following to say:

The issue is bonding neh, you just don't that relationship that you would want to have, you know you want the kids to really be attached to you to know yes mommy has always been present in my life, you know sometimes when they put up a fuss, especially with the six-year-old when you have to get out of the house or when you have to leave him at day care, it feels so, I don't know, it works on me. It stresses me out a lot because then you know the child needs you, the child needs you but you are not meeting his emotional needs because of your job, your, your forced to abandon your children, because of what you need to bring on the table

The feelings of guilt experienced by working mothers because they are not spending enough time with their children are well-recorded (Haslam, Patrick & Kirby, 2014). These feelings of guilt imply that working, single mothers do recognise the importance of mothering and being personally available for children when it comes to a child's general development and well-being.

Participant 5 says the following:

Uhm, to a certain degree I feel guilty about it, I feel that I am not giving her the full attention, I am not the one that gets to help her with her homework, uhm I am not the one that make sure she is eating, you know, I provide the food of course but whether she is actually eating at school and so on I am not the one that does it, so there is a certain level of guilt associated with that but other than that I am glad that she is not in the streets or with the domestic worker at home or just watching tv at least she is in a system where teachers get to care for her as well.

Theme 3: Desire to be a stay-at-home mother cannot be realised.

Some of the participants expressed that they longed to be stay-at-home mothers, but this was not possible because they needed to generate income. This is what Participant 3 had to say regarding this issue:

I would really prefer to stay home on my own; to be a stay home mom if it was possible.... especially, whether it's now at a preschool; it's like when you are sending the child to pre-school is also like a nanny. Full time the child is not with you; at least preschool is a preparation of school for Grade One its fine. But with the five months I would have really preferred to stay with the child myself.

Participant 12 expressed a similar sentiment:

Like for me, I would have loved to just okay wake up, and just take care of her you know. From bathing her in the morning, feeding her, her breakfast, feeding her, her

lunch and her, her snacks between her meals and you know play with her. Have that bond as a mother child bond, and just do things with her, but then I don't get to do a lot of things with her when I am working like from 8-5. When I come home, 5 o'clock she will basically just spend an hour with me, and she is already tired, and she will go to bed. So, there is no mother-daughter bond unless we have to wait for a weekend, or if I have a day off then I fully play the role of a mother, you understand?

Similarly, Participant 15 stated:

It's something that I would have definitely considered... it's something that I wanted. I always wanted to be a housewife and a stay-at-home mom with a lot of children. So, if I had that opportunity to be a stay-at-home mom, I would have loved it.

Similarly, other studies have indicated that the tension between the dual roles of mother and professional leads some women to trade their career for more time with their children (Rubin & Wooten, 2007). Unfortunately, employed, single mothers cannot consider this option because they are primary income generators.

Single mothers tend to give up a lot to play the role of an employed, single mother where they must take on full time responsibilities and at the same time be fully involved at work. Srivastava (2017) is of the opinion that single mothers are one of the strongest people due to all the responsibilities of raising children on their own. They work tirelessly to provide for their families, while in the same spirit take on the responsibility of having to find happiness for themselves and that of their children.

3.2. THEMES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE 2

The second objective of this study was to explore what challenges single mother **experience at work** when trying to balance the roles of employee and primary caregiver

Theme1: The work environment is not a child-friendly environment

Sub-theme 1: Work is disrupted if the child is taken to work.

Some of the participants made it clear that the work environment is not child-friendly. For example, Participant No. 8 explained:

I went to the office I thought I could go with my son and do a few things at the office you know, but it was just not working out because after thirty minutes he got impatient and then all he wanted was just running around and playing so I had to come back home and leave my work. So on a Tuesday, I also did not come to work but then I had to talk to a colleague because we work with kindergartens and she recommended that there is a certain kindergarten where you can leave your child for the day and then they charge a certain fee.

Research indicates that in many other countries as well, for example, Hungary, employers have generally not successfully introduced a working system that facilitates a work-family life balance. There are no flexible working hours; work shifts and schedules; and possibilities to work at home or leave the workplace early to respond to unexpected family situations (Hobson, Fahlen & Takács, 2011).

Theme 2: Burnout

Some mothers felt that when it comes to the balancing of motherhood and employment, they do not really have a choice as they are required to play both roles interchangeably. For some, this is not a work in the park, as it has led to burnout especially during hectic periods at work. Good (2017) wrote that being a single parent is more like a double-edged sword, where the benefits and the negatives are cancelling each other out. Meenakshi, Subrahmanyam and Ravichandran (2013) believed that employees who believe that they do not have time for their personal life, usually feel more drained and distracted while they are at work. Moreover, the spillover of negative aspects of work into an employee's personal life can lead to job exhaustion, disruptions of relationships with family and friends, loss of employment as well as increased stressed.

Participant 2 highlighted that she became exhausted because of the heavy work responsibilities she had to meet, although she was also playing a demanding role mothering the children at home.

Sometimes you can't avoid it; sometimes it happens to you, it happens. Like I remember last year, I was so tired, but it was just July and it was the time of the year and as PR that was like my campaign. I had to drive it; make sure Otjiwarongo wins, so we were doing road shows, we were doing a lot of things. So I was tired, but I didn't aaaah notice that and then we, just one day I...I blacked out while we were still in Windhoek, while we were at the expo... and that now where it all started coz normally I would never get sick, I think I just got overwhelmed."

Participant 7 shared her experiences stating the following

.... like in the afternoon, humanly I get tired; I am exhausted. I have been having, if it was two groups, or one group, which comes in the afternoon, but now every session is a new group, new level; they are not same people. So, you teach different things on those levels; so sometimes if it's like level three. I told them now this one is affecting also quality. I just give assessment or activity coz sometimes you could feel... even now... I don't know whether it's dizzy or what I am...I am a hypertension patient which I believe is tension and pressure for during exams. It can also drop 190/180, I don't know where to touch; must I mark level one, I leave, must I mark level two I won't finish..."

Participant 5 shared that she has no choice but to keep going for the sake of her child

Uhm it can be difficult at times, uhm it's tough to co-parent with somebody with whom you have ended a relationship, especially if the relationship does not end in good terms, uhm we as parents forget to take care of the child and not start with our inner fighting's so it can be challenging in that regard. Uhm but other than that I guess you wake up and just cope, because you have to, you have to do it for your child

Michel, Beiler May and Clark (2014) are of the opinion that people work under a fixed amount of resources, such as time and energy. Making reference to the resource drain theory that states that an increase of resource spent in one domain, will result in a decrease of resource available in the other domain. This is what appeared to be happening with the participants. They implied that they don't have enough time to fully pay attention and be there for their children after work because they have exceeded their energy and time in the work domain.

Similarly, Michel, Beiler May and Clark (2014) explained that work-related stress burnout and exhaustion have been found to be results of work-family conflict; in which role pressure from one domain is incompatible with role pressure from another domain.

3.3. THEMES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE THREE

The third objective of this study was to investigate what coping mechanisms employed, single parents implement to try balance work and parenting responsibilities. The following themes were identified related to this objective:

Theme 1: Boundaries between work and family life should be clear

Some participants made it clear that in order to cope with the stress involved in fulfilling two demanding life responsibilities, namely work and parental, they make sure matters related to work are managed at work and not at home and vice versa.

Participant 13 highlighted the issue of creating boundaries between work and family as an important means of coping.

... as a person you have to weigh and to balance the situation. For instance, if I have let's say, I am not happy with him at work... I mean at home if he did something at home and it really pissed me off, that I cannot bring it to the office. I left it at home if aaah, let's say if we parted our way and we did not solve it, I still have to pack it home, When I go back home I will pick it up and see how can we solve the problem. Coz you find that if you bring problems to work, it will also create another situation at the office. Deal, you see, when you are in the office deal with the content of the office, when you are at home deal with your problem at home.

Participant 4 expressed a similar perspective:

“It’s just how I am I don’t mix things, either maybe relationships or whatever, I don’t mix the two. If I am at home, I am at home and if I am at work, I am at work... do my duties what I am required to do and then from there I am done.... you have to focus on both, at work you have to focus because if you don’t focus at work, you are not going to do your work as required because at the end of the day if you miss something you are fired or something and then where will you get money to support your child? So, you have to balance the thing.”

Basically, Theme 1 highlights the fundamental theoretical framework underlying the study; namely the boundary and border theories. It is obvious that single parents in the study see the need to separate their roles of parent and employee (Allen, Cho & Meier, 2014; Fedakova & Istonova, 2017). They create these ‘boundaries’ by keeping their responsibilities related to mother and employee separate. Although the ‘boundaries’ are permeable, they seek to prioritise the needs of mother and employee when in the ‘physical environments’ they find themselves in daily.

Theme 2: Communicate openly with children

All the participants with children above the age of 9 years had one thing in common; an opportunity for them to engage in free, open communication with their children. They developed a platform where their children could come and talk to them if they were not happy about something. The comments below, reflect this phenomenon:

Participant 1 who has a 14, 12 and 4-year-old said the following:

Okay sometimes I know I must not mention certain things to them, but I think being a single mom I need to tell them what I am going through for them to know. For them to respond better to me. But shu... I think by now they understand what is what, with regard to our little family; that they know and they also try, especially now that I am also at home. There was a time when I was also sick and booked off, so they would like tell each other.... no please don’t make noise mommy is not feeling well. Let’s clean the house so mommy cannot get angry; let’s do this mommy is feeling like that. So they also know now what is happening, but then they are just kids and ja and then they get to misbehave little and then I will like go crazy and then when it’s all forgiven and forgotten they will like come and say oh mama you are a crazy woman neh and I will be like why am I crazy, they will be like mama why are you angry like that, and I will be like you know I don’t like, I don’t like things to be messy even like now, them leaving this out here, for me it’s not nice but then I also told myself that my kids cannot be 100%; sometimes I must also just understand them.

Participant 13 who had a 9-year-old had the following to say:

But then he is, he is this person. We can communicate if he is not happy with something. He will tell me if, for instance, if I want to beat him, he will tell me “No I did, this it’s

true. It's a mistake, but can we talk. Can I ask mommy to talk or to explain why I did, why I did it ja but its only that, that domination or so that I want to work on it.

This theme reinforces multiple research studies which have highlighted the importance of open communication between parent and child within single parent families (Cherry, 2016, citing Bridge & Schrod, 2013; Fife, Nelson, & Messersmith, 2014; Keating, Russell, Cornacchione, & Smith, 2013).

Theme 3: Different sources of stress relief and support

Participants mentioned various sources that helped relieve their stress and provided support.

Sub-theme 1: Physical exercise

Participant 8 believed in doing exercises in order to relieve her stress.

I also do sports. I do karate. You know karate involves punching and fighting. So, most of the time if I had a stressful day when I go to dojo, where we train and then I punch someone in the face, or I punch the punching bag, then when I come home, I am fine.

The effectiveness of physical exercise as a means of reducing work-related stress, is well recognised by experts in the field of stress management in the work environment. (Gronningæter, Hytten, Skauli, Christensen & Ursin, 1992; Stier-Jarmer, Frisch, Oberhauser, Berbercih & Schuh, 2016).

Sub-theme 2: Religious strength

For participant No10, she drew her strength from her God because, as she explained, other coping skills are not as successful as talking to God. Below is an extract from her interview.

Talking to God, is most definitely, quite something that I would say is, it's a coping mechanism for me, because it also depends on the beliefs you have and how, how close you are with your God. He's answering is always on my side, so to say. When I pray, I get peace of mind and that is what is keeping me going every single day."

This finding concurs with other researchers who have identified that hardships are managed through resilience that spiritual strength and religion provide (Dilmaghani, 2018; Manning, 2014).

Sub-theme 3: Grandmothers play a meaningful role

Most of the participants stated that they can always rely on their parents (especially grandmothers) to step in and assist them when times get tough. Either they take the children to

the village to be with the grandmother, or the grandmother comes to stay with them; whichever way that works for the family situation.

Participant 3 had this to say:

... support is there, like now I am sending my six-year-old to the grandmother up north for the holidays, so at least I can relax a little bit with the five months. So, it's at least good. They would call you in, they would visit, ja and they would even ask you to send the children...so it's really, the support system is really good.

Participant 15 shared her experiences stating the following:

... usually I ask his grandma to step in for me for that time. If there have been instances where I have to, while he is still with me he has to work extra hours, or a trail would go on till 8 and I cannot drive back to Outjo that time, then I would ask his grandmother to uhm take care of him for those two days in my absence, or to do whatever I have to do while I am not there.

Participant 10 shared:

... I think there are times when she misses mommy's attention. There are times when she will be crying when I am leaving, but I don't have a choice... On the other side, and you know a child it might affect her, but in the long run there is grandmother to share the love with during the weekend also.

The important role that grandparents can play in caring for children of single parents is emphasised worldwide (Goodfellow & Lavery, 2003; Weldon-Johns, 2015). In this study, the issue of providing care for their children when work commitments became unavoidable was also highlighted.

Sub-theme 4: Social life is not the only answer to self-care

Many participants emphasised that taking care of themselves is important. Social life is a luxury that most of these single mothers do not have the opportunity to enjoy at all. Some participants did not regard going out with friends as a means of caring for themselves; taking a break from work commitments.

Participant 13 pointed out that she would rather stay at home; having some quality alone time.

“... I don't socialise so much, and I am a reserved person. I like time; my own time. I like my own space. I like just being me, so socialising to me, okay to me I foresee it as wasting of time.”

Participant 14 also did not regard going out with friends and enjoying herself as a way of caring for oneself.

“... now maybe because my sister is also in town she moved to town and she is also a single mom and then she is also having two kids and sometimes she is with the kids at home.... she is having a social life because she doesn't have a life like mine and she is also saying let's go out or what. It was not there it's just now that I am learning how to, to go out but I feel it's so boring, seriously.”

During the interviews participants somewhat didn't understand the whole concept behind 'me time' as some referred to it as being with their children. Moreover, for some participants letting go of everything is somewhat not an easy road for them; so instead they opted to taking time off with their children to either go out or travel.

Participant 8 had the following to say:

I moved to Otjiwarongo a few months ago so I don't really have much of a social life. I haven't gone out in a long time here locally, unless maybe I travel out of town, to other towns; then maybe that's when I get to hang with my friends. But what I have done in the past was that my friends that I used to hang around, where I used to live; they were also mothers... so it's either we take our children with coz we would invite, we would have, like a gathering at a friend's house and then there I can take my child with and then he can also play with the other parent's kids.

OBJECTIVE 3

The final objective of this study was to probe what single, employed mothers think **should be changed in the work environment, through policy and practice**, to enable them to manage the challenges related to balancing their dual roles more effectively. The following sub-themes emerged when exploring this objective:

Theme 1: Day care centres needed

Some participants emphasised the need for child-friendly work environments. For example, Participant 1 had the following to say regarding the issue at hand:

... maybe a day care at the workplace. It would have been nice because us single mothers; we are really struggling. You have to take a taxi and then drop our kids off wherever you have to.

Similarly, Participant 5 stated:

... I know of private companies who have a sort of like crash at their offices; just space for kids. So, where the mothers get to come to work, or the parents get to come to work, their kids are also there just in a separate office block, with somebody taking care of them. If like your single mother; like a newly single mother and you have to breastfeed... you don't have to drive all the way home to breastfeed. You just move to the next office, breastfeed your child you will be given some time off to come back. So maybe if we can look into programs where, we allow single parents especially in government institutions, where we allow single parents to have to time off to go breastfeed...

It is well-reported that international organisations that have on-site childcare available either full time or on a drop-in basis find it helpful to employees. Research has repeatedly indicated that employees report decreased parental anxiety, feelings of job satisfaction and less stressed about balancing work and family (Secret, 2004). Increased productivity and worker retention have also been identified (Babu & Raj, 2013). In South Africa, the advantages of childcare provision in the workplace had also been identified (Childcare in the Workplace, 2014). Unfortunately, the benefits of childcare in the workplace has not been the focus of research in Namibia.

Theme 2: Longer maternity leave

Some participants emphasised the need for a longer period of maternity leave. Participant 3 had this to say:

...but I would prefer at least either at least that ag, even six months is so less, maybe a year to two years of maternity leave, just for that bonding purposes.

Participant 11 had the following to say regarding this issue:

... I always say you know after giving birth, then here in Namibia, it's just three months then the fourth month you return to work. So, I will suggest they give us, maybe 6 months, at least. It's when you know child...

Longer maternity leave is being promoted in many Western, developed countries. For example, in Canada, research has indicated that there are large increases in absence from work when mothers are breastfeeding their infants (Andres, et al., 2016; Baker & Milligan, 2008). Staehelin, Berteau and Stutz (2007), also point that there is a positive association between the duration of maternity leave and the mother's mental health and duration of breastfeeding. Furthermore, extended maternity leave has also been associated with lower perinatal, neonatal and post-neonatal mortality rates as well as lower child mortality.

Theme 3: Flexible working hours

Some participants expressed the need for work hours to be flexible.

Participant 15 had the following to say:

... if they were to give me like relax time; allow me to leave 4 o'clock instead of 5 o'clock; that would make my life a whole lot easier than it is now, a whole lot easier.

Similarly, Participant 8 commented:

... if we can be allowed to leave you know the 10 min early and maybe you know because we drop off our kids at school at 7. If we can make an arrangement where if I come in 10 min early to work, I get to leave 10min early that can work coz then I get to do my job, the full 8 hours that I am paid for, and then I get to be there on time for my child as well.

Jacobsen (2015) stated that often when one thinks of work-life balance, one thinks of offering flexible work schedules or a holistic benefit package. However, it is not as simple as that. He therefore suggested a solution, which is mindfulness; believing that it may help employees build emotional barriers between work and life. Which is something that some of the participants are employing in their day to day lives in order to balance the work-life conflict dilemma. Moreover, Stephens (2017) proposed that acknowledging that work-life conflict exist for single mothers is the first step in understanding the challenges single mothers experience.

4. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the most important themes emerging when exploring the objectives of the study and critically discuss findings in this regard. Most of the themes emerging related to these objectives basically reinforce findings worldwide. However, it became evident that although single-mothers' needs to enjoy work-primary caregiver balance is being recognised overseas, and efforts are being made to address these needs. However, In Namibia these needs are not being adequately addressed as should be in order to make work-life balance manageable.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the findings from the research document. This chapter will, therefore, go ahead and present the summary of those findings in accordance with the purpose of the study. Furthermore, recommendations from the summary will then be made based on the conclusions reached.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In terms of Objective 1, it became apparent that single parents are particularly worried about the care of their children while at work. They needed to feel certain that their children's needs were being adequately met by caregivers taking over this responsibility; but this need for certainty wasn't being adequately met.

Themes related to Objective 2, which focused on challenges experienced in the work environment, identified experiences of an unfriendly work environment; the workplace is not taking the needs of the working mother into consideration and this can lead to burnout.

Objective 3 centred around coping mechanisms when it comes to family-work balance. It became apparent that some participants had identified the need to set boundaries; prioritising work responsibilities at work and parenting responsibilities at home. Being frank with older children was also deemed important. Several sources of support and stress relief activities were also highlighted.

Finally, Objective 4 focused on what participants wanted to see changed to enhance work-primary caregiver balance. Suggestions included the benefit of day-care centres in the workplace; a longer period of maternity leave and flexible working hours.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on research findings, it becomes apparent that the needs of single mothers living in Otjiwarongo, Namibia, are not being adequately addressed. Challenges being experienced in the workplace are contributing to challenges being faced in their role as a primary caregiver and vice versa. In order to function effectively, they have identified the need for the workplace

to better in accommodating their needs as a single parent. They identify a need for meaningful changes in the workplace so they can adequately fulfil their roles as the primary caregiver. Therefore meeting these needs will ensure better work-life balance for them.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Policy and practice

As outlined in the literature review, Namibia has some good laws, acts and legislation addressing issues of women in employment, which aim for gender mainstreaming and including women in the workplace. However, these laws, acts and legislations are not visible in organisations, companies and ministries. It is therefore recommended that the government closely monitors organisations, ministries and companies so as to make sure that policies are put in place that will be addressing some of these issues in order to really strike a balance. This will then ensure that some of the challenges experienced by the mothers as outlined in both Objectives 1 and 2 will be minimised.

4.2. Employee Assistant Practitioners/ and Occupational Social Workers

It is also recommended that government ministries strongly consider putting a structure in place that sees to it that they employ employee assistant practitioners or occupational social workers as currently there is no government ministry that caters for that. This would help them have a clear understanding of the issues that single mothers are facing while trying to balance the two worlds of work and primary caregiver. It will therefore not only assist with the issue of single mothers but overly issues that employees may be facing on the day-to-day basis that hinders them to be fully effective in their jobs. Furthermore, this type of structure will help in making sure that the employee rights and needs are taken care off in accordance to their constitutional rights and legislations, regarding facilitating a work-family balance.

4.3 Nanny Agencies

There is an urgent need for single, employed mothers to have access to good childcare providers (nannies) in the home environment. Policy needs to be put into place to ensure that nannies are registered, trained to be competent child caregivers and show a commitment to meeting the best interests of children they care for.

4.4. Future Research

It is further recommended that future studies in Namibia on focus on single, employed fathers in professional careers. Comparing the challenges faced by single employed mothers and those faced by single, employed fathers could identify if both presents with similar work-parenting balance needs.

Moreover, it may also be helpful in doing a mixed methodology (i.e. quantitative and qualitative approaches) in order to strengthen research findings.

Furthermore, exploring the challenges experienced by employers in meeting the needs of the primary caregiver in the workplace also requires attention. The voices of both employer and employee need to be heard and a joint approach to addressing these changes initiated. These role players must be informed of how initiatives in the western world to promote work-family conflict is being addressed and explore whether these changes can be implemented in Namibia.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

TITLE OF STUDY: BALANCING THE ROLES OF EMPLOYEE AND PRIMARY CHILD CAREGIVER: EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE MOTHERS FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN OTJIWARONGO, NAMIBIA.

The following questions serve as a guide to the information to be collected in the interview:

- How many children do you have?
- How old are they?
- When you go to work every day, who takes care of the children?
- How do feel about this child care arrangement?
- How long have you been working on a full time basis as a single mother?
- What are the challenges you face being a mother and also having to work on a full-time basis?
- What sort of affect do you think working on full-time basis has on you fulfilling your roles and responsibilities as a mother?
- How do you think being a single mother affects fulfilling your work responsibilities?
- What do you do when your motherhood responsibilities are weighing down on your work responsibilities?
- What do you do when your work responsibilities are weighing down on your motherhood responsibilities?
- How are you coping as a single mother while having work responsibilities?
- How are you coping as an employee while having motherhood responsibilities?
- Are this ways proving successful?
- What do you think your employers could do you to improve the problem-situation you face?

APPENDIX B



SOCIAL WORK
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

TITLE OF STUDY: BALANCING THE ROLES OF EMPLOYEE AND PRIMARY CHILD CAREGIVER: EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE MOTHERS FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN OTJIWARONGO, NAMIBIA.

Greetings

My name is Julia Ndeyapewa Markus and I am a MA social work student at the University of the Witwatersrand, specialising in Occupational Social Work. As part of the requirements of my degree, I am expected to conduct a research study. I wish to research how single mothers in Otjiwarongo Namibia balance their work and motherhood and I'm sure that you have meaningful information to share with me.

Description of how I will gather information

If you agree to take part, I will personally interview you at a time and place that is suitable and convenient for you. The interview will take about 30-60 minutes to complete. In the interview process you may choose to answer or not to answer a question without any negative consequences, and you are free to get clear understanding of anything. The interview will also be carried out in Oshiwambo or English.

Apart from asking you to agree in writing for me to interview you (I will give you a form to complete), I will also give you a separate form to complete if you agree for me to record our interview.

Right to refuse or withdraw

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without any consequences. You have the right to answer any single

question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the interview. Furthermore, you have the right to request that I do not use any information that I collect from you during our interview.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked cabinet, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a file on my password-protection computer. All the files will be kept in a locked cabinet for two years following publication or for six years if no publication comes from the study.

I will also not include any information in my research report, or in any article I may publish that would make it possible to identify you. Instead I will use pseudonyms (false names) for all the people taking part in this study that I interview.

No-one, other than my research supervisor (Dr. Priscilla Gerrand) and I, will have access to research information gathered during the interview.

Material Benefits

If you take part in the research, there will be no material benefits, that is, you will not receive and money or goods that you can use.

Risks/Discomforts of being in this study

I don't think that there will be any risks or discomforts if you decide to take part in the research. If you feel stressed or unhappy, please let me know and I'll avoid talking about the issue if you want me to.

Further questions about the study and report concerns

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor. You can email me at ndeyapewa2011@gmail.com or 1644009@students.wits.ac.za. You are also welcome to telephone me on Cell: +264 81 4047107. My supervisor's email address is Priscilla.Gerrand@wits.ac.za and she can be telephoned at 011 717-4475.

This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request.

If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email: hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za/
Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

.....

APPENDIX C



SOCIAL WORK
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF STUDY: BALANCING THE ROLES OF EMPLOYEE AND PRIMARY CHILD CAREGIVER: EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE MOTHERS FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN OTJIWARONGO, NAMIBIA.

I hereby agree to participate in the research study and be interviewed. I confirm that the purpose and procedures of the study were explained to me well. I understand that:

- My participation is completely voluntary. I am not bound by anything, and I may choose to stop participating at any time with no consequences.
- I may choose to answer or not answer any questions if I do not want to.
- The interview will take up approximately 30-60 minutes of my time and it will be at a place where I am comfortable with and in the language of choice.
- I have been told that there are no benefits of any kind for taking in the study, in other words, there is no compensation.
- My personal and identifying details will not be disclosed.
- The research study is for the requirements of the university and the information will be used to write and submit a final research report to the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand.
- I may choose to see and be given a chance to see the final report.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D



SOCIAL WORK
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



CONSENT FOR AUDIO-RECORDING IN INTERVIEW

TITLE OF STUDY: BALANCING THE ROLES OF EMPLOYEE AND PRIMARY CHILD CAREGIVER: EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE MOTHERS FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN OTJIWARONGO, NAMIBIA.

I hereby agree that the interview can be tape recorded.

I understand that:

- The recording will be kept in a secret and safe place where no one else can find and no one other than me and supervisor will have access to the recorded information.
- The recording will be typed and some of the words or information that I share will be written in the final research report, but my identifying information will not be shared.
- The recording will be kept for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications are made on the study.
- I may be quoted directly in the research report but then my identifying details will not be disclosed.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____