

**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**



**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**STRESSORS RELATED TO TRANSFERS AND COPING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED  
BY FEMALE WORKERS AT ZIMRA**

**BY  
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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN  
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## **DEDICATION**

To Ms. J Maseko, my cherished mother, this is yours may you be inspired

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The study explored the stressors related to transfers and coping strategies employed by female workers at ZIMRA. It was based upon the problem statement that transferring an employee from one working area to another severely affected work-life balance of that employee. The ultimate purpose of the research being to make known all the stressors related to transfers and coping strategies used by employees so that stressors could be eliminated and coping strategies improved so as to promote employees' well-being. The study was guided by the Transactional model of stress with attempt to show how employee transfers result in stress. A qualitative approach and phenomenological research design were used and to come up with sample, the researcher used convenient sampling whereas data saturation method was used to determine sample size. The research consisted of 14 female participants of which 12 were non-managerial and 2 were managerial employees. The data was collected through in-depth interviews was then coded, categorised and analysed using thematic data analysis. The major themes were work-life stressors related to transfers, coping strategies used by ZIMRA female workers to cope with stress. The conclusions drawn were that there are so many stressors related to transfers, these included family disintegration, homesickness, increased financial constraints and challenges in adapting and relearning new procedures. The study also found that emotion focused coping strategies were mostly used by employees especially seeking social support to cope with stress and the major recommendation most employees gave was that during transfers, the proximity between the new station and employees' home and family should be maintained.*

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

HIV- Human Immune Deficiency Virus

MSU-Midlands State University

NIOSH- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

ZIMRA-Zimbabwe Revenue Authority

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The chapter serves as the bedrock of the whole research, it contains the background of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions, definition of key terms and chapter summary.

#### **1.2 Background of the study**

Employee-transfers are a current issue practiced by many organizations in Zimbabwe yet it has not been accorded much attention by researchers despite the fact that it appears to be one of the major stressors at the workplace. There are a countless number of reasons as to why organisations transfer their employees from one work area to another. In a study by Adekunle and Popoola (2009) in Nigeria which aimed at exploring reasons why organisations conduct employee transfers, it was found that transfers are important as they expose employees to new experiences thereby helping them to develop a variety of skills. It was also found that transfers reduce boredom which is accompanied with working in the same area for a long time doing routine duties. Again, the study demonstrated that transfers provided promotion opportunities to employees and that most managers started as mere employees and only climbed the ladder through transfers. On the contrary, Stassen, Cameron and Horsburgh (2001) argue that no matter the reasons compelling organisations to transfer their staff, transfers are counterproductive. Employees would be forced to leave whatever they would be doing in their stations to go and start a new life at a new station. This is why most employees reject promotion opportunities which come through transfers.

In addition to the above, Chadenga (2015) in the Southern Eye newspaper July 2015 reported that Midlands State University located in Gweru Zimbabwe in a bid to decongest its Gweru main campus had to relocate about 10 programmes to a new campus which was opened in Zvishavane. This decision excruciated much distress not only to students but also to lecturers. The concern was that the move was going to incur extra financial constraints and disrupt so many activities that the transferees were working on prior to their transfer.

More so, Stassen, Cameron and Horsburgh (2001) add that transfers can also follow a restructuring process, whereby an organisation would be closing some of its operations and as an alternative to avoid many employees becoming jobless, employees are then transferred to remaining departments. This sounds as a good thing since many employees would have been saved from becoming jobless, but the point still remains that changes that come along with relocating are enormous and very difficult to be endured. Family ties, friendships, personal development among others would be affected with the severity of the effects being dependent on the actual distance between the new work station and the old one.

According to Brett (1984), job transfers represent a frequent, an expensive and a potentially disruptive human resource issue. This follows the fact that transferees would have to adapt to the new environments which would be relatively different from their previous ones. For example, they would meet new workmates, management, organizational culture and different physical environments such as different offices among others. Employees would encounter difficulties in adapting and developing sound support base, blending with new teams and appreciating the new environments and this in turn would lower their satisfaction levels, commitment and engagement to their work.

In addition, Thomas and Darryll (1994) assert that different stakeholders in an organisation would perceive transfers differently, while most managerial employees in different organisations view job transfers to be a very effective tool for balancing their staff as they necessitate cross-training of employees, many employees appear to be increasingly reluctant to accept job transfers because of potential disruptions and difficulties they pose on their work relationships, their families as well as to their general quality of life.

Moving on, there are so many stressors related to transfers. Munton (1990) posit that job-transfers result in work-life conflicts. Moreover, Robins, Judge and Sanghi (2009) add that work-life conflicts grabbed management's attention mostly in the 1980s, largely as a result of more women with dependent children entering the workforce. Their research demonstrated that transferring a married female employee with children from an area where she would be established with her family greatly affects that female employee psychologically and that would lead to increased rates of accidents, dissatisfaction, disengagement, absenteeism or even to the employee having to resign from the organisation.

In addition, Brett (1984) and Maxwell (2009) articulate that transfers lead to work-family disconnects, especially for working mothers and both parents and children in what they called 'mobile families' experienced problems in establishing social relationships following relocations. These problems were more acute in families with adolescent children. They further stated that female employees whose families had well-established social networks within their community were less willing to accept relocations simply due to the psychological attachment that they had with their children. When transferred they could either appeal against the transfer or take a drastic move of resigning. Organisations thus lose most of their productive staff due to transfers.

Furthermore, transfers affect employees physically, psychologically and mentally. In a study by Munton (1990) which sought to assess overall stress levels experienced by employees following transfers, it was found that 27 percent of the participants responded that transfers were very stressful. In another different study by Stassen, Cameron and Horsburgh (2001) on the reactions to hospital amalgamation of 66 nurses who had been transferred to a different unit for a downsizing-related reason comparing them with the reactions of 181 nurses who remained on their units. Prior to job transfers, the two groups perceived comparable levels of support and held similar attitudes towards their job and the hospital. Two years later, after job transfers had taken place, transferred nurses perceived significantly lower coworker support. They also reported a significantly greater decrease in organizational commitment than nurses who were not transferred.

Female employees are mostly affected by transfer related stress compared to their male counterparts. According to an article in Shape Magazine, women are 60 percent more likely to suffer from job stress than men. In addition, Carson, Butcher and Mineka (2000) argue that stress is a by-product of inadequate coping. Studies have shown that males and females experience and cope differently with stress; women due to gender roles have so much responsibilities and it is usually hard for them to balance work and life and mostly cope with stress by seeking social support, an emotional stress coping technique which does not eliminate the source of stress but merely reduces the severity of stress. This is mostly the reason why females constantly suffer much stress. Male employees are however not that involved with family responsibilities but would only focus on their work since they are bread winners and they mostly cope with stress

using problem-focused techniques, techniques which eliminate sources of stress therefore helping them feel less stress.

The aforementioned discussion point to the issue of transfers being a matter of concern that is so stressful to employees. The researcher during his work-related learning at ZIMRA observed that ZIMRA transferred its employees from one work area to another and most of the employees appeared not to be happy with transfers and were appealing against them. Again, ZIMRA twice a year conduct employee satisfaction surveys to measure the level of satisfaction of its employees, and the issue of transfers appear to be the most stressor to employees, especially female employees. The researcher also noticed that most of the employees who resigned from ZIMRA, the resignation followed its national transfers. This study therefore seeks to explore the stressors related to transfers and coping strategies employed by ZIMRA female workers to deal with stress.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Employee transfers are associated with a lot of stressors. Transferred employees go through a hard time adapting to the new work environment, suffer more financial strains, live in isolation as family ties and social relationships are destroyed and do not have work-life balance, (Brett (1984). Female employees are mostly affected by transfers following their gender roles, they have more responsibilities at home, for example taking care of kids and generally making sure that all things are well home, (Robins, Judge and Sanghi (2009). Transfers therefore result in female employees absenting themselves from work or taking more leave days, having low morale at work, increased rate of accidents and injury among other effects and these in turn result in less productivity making organizations lose their competitive foot.

### **1.4 Purpose of the study.**

The study aimed at exploring the stressors related to transfers and coping strategies employed by female workers at ZIMRA. This will help increase knowledge to organizations on how transfers lead to stress and best strategies that employees should employ to effectively deal with stress.

### **1.5 Significance of the study.**

Employee transfers are practiced in so many organizations in Zimbabwe. The current study is important therefore as it will benefit the following;

### **1.5.1 Employees**

ZIMRA employees as well as others from different organisations that practice employee transfers will gain more knowledge and insight on how transfers are stressful and the best strategies they could use to cope better with stress resulting thereof. Again, the research would give employees an opportunity to recommend best strategies they think could reduce the stressfulness of transfers.

### **1.5.2 Company directors and managers**

The research would provide better insights to company directors, managers and supervisors who design transfers to design and conduct them in a friendly manner that would be incorporating employees' needs and interests to reduce stress resulting thereof.

### **1.5.3 Field of psychology**

The research would also add to the already existing knowledge on stress, its causes and coping strategies as well as provide baseline knowledge for further studies in the area of job transfers and stress. Again, having exposed the stressors associated with transfers, psychologists could then come up with ways to alleviate them.

### **1.5.4 Community and the public**

The research would also benefit the community and the public as they would be acquainted with stressors related to job transfers, they would then offer maximum support to their friends and family members who would have been transferred to other areas so as to reduce their stress.

## **1.6 Research questions.**

- What work-life stressors do ZIMRA female employees experience following transfers?
- How do ZIMRA female employees cope with stress resulting from transfers?
- What recommendations do ZIMRA female employees give to ZIMRA management concerning the administration of transfers?

## **1.7. Delimitations.**

The research was conducted in Gweru and Victoria Falls ZIMRA stations on managerial and non-managerial female workers who would have been transferred at some point in their career with ZIMRA regardless of age, marital status and department.

### **1.8. Limitations.**

Coolican (2009) defined limitations as shortcomings of the research or challenges faced by researchers during their research. The study suffered gender imbalance since it only used female respondents and as such findings only apply to female workers only and may not generalize to male counterparts. The researcher wanted to find in detail how females are affected by transfers and deliberately left males for other researchers.

Again, the qualitative study only used 14 respondents of ZIMRA female employees who were at some point transferred; the findings cannot generalize to ZIMRA organisation which has a total of approximately 2000 employees. Moreover, the way ZIMRA conducts its transfers may differ with other organisation thereby affecting external validity of this study.

More so, employees were too busy with their work and hardly had time to accord the researcher; nonetheless, they cooperated and answered all questions. The researcher interviewed any female employee who was present at the time he arrived and tried to make the interview process to be as short as reasonably possible but acquiring detailed information.

### **1.9 Assumptions.**

- Job transfers are characterized with a lot of stressors
- Transfers disrupt work-life balance
- Female employees are not happy with transfers
- Most females use emotion- focused coping strategies

### **1.10 Definition of key terms.**

**Employee transfer-** a relatively permanent job reassignment that entails the movement of an employee within an organization from one of its operating sites to another, (Lee and Johnson (1994). In this study, employee transfer refers to the movement of an employee from one work station to another which would be in a different town or city.

**Work-life-stressors-** difficulties encountered by employees to balance their work life with personal life resulting in stress, (Robbin, Judge and Sanghi (2009).

**Stressors-** anything strenuous and overwhelming and affecting the well-being of workers.

**Coping strategies-** attempts by workers to deal with causes or to minimize the effects of stress, (Lahey (2004). In this study, coping strategies are any methods that female employees use to feel better when stressed or to eliminate that stress.

### **1.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter served as bedrock of the whole study, it focused on the introduction, background of the study, problem statement, research questions, and purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, assumptions and definition of terms. The next chapter would focus on the literature review backing the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The chapter defines the concept of workplace stress, its effects, how employees cope with it and how it links with employee transfers. The chapter also covers the Lazarus and Folkman (1984)'s transactional model of stress that backup the study. The chapter ended by highlighting the knowledge gaps which simply refers to issues that other researchers did not focus on concerning employee transfers.

#### **2.2. The concept of work stress defined**

According to Carson, Butcher and Mineka (2000) stress can be defined as adjustive demands placed upon an organism and also affect the organism's biological and psychological responses to such demands. National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (1999) and Campbell, Lin, Devries and Lambert (2003) argue that not all stress is detrimental, minimum levels of stress are necessary and functional as they keep people alert, providing them with some energy required to focus and adapt fast to the environment. This positive stress is called eustress, however if stress becomes chronic it becomes very dangerous to one's well-being. This is called distress, the most familiar definition of stress.

The workplace is infested with a plethora of stressors some of which are long hours, too much workload, mixes different people with different backgrounds, personalities and priorities together among other stressors, (Mccluskey (2012). He further articulated that most of the ill-health working people experiences are due to work-related stress. A Telephone survey of 1,019 employed adults found that 83 percent of Americans are stressed by at least one thing at work, a sharp increase of 10 percent when compared with 2012' 73 percent, (Corinthian Collages (2013).

#### **2.3 Categories of workplace stress**

According to Claussen (2011) workplace stressors can be categorised into five groups as according to Rosch, a president of the American Institute of stress. These are as follows;

### **2.3.1 Stressors related to task design**

These are connected to the nature of the job that employees do. If the employees have too much workload, work long hours, have infrequent breaks, do routine tasks and have limited time to finish tasks, they are likely to suffer from stress. Employees also compare their efforts and rewards at work, if they feel they are putting more efforts and in return get low rewards, they suffer stress. Therefore there should be a reciprocal relationship between the tasks being done and rewards. A study by Corinthian Colleges (2013) in Los Angeles showed that although U.S. unemployment rate may be falling, but stress levels continues to rise among workers as more than eight in ten employed Americans said they are stressed out on the job amid heavier workloads and low pay.

### **2.3.2 Stressors related to management style**

Management styles have a greater role in causing as well as reducing stress at the workplace. Employees are likely to be stressed if the management do not involve them in decision making and if they do not give them autonomy over their work. More so, if employees do not have control over finished products, they would feel alienated from their product and suffer stress. Again management should clearly communicate with employees, lack or poor communication severely affects employees. Another important stressor connected to management style is formulation of policies that promote work-life balance. Management also have got a role of recognising good work from employees and appraising it, this greatly motivates employees and makes them feel good.

Brien (2014) argues that management should relate well with their employees as this is very important to the ultimate success of any organisation as it makes employees feel valued and loved, they would then develop trust and become committed to the organisation. Bad management- employee relations are disastrous to organisation's success. One study in the U.S. on more than 900 workers found that employees' relationship with their boss is the most common cause of workplace stress, followed closely by workload, work-life balance and relationships with coworkers, (Dill (2014).

### **2.3.3 Stressors related to interpersonal relationships**

Poor social environment and lack of support from co-workers or supervisors is very stressful on employees. This is further aggravated by prejudice and discrimination at the workplace based on race, religion, gender or even age.

### **2.3.4 Stressors related to work roles**

Conflicting or uncertain job expectations, too much responsibility, too many bosses, job insecurity and lack of opportunities for growth, advancement or promotion are also stressful.

### **2.3.5 Stressors related to the environment**

Unpleasant or dangerous work environments comprising of conditions such as poor offices, crowding, noise, air pollution, among others may be also very stressful.

## **2.4 Effects of workplace stress**

Stress is not something to be dismissed as being just part of the job. Stress has so many adverse effects; it is directly or indirectly responsible for early untimely deaths through heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure and a multitude of other stress related illnesses, Bickford (2005). Stress exists in many organisations but the people who should do something to eliminate it ignore it. These people include among others managing and senior directors, personnel and training managers, occupational health workers, and departmental managers and supervisors. Clack (2002) posits that change must come from the top; it is the duty of managers to recognise that they have a legal and moral responsibility to protect the physical and mental health of their workers.

According to Robbins, Judge and Sanghi (2010) the effects of work-related stress can be put under three categories; physiological, psychological and behavioural effects.

### *Physiological effects*

Health and medical specialists have found that stress leads to changes in metabolism, increase heart and breathing rates, increase blood pressure, bring on headaches and induce heart attacks. One study found that stressful job demands increases the susceptibility to upper respiratory illnesses and poor immune system functioning. Claussen (2011) reiterates that stress is so dangerous on the psychological and physiological health of employees. A study of British Civil

servants (2008) found that people with most severe levels of job stress had 68 percent higher risk of developing heart diseases.

### *Psychological effects*

Stress at work causes job-related dissatisfaction; job dissatisfaction, tension, chronic worry, distress, anxiety, irritability, and boredom among others. All these psychological effects of stress are very harmful not only to employees' health but also to the success of the organisation. A stressed employee cannot focus on their job and perform effectively thereby directly reducing the organisation's productivity.

### *Behavioural effects*

Behavioural-related stress symptoms include changes in productivity, absenteeism, presenteeism, turnover, changes in eating habits, increased maladaptive behaviour such as smoking and consumption of alcohol, rapid speech, fidgeting and sleep disorders. One English survey of Human Resource professionals conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reported that 40% of all companies identified had rising levels of stress-related absenteeism, McDaid et.al (2008). McDaid et.al (2008) refers to presenteeism as a situation whereby individuals remain at work but do not function effectively. One US study demonstrated that presenteeism is more disastrous and may cost up to five times more than absenteeism. Another U.S study on workers with depression revealed that presenteeism was associated with 7.2 hours of productive time lost per worker per week, (Kessler and Frank (1997).

More so, results from NIOSH (1999) study showed that distress has been seen to be the most causer of higher turnover in organisations, decreased motivation and more absenteeism. Dill (2014) also added that most employees have changed their jobs to flee from stress. A survey conducted by employment search site monster. Com (as cited in Dill (2014) on nearly 7000 U.S. workers found that while a less than surprising 35 percent had contemplated leaving a job to flee a stressful work environment, a more significant number 42 percent had purposely left a position because of stress.

## **2.5 Coping with stress**

Stress severity depends on the coping strategies employed by individuals to deal with stress. If the individual has enough resources to cope with a certain situation, there would be no stress. They defined coping strategies as any attempts used by people to reduce the impact of stress on their psychological, physiological and behavioural well-being. They posited that there are mainly two stress coping mechanisms that people resort to, these being emotion-focused and problem-focused coping mechanisms. Problem-focused coping strategies are the most effective as they look for the source of stress and meticulously eliminate it. However, emotion focused coping techniques do not necessarily eliminate the stressor but reduce the impact of stress on an individual; they just make an individual feel better in the midst of the stress. These include among others the use of alcohol and drugs, prayer, exercise, and seeking social support among others, (Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

In a study by Eisengart et al (2006) on the factor structure of coping in a sample of working mothers in Malaysia who experienced high but varying levels of stress. The study found that most of the mothers used emotion-focused coping techniques. The most coping strategy used was seeking social support and use of faith. However, these strategies were not of much help as the stress remained unabated but was just weakened for some hours. A recommendation was given that mothers should be educated on problem-focused coping methods which would in turn eliminate the source of their stress. Again, Raak and Wahren (2005) conducted a study on the relationship between headache and coping among 257 female employees in a Swedish University hospital. The results found were that women who relied on emotion focused coping relatively suffered more from headaches compared to women who used problem focused coping methods.

Furthermore, Keas (2014)' survey on the trends and insights regarding stress in the workplace on 762 participants across United States found that 83 percent and 66 percent of the participants used exercising and alcohol respectively to cope with stress. Exercises distract people from focusing on stressors and help the brain release special endorphins that reduce stress, (Help guide (2016). However, Killien and Brown (1987) and Morris (1991) report that most working mothers manage to cope with work pressures through consulting their co-workers. It is the purpose of this study to explore stressors associated with transfers and coping strategies used by ZIMRA female employees.

## **2.6 The concept of transfers defined**

According to Chand (2015) job transfers are lateral movements of employees within the same grade from one job to another. Flippo (2015) adds that this change in the job is also accompanied by a change in the place of the job without necessarily a change in duties and remuneration. Chand (2015) further states that transfers are different from promotion as promotions involve change in job accompanied by an increase in salary, authority, status and responsibility, while all these remain unchanged in the case of transfers. Transfers are also done more often than promotions. The two however can go together as one can be transferred and promoted at the same time.

Again, transfers can either be permanent or temporary, with permanent transfers mainly stemming from changes in workload, death, retirement or resignation and restructuring among other causes thereby opening a gap in a firm to be filled. Temporary transfers however may result from temporary intense pressure in certain departments or stations of an organisation, ill health or absenteeism of some employees consequently leading to some employees being temporarily transferred to assist there, but they would return to their stations or departments as soon as the pressure subsides, (Chand (2015)).

According to the research done by the University of Texas, there are three types of job transfers, that is lateral, voluntary and involuntary transfer;

### *Lateral transfer*

These involve movement of an employee from one work area or department to another but not changing the title or salary entitled to the person, even if the title is different, no immediate salary action is taken but the base salary of the transferred employee will be reviewed during the normal common review process. This is the kind of transfer that this study is about as ZIMRA transferees maintain their job titles and levels and would be still entitled to the same salary as their responsibilities remain the same.

### *Voluntary transfer*

This applies when an employee voluntarily applies to be transferred to any other area or department where there would be an open post regardless of salary range, whether it's lower or

more than the one they would be currently entitled to. Of much importance here is that the employee is the one who would have voluntarily applied for the transfer, the idea would not have been superimposed on him/her by the employer. The advantage of this transfer type is that since the employee would have willingly applied for the transfer, approval by management would be motivating to the employee.

### *Involuntary transfer*

This form of transfer is when an employee has absolutely no power over the transfer process. The transfer takes place either due to the employer's directive; the employee has no power to oppose the decision but just to play along. Involuntary transfer can also follow a restructuring process whereby some of the company's operations would be closing and employees are therefore forced to move to the remaining ones. In involuntary transfer, an employee's salary does not change. ZIMRA conduct involuntary transfers as every employee could be moved at any time whether they like it or not.

## **2.7 Factors leading to employee transfers**

According to Employee Relocation Council (1981) over 100 000 employees together with their families in the United States face job transfers yearly. The major reason for these transfers is to balance organisations' staff needs and provide opportunities for employee growth as most organisations have their operations across cities and others international and employers see to it that all these different departments in different places find competent and committed employees.

In addition, Adekunle and Popoola (2009) conducted a study in Nigeria and found that transfers expose employees to broader job experience which adds to their career growth and development. Furthermore, transfers act as an important activity encouraging employee flexibility as employees in an organisation can be requested to fill vacancies as they occur in other stations. Transfers also act as a motivating factor as they keep promotion ladders open, if a superior post arises, employees from different stations would be likely to occupy that post, as such, it is believed that most managers emerged through transfers and these can also then with time be reshuffled to other stations or departments to keep their job motivation and interest high. Again, transfers serve to eliminate work boredom, routine work duties in one place end up boring to employees therefore changing environment of work would lead to cessation of the boredom.

More so, to employees who would be having conflicts with their co-workers, transfers would be a solution to the conflict and would in turn increase employee' organisational commitment.

Moving on, in a study conducted by Stassen, Cameron and Horsburgh (2001), approximately 400 hospital staff comprising mostly of nurses were laid off while some of them were transferred to different units following a process of restructuring. This restructuring followed hospital's downsizing. Therefore it can be seen that companies can transfer their staff from units that are closing to those that are would be remaining functional following a restructuring process.

According to Stroh, Brett, and Reilley (1994) in the case of restructuring being a cause for employee transfers, employees are likely to perceive themselves as fortunate to be selected for transfers and would respond positively to the transfer since the transfer would have preserved their jobs. In a study by Stassen (1993) on feelings of transferred employees from a closing plant, it was found that transferring workers to another facility reduced feelings of job insecurity and, at the same time, produced positive attitudes, loyalty and commitment towards the company. In contrast, Barnes, Harmon, and Kish (1986) examined the reactions of nurses who were transferred following closure of three nursing units, three months following the transfers, transferred nurses reported higher levels of anxiety, fatigue, and depression, lower self-esteem, and greater absenteeism than nurses who were not transferred although these decreased within the period of approximately 6 months following the transfers and self-esteem levels of those employees increased, and absenteeism declined too. These findings suggest that negative reactions to job transfers following downsizing are relatively short-lived.

Moreover, Chand (2015) reiterates that management can also use transfers as an instrument to penalise employees who would have indulged in undesirable activities. In this case transfers serve as a disciplinary action whereby employees are transferred to remote and far-flung areas where they would not enjoy and would become remorse of their previous actions and repent from them.

However, notwithstanding the reason which might have triggered the transfer, Anderson and Stark (1988) posit that transfers that require employees to change geographical locations and travel to other cities or countries are a major stressor as they disrupt work-family balance.

## **2.8 Stressors related to employee transfers**

According to Thomas and Darryll (1994), the way transfers are viewed by employees may differ according to individual's personalities and perceptions. Some employees may perceive them as stressful whilst others may view them positively. Managerial employees are likely to view job transfers with a positive eye than non-managerial employees, this being due to the fact that most managers become managers following transfers. Mayer and Bones (2011) carried out a study on German managers who were transferred from Germany to South Africa. These German managers reported more job satisfaction in South Africa than in their motherland; they greatly liked the South African environment and reported being happy with their families and social lives too.

On the contrary, in a survey which was conducted by IMS, over 60 percent of the managers in Britain refuse a move at some time in their careers because of the potential disruption accompanied by such movements not only to themselves but to their families too. More so employees appear to be increasingly reluctant to accept job transfers because of potential disruptions and difficulties they pose on their work relationships, their families as well as general quality of life. Below are some of the major stressors associated with transfers;

### **2.8.1 Lack of consultation**

In the case of involuntary transfers, employees are just transferred without their consent and this makes them feel unvalued and uncared for. Their moral deteriorate greatly, mostly because most of them would be having genuine concerns that suffice reversal of transfer such as family responsibilities among others. Musakaruka in the Herald dated 14 June (2012) reported a case of Jane Kanonhuwa who worked for Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (Cottco) and was transferred from Harare to Gokwe which is about 400km away from her family without her consent. She sought relief from the High Court and the High Court set aside her transfer and ruled that it was unfair and outrageous as her views, wishes and personal circumstances were relevant and should have been taken into consideration before the decision to transfer her was made, (case number HH10/98).

### **2.8.2 Imbalance between work and personal life**

According to Burke (1986), job transfers create an imbalance between work and personal life. This stems from the fact that employees have many roles to play at work as well as at their

homes. These may appear separate but in actual sense they are inseparable as what happens at home directly affect the employee's performance at work. If an employee experiences challenges at home, either due to marital problems or any other not related with work, the effects would extend to work and decrease the performance of that employee.

In addition, Grant-Vallone and Donaldson (2001) state that work-life conflict consists of inter-role conflict as competing demands arise between work and personal roles. Galinsky, Bond and Friedman (1996) conducted a study on 2958 wage and salaried workers and they found that 58% of parents and 42% of non-parents reported at least some conflict; 17% of parents and 12% of non-parents reported quite a lot of conflict between work and family roles. This study shows that work-life conflicts are not only experienced by employees who are parents but all workers generally experience it in different ways. Parents would be more worried of their children even when at work while other employees may be thinking of their friends, families, businesses and even education among other things. Employee transfers exacerbate the existence of work-life conflict as in most cases they involve changes in geographical locations thereby separating employees from most of their life commitments.

Moreover, Robbins, Judge and Sanghi (2009) further reiterate that women experience much work-family conflict and this became evident in the 1980s due to the rapid entrance of women into the workplace. Women have multiple roles to play at home; working therefore becomes strenuous on them. Noor (1999) argues that the current economic conditions force women to join the workforce so as to be able to survive on their own instead of being dependent on men. Some women are single mothers and they need to provide for their families, the problem is that even though women have joined workforce, their societal trends and expectations have not changed and women still assume their traditional roles of being homemakers. In this regard, transferring women exacerbates their work-life imbalances and thereby excruciating severe mental distress which in turn reduce their performance and quality of life in general.

According to Shen and Jiang (2013), there are three types of work-family conflict, namely, time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based;

*Time-based work-life conflict*

This is said to exist if the amount of time an employee devotes to work leaves him or her with too little time to spend on family and social responsibilities. For example, an employee's busy schedule may hinder him or her from joining a family vacation. Transfers just aggravate the situation, if employees are transferred away from their native towns or away from where their families would be, then they would be expected to constantly drive long distances to see their families, time is always scarce to allow that.

#### *Strain-based work-life conflict*

It involves pressures in one role impairing performance in the second role. This works perfectly well for employed women, these work very hard at work, and return home stressed out and exhausted and when at home they are also faced with so many duties meaning they do not have time to rest, work-family roles then become so strenuous on them. Strain-based work-life conflict is not ideal to human functioning and can lead to emergence of many health complications.

#### *Behaviour-based work-family conflict*

This comprises of incompatibility of behaviours necessary for the two roles. For example, an employee whom at home, spouse and children expect him or her to be nurturing, emotional and accommodating, while expected to be aggressive, affirmative and objective at work. Transfers however confine employees to focus on their work only while neglecting personal responsibilities mostly due to increased distance between them and their families, relatives and friends.

### **2.8.3 Weakening of family bonds**

Brett (1982) posits that transferring employees with families weakens the family bond. He refers to such families as mobile families and argues that these are definitely not the ideal families as the mother would be working in a different city and the father in another city. It therefore becomes difficult for attachment to develop between mother, father and children. Children would not experience the kind of love due to them from their parents and this may directly lower their self-esteem as they grow. They would be also likely to have behavioural problems. Again on the other end, parents working in separate cities due to transfers would be more likely to divorce than those working closer together. This is due to lack of trust in long distance relationships

between couples. Maynard and Zawacki (1979) carried out a study which found out that employees whose spouses had their own careers were less willing to relocate.

In addition, another study by Van Rooyen, Telford-Smith, and Strumpler (2010) on South African nurses who were transferred to Saudi Arabia found that leaving home and loved ones was very traumatic for the participants and most of them exhibited signs of being homesick. One of the participants echoed that;

*“Leaving the family behind was very traumatic...it was very traumatic...I cried all the way...was tearful for the first three months...sometimes I just felt like I could not cope at all...”*  
(Van Rooyen, Telford-Smith, and Strumpler (2010: p 9).

More so, Brett (1982) adds that transfers strain the relationship of families. The empirical research on military families by McCubbin, Dahl and Hunter, (1976) has shown that there are so many challenges faced by mobile families which include separation and loneliness. In addition, Marshall and Cooper (1976) assert that separation of family members following a job transfer can be referred to as the crisis point in marriages. This simply shows that transfers despite all the advantages they may have to the employer or employee, to the family integration, they are very disastrous.

In addition, Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1989) guide us on the importance of attachment between children and their parents or caregivers. The two came up with the attachment theory which shows that lack of secure attachment between children and parents have negative effects on them both. Hooper (2007) posits that children who lack attachment with their significant others tend to have difficulties forming relationships with peers as they grow up. Again lack of attachment between children and their caregivers give children sense of dejection, separation and loss. Therefore transfers are likely to affect children as they lead to multi-mothering, a situation whereby children are raised up by so many caregivers, in this case parents and maids.

#### **2.8.4 Place attachment disruption**

According to Stokols and Altman (1991) place attachment refers to the bond that people develop to a place. The bond can either be to the social environment, psychological environment and/or physical environment. Proshansky et al (1983) argues that place attachment can become so intense that it ceases to qualify as place attachment anymore but becomes place identity and

place identity is a point when people find themselves so tied and intermeshed with their social, political, religious and physical environments to the extent that they become inseparable. In addition, place identity has been described as the individual's incorporation of place into the larger concept of self; it includes memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific environments. People form attachment with places that not only define themselves but also give them a sense of belonging and freedom and also promoting psychological security. Transfers destroy place attachment and put employees through adjustment challenges.

In one study by Harns et al (1996), it was found that place attachment is linked with greater ease in regulating privacy, an important part of identity. Attached individuals have a sense of control and power over their environments. The study showed that people who are attached to places are generally happier and have a sense of security and continuity than those who are not. This therefore shows that as people spend much time at a particular place, whether home or workplace, they develop so much bond or ties with those places. At the workplace, employees form attachment with their organizational culture, workmates, supervisors and offices among others and these make work more satisfying and easy as individuals can freely interact and assist each other.

### **2.8.5 Culture shock**

Culture shock is defined by Kingsley (2013) as confusing and nervous feelings a person may have after leaving a familiar culture to live in a new and different culture. In a new place employees would experience new things and a lot of changes, some of which would be exciting and stimulating, however some may be overwhelming thereby making the employee feel sad, anxious, frustrated and miss the previous familiar place. The advantage of culture shock is that it is natural and temporary; with time an individual adjusts well to the new culture and functions well again despite the challenges faced at the beginning.

In a study conducted by Van Rooyen, Telford-Smith, and Strumpler (2010) on South African nurses who were transferred from South Africa to work in Saudi Arabia, it was revealed what really culture shock is. The South African nurses found themselves immersed in a totally different culture to that of theirs. They were very much shocked by the new religious experiences they encountered in Saudi Arabia. Religious practices there were new to the South African

nurses. For example, the Ramadian practice was totally a new thing. It is said that the ninth month of the Muslim calendar is Ramadian, which means a period of mandatory fasting; even non-Muslims are not allowed to eat or drink anything in public places and due to the hot weather in the area, the South African nurses suffered severe dehydration during the Ramadian month. To make the shock even worse, the Muslim's prayer times were very much respected, three times a day they were supposed to be in prayer rooms praying as such even in the hospital all Muslim nurses would leave to go attend prayers during the working times leaving the non-Muslim nurses having to cover up for them. South African nurses were greatly affected as they were the ones who always remained at work. The South African nurses who were mostly Christians suffered so much of the feeling of discrimination as no other church except Muslim one is allowed there.

In addition, the religion and culture in Saudi Arabia strictly dictates the dress codes with women expected to put on a black cloak referred to as the 'abaya' and a scarf covering their faces and their hair. This was not only hard due to its newness to the South African nurses but more because of the extreme desert like temperatures in Saudi Arabia. Women were also shocked to be informed that they were prohibited from driving in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it is seen that transfers put employees under harsh conditions and are therefore worth researching on.

## **2.9 Theoretical Framework**

This research was guided by the transactional model of stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The model proposes that stress happen as a result of the interaction between a person and the environment. These two are so intermeshed that any imbalance between them lead to the person suffering from stress and stress can only be understood by analyzing these two together, any attempt to separate them will lead to inappropriate results. A person is viewed as a rational and active agent capable to perceive and construe his/her environment to make it fit with his/her expectations. This is to say that there are transactions that take place between a person and the environment, some of which may be taxing to the person.

For stress to happen, individuals go through primary and secondary appraisal process so as to understand the environmental demands. Primary appraisal involves evaluating a certain situation so as to understand whether it is harmful and uncontrollable or not. Secondary appraisal however involves deciding whether one has the resources needed to deal effectively with a situation. If the individual appraises the situation or event as not harmful or would be to be having adequate

resources to deal with the situation, then that situation would not be viewed as stressful. This model explains why individuals experience or suffer from stress differently regardless of the stressor being the same. Even at the workplace some employees are so stressed by transfers and they suffer so much stress whereas others view transfers as normal and advantageous, necessary for their personal growth, job satisfaction and for organisation's growth.

### **2.10 Knowledge gap**

The literature on job transfers is very much limited in Africa; most of the information used by the researcher in this study was gotten from old and outdated European sources. Most of the sources date back to 1960s up to 1990s; the researcher felt that current challenges concerning employee transfers in Africa and specifically in Zimbabwe are not being given attention. Again, the few studies on employee transfers utilized both males and females as such the researcher felt that women are the most affected by transfers should be accorded more attention as they work and at the same time are expected to actively participate in home affairs like looking after their homes and children. Furthermore, much research on transfers dwells much on transfers leading to work-life imbalance but no further profound analysis is given to show how and what coping strategies do employees employ to balance the two, thus this study was worth doing as it brought current dimension of employee transfers and vividly showed the stressors associated with transfers and the coping strategies employed by female workers to deal with stress.

### **2.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter focused on reviewing previous literature on employee transfers. It highlighted more on the concept of stress and employee transfers showing how the two are related as well as their effects, symptoms and coping strategies to be employed. The chapter also included the theoretical framework backing up the study that is the transactional model of stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The chapter ended by showing the knowledge gap that needs to be filled in the area of employee transfers.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the research methodology used by the researcher in the study. Research methodology is defined by Saunders (2007) as a collection of methods, practices, procedures and rules guiding the researcher in a study. The researcher looked at the research approach, research design, target population, sampling strategy, instrument used, data collection procedure, data analysis, ethical considerations that would be used by the researcher in this study.

#### **3.2 Research approach**

The researcher used the qualitative research paradigm. Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to qualitative research approach as informal, subjective and inductive since it generally uses fewer participants compared to quantitative approach and most of its data is descriptive as opposed to being statistical. The researcher used qualitative paradigm because it allowed him to use fewer participants in his study at the same time enabling him to dig and obtain detailed information about the effects of employee transfers. It gave the researcher the privilege to interact with respondents and got detailed first-hand information. Therefore the researcher saw qualitative research as a suitable approach to enable him to explore the stressors related to employee transfers and coping strategies that female employees at ZIMRA use to cope with stress.

#### **3.3 Research design**

The study used phenomenological research design. Coolican (2009) defines a phenomenological research design as concerned with studying real events as they are on the actual ground. It best works in researches requiring descriptive answers like “what is this experience like” or “what is the meaning of this experience or phenomena”, such questions are referred to as phenomenological type questions. It is the ability of phenomenological research to give in-depth and reliable information on experiences and emotions of individuals concerning their real situations that made the researcher to choose it as the researcher sought to explore the stressors related to transfers and coping strategies employed by female workers at ZIMRA to cope with stress.

### **3.4 Target population**

Coolican (2006) defines a target population as a community to which a given intervention is directed; whom results will be generalized to. In short these are the people that the researcher purported to use in his study. The research targeted Gweru and Victoria Falls ZIMRA managerial and non-managerial female workers of any age group, marital status and grade who were at some point in their career transferred from one working station to another. The researcher deliberately left out men in his study as he wanted to focus more on how transfers affect women and he included women of different ages, levels and marital status among others so that he could be able to pinpoint different work-life stressors affecting women due to transfers.

### **3.5 Sampling technique and sample size**

Sampling refers to a process of selecting subjects or participants to be used in research and these should represent the larger population or group from where they were selected, (Coolican (2006). To come with his sample, the researcher used convenience sampling technique which is a type of purposive sampling. Patton (1990) defines convenience sampling as a purposive sampling technique that saves time and resources as it allows the researcher to use any participants who qualify and are readily available to acquire required information. ZIMRA does the transfers after every three years as such there are so many employees who had been transferred from one place to another, the researcher interviewed any female worker who he found present who had been transferred at some point in time from one station to another.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) qualitative research often uses smaller samples as it is labour intensive and analyzing larger samples may become time consuming and impractical. However, in as much as the sample size would be smaller, it should be larger enough to assure that most if not all of the perceptions that are important are uncovered but at the same time if they become too large, data becomes repetitive and superfluous. In determining his sample size, the researcher used data saturation method. This is a method whereby the researcher is not necessarily restricted on the number of participants to use but collects data from as many participants as reasonably possible until a point when the collection of new data does not shed or add anything new on the issue under investigation. The research consisted of 14 female workers, 12 being non-managerial and only 2 being managerial workers.

### **3.6. Research instrument**

Research instruments are tools used as a testing device for measuring a particular phenomenon and these tools can be questionnaires, interviews, and observations among others, (Coolican (2006). The researcher used in-depth interviews. According to Boyce and Neale (2006) in-depth interviews seek to unravel detailed information from respondents on a particular phenomenon. The researcher chose in-depth interviews since they allowed him to have face to face conversation with participants which enabled him to get detailed first-hand information which was reliable. In-depth-interviews also allowed the researcher to clarify on grey areas to the participants and this made sure that participants responded to what they understood as such their responses could be relatively accurate. The only problem that the researcher encountered was that in-depth interviews took so much time and participants had little time to accord the researcher as they were busy with their work, this also limited the number of female employees that were interviewed. To curb this problem, the researcher ended up using semi-structured interviews as these relatively took less time to administer.

### **3.7. Data collection.**

First of all, the researcher got permission from his supervisor to conduct his research. The supervisor approved the research topic and the research instrument. The researcher then applied to ZIMRA Human Resources for authority to conduct research and approval was given to him in the form of a letter by the Director of Human Resources and Administration. The researcher personally conducted the interviews. Before the participants were interviewed they were fully briefed about the study, for instance they were told about the purpose of the interview and that the research was solely for study purposes. As the participants were responding during the interviews, the researcher took down detailed notes of all the responses and also some participants were recorded on phone while others refused.

### **3.8. Data analysis and presentation**

Data analysis is defined by Gray (1995) as the process of examining, tabulating, categorizing or restructuring the evidence to address the needs of the study. The researcher used thematic data analysis method and verbal quotation presentation to present his data. Braun and Clark (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes)

within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in detail. A table was also used to present demographic information of participants.

### **3.8.1. Steps followed in thematic data analysis**

According to Clark (2006) thematic data analysis has six steps. The researcher followed all the six steps to organise, analyse and present his data. The first step involved familiarising with data collected to see if it really answered the research questions. The second step involved generating codes; here the researcher was screening out some of the data which was irrelevant while taking only that which was of much interest in answering the research questions. Codes give direction on the data which is important but are so wide therefore the third step involved turning codes into themes. Themes are broader topics where many codes holding similar information are meshed together for easier analysis. The fourth step involved carefully reviewing the themes so as to answer the research questions. Having done that, the fifth step was to define and name the themes and determine whether they really covered all the ground to answer the research question. Finally, the researcher edited and presented the themes.

### **3.9. Ethical considerations.**

Lahey (2004) defines ethics as moral guidelines of what is good or bad in research. In conducting his research, the researcher was guided by the following ethical standards;

#### **3.9.1 Ethical approval**

Authority was given to the researcher by the Midlands State University to go ahead and collect his data.

#### **3.9.2 Respect to privacy/ confidentiality**

Participants were assured that all information they give was for the purpose of the study and under no circumstances were their names or information that would lead to identification of any of them was going to be used; all participants were kept as anonymous, in presenting data they were referred to as participants and allocated numbers. This saw the researcher having Participant 1, 2 up to 14.

### **3.9.3 Informed consent**

Before the study commenced, all participants were given full information about the purpose of the study and they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. They were also told that they had a right to withdraw from the study if ever they felt like.

### **3.9.4 Debriefing**

After the interviews, the researcher further reiterated the purpose of the study and assured the participants that the information received was only for the study so as to eliminate the participants' fear that information they gave could be abused.

## **3.10. Chapter Summary**

This chapter looked on the methodology which was used in the study and this included qualitative research approach, phenomenological research design, convenient sampling method and in-depth interviews in collecting data. The thematic method which was used in data analyses and presentation as well as ethical principles which guided the study were also discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the research findings. The researcher started off by presenting the demographic characteristics of the participants and then went on to present the themes from the research findings that the researcher felt were best displaying the stressors related to transfers. Every research question served as a major theme and had sub themes below it. Major themes are work-life stressors faced by ZIMRA female employees following transfers, strategies used by ZIMRA female workers to cope with stress resulting from transfers and recommendations given by ZIMRA female workers concerning the administration of transfers.

#### 4.2. Characteristics of research participants

The study comprised of 14 female employees who had been transferred at some point in their career with ZIMRA. The majority of the participants had been transferred once while the participant who had undergone many transfers had been transferred 7 times. The majority of the participants were married and non-managerial. All participants were adults with the majority being in the 40s, the youngest being 27 years old and the oldest being 52 years old. They had worked within the Authority for a number of years, the participant with the least having 6 years and the highest having 23 years. In a bid to honor the right to participant's anonymity, the researcher did not use the actual names of the respondents; rather, they were referred to as participants. Every participant was allocated with a number in relation to the order in which interviews were done, this therefore saw the researcher having respondent 1, 2, up to 14. The figure below summarises participants' demographic characteristics;

**Table 4.2.1 Summary of participants' demographic information**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Number of children</b>	<b>Number of years in the organisation</b>	<b>Number of transfer</b>	<b>Employee category</b>
1	Female	32	Married	2	7	1	Non-managerial
2	Female	45	Married	1	18	7	Non-managerial
3	Female	34	Married	3	8	2	Non-managerial
4	Female	32	Married	2	6	1	Non-managerial
5	Female	48	Single	1	22	4	Non-managerial
6	Female	27	Single	0	7	2	Non-managerial
7	Female	44	Married	1	18	4	Non-managerial
8	Female	44	Single	0	12	4	Non-managerial
9	Female	42	Married	2	17	1	managerial
10	Female	38	Married	2	13	2	Non-managerial
11	Female	52	Married	5	23	1	Non-managerial
12	Female		Married	4	10	1	Non-managerial
13	Female	41	Single	2	11	1	Non-managerial
14	Female	49	Married	3	17	1	Managerial

### **4.3. Work-life stressors faced by ZIMRA female workers following transfers**

Transfers were described by participants as a source of frustration, isolation, worry and distress in their lives. They reported that they experienced the following work-life stressors following transfers; family disintegration, homesickness, challenges in adapting and relearning the job procedures, absence of transfer policy and lack of consultation, more financial constraints as well as disturbances in personal programs. These will be discussed below;

#### **4.3.1 Family disintegration**

Most participants reported that transfers fragmented their families. They argued that the long distance between work station and the families as well as the fewer vacation days given made it difficult for them to constantly visit their families and this severely weakened their family ties. The following narratives show that transfers led to participant's family disintegration;

*The transfer brought stress to my family. When I was told of the transfer, I told my husband and for the first time my husband complained about my job and that resulted in a conflict which brought tension between us...even my daughter cried when I told her that I was going to leave Harare for Gweru for work related reasons and with pain in her heart she requested to talk to my manager. She was in grade 7 and as it was in the middle of the year, I could not go with her to my new Station. My husband also goes to work; this leaves me with so much worry about the wellbeing of my child who stays with a maid, my brother I do not feel secure leaving my kids with the maid, you know those cannot be trusted. What worries me even worse is the fact that I do not know what my husband does in my absence, you know how men are, and this distance thing really causes promiscuity (Participant 12)*

This was further supported by Participant 1 who also complained that transfers disturbed family solidarity;

*When I was transferred from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls I felt so bad, it was hard separating with my family, especially leaving behind a four year old child since I had no accommodation to accommodate the two of us in Falls and the accommodation provided to us cannot accommodate a family since it is just a room...My family life was okay before the transfer as I was living with my family. Following the transfer, my relationship with my family, particularly my husband has*

*deteriorated severely, mostly because of the distance between us. We cannot plan together as a family anymore and this has created more problems for me. I can safely say that the transfer killed my marriage, so I cannot say it's beneficial at all. How can I say they are beneficial when I am forced by my husband to choose between work and my marriage, this is just so stressful. My family needs me, it does not have a mother anymore and there is no more attachment between me and my kids as they now attached to the maid than me their real mother, this worries me so much*

To further reiterate on the family disintegration due to transfers, Participant 4 also echoed that;

*My relationship with my family deteriorated severely following my transfer because of the distance, you can imagine going to Victoria Falls from as far as Kadoma. I hardly visit my family; this stresses me although the stress is no longer as much as that which I used to feel a few days following my transfer. Imagine I had left my two young kids with their father and the kids used to cry the first days asking their father of their mother's where about. It is better now as they are used to staying with their father*

More so, Participant 13 also shared that;

*The transfer separated me from my kids; kids need parental guidance and assistance in whatever they would be doing. Now my kids stay alone with the maid and have no one to assist them, even at school their performance has dropped from what I used to know as I am no longer there to monitor their studying and to assist them read and do their homework. Again my major worry is what are my kids learning from the maid, maids cannot be trusted since people come from different backgrounds and have different teachings; in my absence she can teach my kids wrong things*

These narratives show that transfers really destroy family ties as participants are complaining of being detached from their families. It is also demonstrated that transfers result in multiple mothering leading to the children of transferred employees suffering from maternal deprivation and this negatively affect the social, mental and physical development of children. Again, the participants reported of being insecure when they are far away from their husbands and distrusting maids, this shows that the participants developed paranoid personality disorder following transfers.

### 4.3.2 Homesickness

Most participants reported that their new stations were not their preferred stations as they are far away from their communities. Their responses proved that they were homesick;

*It is very difficult to balance family and work, right now I'm here in Vic- Falls while my family is in Bulawayo and I cannot constantly visit home as it is very far. I travel once a month to see my children who are always under the care of the maid; I feel it's not enough (Participant 3)*

Participant 7 also stressed out the issue of missing home when she said the following;

*When I was notified that I was moving to Victoria Falls I wept and would do so whenever I told my friends the news. I was not happy with the new station as it is too far from my home town and relatives. How I wish I could travel home as often as I could, but due to the lack of off days I rarely go home, I just utilize my off once a month to go and be with my family. When I am here I cannot let a day go-by without hearing from my husband and child, I communicate with them regularly over the phone*

In addition, participant 12 further reiterated that;

*It stresses me being away from home for too long, for the home is home because of the mother, in my absence my kids stay with their father and we all know fathers are not that good looking after kids*

As if that was not enough, Participant 1 further echoed the following;

*I can say that the transfer was okay since I met new people and was exposed to the new environment, but the major problem is I am always in two places at the same time, I am physically here but my mind is miles away as I am thinking of my husband and children. To make matters even worse, the off days given are not enough to allow me to constantly visit my family*

To further strengthen the point of being homesick, Participant 9 when she was asked what improvements if any were needed in the administration of transfers, she said;

*I do not see anything wrong with the employer transferring his staff from one station to another but my problem is that the way transfers are done is not fair as employees are transferred to*

*areas that are very far away from their homes. Staff should be transferred to stations closer to their homes*

This shows that if transfers involve geographical relocation to far areas, employees find it hard to enjoy their stay in the new stations as they would be homesick. In other words employees suffer separation anxiety following transfers as they would be thinking of their native areas they are attached to.

#### **4.3.3 Challenges adapting and relearning the job procedures**

Most participants reported that adapting to their new stations was a challenge. Some said they suffered from harsh weather conditions, for others language barriers seemed to be the most challenging thing and for others relearning job procedures was very stressing. The following narratives show that adapting to the new stations and relearning job procedures was a challenge; Participant 6 echoed that;

*The few days following my transfer were very hectic for me as for the very first time I was exposed to Customs work. Previously, I used to work in the Taxes department and this complete shift of the department meant that I had to start learning Customs procedures from scratch. It was not easy at all in the first days although I can now with a smile say it was worthwhile as it has broadened my work experience... (Participant 6)*

Participant 2 also reinforced the point that adapting in the new work station is not easy by saying the following;

*Adapting to a new area is always a problem. As for me being transferred to Victoria Falls was the worst thing that has ever happened to me. The town's weather especially was just something else...my son I have worked in almost all of ZIMRA's Stations but I have never seen an area as hot as this town, during my first days here, I could hardly survive and my body was something else due to heat rush. At least I am used to it now...Another challenge here is the language problems, people here speak Ndebele, Nambya and Tonga and I do not understand these making communications a bit challenging.*

Again, Participant 3 further cemented on the difficulties of adapting to the new area. She said that;

*Adapting in a new area is always a challenge. Places are different, I was used to working in Harare and when I was thrown this side, I found it hard to get used to this place. In Harare, the work environment was just good, talk of buildings and the offices, it was just superb. Here the infrastructure is substandard and very poor. All of this demoralises you know*

Participant 7 also added that;

*Transfers make you feel like you are no longer part of the station you have been working at and at the new station it is hard to adapt because most people have a tendency of stereotyping that every new employee is troublesome, they would not trust you as they would be thinking that you might come up with changes*

More so, Participant 11 also reported that adapting to the new work station was not easy when she said the following;

*I did not find any trouble blending in with my workmates as they were very much supportive, even the workplace itself its ok for me. My biggest worry is where I am renting, renting is very difficult and I am not used to it. I am now living in one room as I cannot afford to pay more rent, this situation is just awful*

The above narratives show that some employees suffered from adjustment disorders following transfers as they could not easily cope with abrupt and drastic changes in their lives resulting thereof.

#### **4.3.4. Absence of a transfer policy and lack of consultation**

The majority of the participants reported that what makes transfers so stressful is that there is no transfer policy and they are not consulted. They reported that they are just transferred and there are no clear procedures to be followed and this is so distressful. Following are some of the responses that demonstrate that participants were not happy with the absence of the transfer policy and not being consulted prior to the transfer;

*There is no transfer policy, what is there is only a statement in the contract of employment which states that employees would at some time be transferred to different Stations, I doubt if that alone is enough to stand as a transfer policy. The absence of the transfer policy makes it hard for*

*us to oppose the transfers that affect us as there would be nowhere to base the grievance on, but if there would be a policy, it would be clear to us how transfers are done (Participant 7)*

Participant 9 also cemented on the above point by saying that;

*No, there is no policy in ZIMRA but there mere guidelines on how transfers should be done. As people were have a tendency of feeling comfortable when doing things which are kind of routine, as such, if there is a transfer policy, we would be familiar with the policy to the extent that even before we are told that we are going to be transferred, we would be already knowing that we are due for transfer, the fact that we would be anticipating the transfer make it less stressful*

In addition, Participant 5 echoed that

*I am not sure if we have a transfer policy; even if it is there I am not familiar with it and this makes it easier for the employer to transfer us to any station willy-nilly as he would be knowing that we cannot object to that*

Moving on, to show that respondents were not happy with not being consulted, Participant 12 echoed the following;

*It is so sad, I just received a letter of transfer from Human Resources, and no consultation was done. At least if I was consulted the management might have understood my condition and reversed the transfer. My husband works outside the country and we have four kids, one of them was doing her grade 7 when I was transferred and as it was in the middle of the year I could not take her along with me. Three of my kids remained in Harare under the care of the maid; I only took the youngest one with me as it is still breastfeeding. So I have two maids in Harare and here and come month end I pay them both, it is so tough my son I do not want to lie to you. Initially, I appealed against the transfer but my appeal was quashed down (Participant 12)*

Furthermore, Participant 2 also highlighted that not being consulted made her feel bad, she echoed that;

*You are talking about being consulted, do you think anybody cares about that, even if they consult you at the end of the day your views are not considered as they say that the obligations of the employer supersedes the interest of employees. I have been transferred for more than 7 times*

*as such I know what I'm telling you. I was working in Bulawayo when I was just informed that I was going to be transferred to Victoria Falls. Honestly speaking, I was not happy with this decision because it's very far away from my family, imagine close to 700 kilometers away but as you can see the job market is just something else, if you refuse the transfer you never know, the axe might just descend on you. Nonetheless, I appealed against the transfer but my appeal was not approved so I moved. Even this side I applied for a swop transfer since I had a friend in Bulawayo who understood my situation and agreed we could exchange stations, this arrangement was also suppressed*

Again, Participant 14 shared same sentiments that the employer just imposed the transfer on her without seeking for her consent;

*I was not consulted, I was just offered with a letter that by the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2016, I was to report in Gweru. I was totally not happy with the move as it was to disrupt so many of my activities that were underway in Harare but I had to respect the decision from management since I had agreed in the contract of employment that I would agree to be moved to any station within ZIMRA*

The above narrations show that employees are unhappy with the absence of a transfer policy as this leads to lack transparency in the selection of those to be transferred. Again, it has been shown that employees developed feelings of worthlessness, being uncared for and helplessness if they are not consulted prior to their transfers.

#### **4.3.5. More financial constraints**

Another concern that the participants were greatly touched with was that transfers incur extra costs which then become strenuous on their budgets. Transfers were appraised to be a source of more financial constraints as seen in the following responses;

*For me transfers are very costly, I cannot say they are beneficial anyhow... as I have already mentioned that I have four kids, we are renting in Harare and now here in Gweru, I am renting too. As if that is not enough, I now have two maids, one looks after the house and my three kids in Harare and one is here with me as I have a small baby as such at the end of the month I pay them both...Yes, I was given a disturbance allowance though it was not enough to allow me to settle, the money was so small and could not buy me the major things I needed such as the bed,*

*television, stove, pay rent among other necessities. If you see the room I am renting now, it is pathetic my brother... For weeks following my transfer, I was always feeling sick and exhausted and I constantly visited the doctor on my expense, this strained me financially (Participant 12)*

Participant 1 also strengthened the point that transfers lead to financial strains by echoing the following;

*Yes all employees working in border towns are provided with accommodation. Even here in Victoria Falls we are provided with accommodation although the rooms cannot accommodate a family, I am therefore compelled to regularly visit my children in Bulawayo. This is not only costly but also risky considering the rate of accidents in Zimbabwe*

In addition, Participant 8 echoed that;

*I could not travel to visit my relatives as often as I would have wanted due to lack of money but I could communicate with them a countless number of times over the phone*

This shows that transfers are a source of frustration, worry, distress and depression to employees due to the extra costs that accompany them which are strenuous to employees.

#### **4.3.6. Disturbances in personal programs**

Most participants reported that transfers disturbed progress and planning in their lives. Some reported that prior to the transfers, they were running businesses while others shared that they were enrolled in the nearest Universities where they were learning. The transfers therefore made sustaining such activities very difficult. To show that transfers really disrupted personal programs, the respondents had the following to say;

*If you are young transfers can be good as you would be exploring places but for us old people, being transferred away from homeland just destroy our lives because we are now approaching retirement and we need to settle down and retire in one place (Participant 11)*

More so, to cement on the point that transfers disrupt people' activities, Participant 1 echoed that;

*When I was in Bulawayo I used to stay with my husband and we could plan and do projects together to sustain our family. All that is a bygone now, the transfer saw me working far away*

*from my husband and now we hardly plan together crucial matters that can see the family getting another level. We used to be transparent on all our incomes but all that has long gone*

Participant 12 further concreted on the point that transfers disturb the smooth flow of family activities, she said that;

*When I was transferred one of my children was doing her grade 7 of which I was playing a very crucial role of assisting her do her homework and study. Her performance was outstanding but following the turn of events I left her and she was very much pained as she was left with no one to assist her and obviously her performance would decline. I wonder how she would perform in her grade 7 examinations in October... My husband is an elder at church and he was also affected by my transfer because there are some church meetings such as the couple' meetings where it is absurd for him to attend alone without me his spouse. It worries me so much that I cannot support my husband anymore. Again, my friends are often calling me for parties such as kitchen parties, baby welcome parties and the likes, but I fail being with them, this stresses me greatly*

These narratives show that transfers really disrupt employees' personal activities and as such they are a source of worry, sadness, distress and depression.

#### **4.4. Coping mechanisms employed by ZIMRA female workers to deal with transfer related stress**

##### **4.4.1. Emotion focused coping strategies**

The participants reported that they were powerless to avoid or stop the transfers, therefore the stress remained unabated, they resorted much on emotion focused coping strategies such as seeking social support, praying, alcohol consumption, exercising, sleeping and taking medications. These are discussed in detail below;

##### **4.4.1.1. Seeking social support**

Most of the participants reported that going to church and hanging out with friends were their major coping strategies. This can be seen in the following responses;

*I am a Sabbath Day Adventist member. I often go to church and it is at my church that I have found a new family and friends. I feel less stressed when I'm in church than when I'm home alone (Participant 2)*

Participant 3 also expounded on the point of seeking social support when she said that;

*Going to church keeps me going, I am someone who is not outgoing, I am not into parties and all that, the only outing I do is going to church. I go to ZAOGA and I make it a point that I attend every service at my church as long as I'm not at work and this gives me the courage and strength to keep going otherwise I could have succumbed to stress and died*

In addition, Participant 6 shared that

*During most of my time when I am not at work, especially during weekends, I travel to Hwange to meet and hangout with my friends, this way I feel cheerful and less stressed*

This shows that employees feel better when they are in the company of others. The participants highlighted that they felt less stressed when they were at church and when they hung out with their friends.

#### **4.4.1.2. Prayer**

Most participants reported that they often prayed. They prayed for protection of their families and the praying gave them fortitude and solace. The following responses show that;

*... I pray every day interceding for my husband and kids and I feel much better whenever I pray because I begin to feel that since I would have surrendered my burdens to God, surely he would not let me down (Participant 2)*

To add on the point of prayer as a coping tool, Participant 12 reported that;

*Sure I do not feel secure staying far away from my family and not seeing them for days. My husband works in Botswana and my children are alone in Harare with a maid, a thought of this make me sick but when duty calls what can one do nothing but just to play along. I do not have control over all this, what I do is just to kneel down before God everyday begging him to safeguard my home and my family*

Participant 3 also uttered the following;

*There is nothing as painful as staying away from your family and relatives. Every day you just think of them but do nothing, I'm just short of a thousand mouths with which to thank the almighty for keeping us intact*

The above narratives show that employees feel helpless and powerless over their predicaments of staying away from their homes, families and friends following transfers. The only way for them to feel better is to pray to God for the protection and comfort.

#### **4.4.1.3. Exercising**

Exercising was reported to be one of the coping strategies that participants in the study resorted to. They reported that exercising works for them since it keeps them occupied having no idle time to think, and consequently be stressed. This can be seen in the following utterances;

*When I dismiss from work every day I go to Elephant-Hills gym and work out. We usually finish working out around 7pm after which I go home. When I get home, I just cook eat and retire for sleep and the good part about it is that I would be totally exhausted as such falling asleep is not a struggle. The whole night I just sleep like a baby and have no time to think of anything. In the morning also I wake up at around 5:30 and go jogging for about 30 minutes after which I start preparing for work. Exercising keeps me busy and help me feel good since I would be having little time for distress (Participant 6)*

Participant 10 pointed out that she also uses exercising as coping strategy, she articulated that;

*We have a netball team here of which I am also a player and we usually meet during weekends to play. This group keeps me busy during weekends and I rarely get bored. Even when I am alone, I do exercise though not often*

The aforementioned narratives show that exercising keep employees busy thereby distracting their minds from all stressful stimuli thereby improving their well-being.

#### **4.4.1.4. Seeking medical attention**

Some participants reported that they constantly felt sick following transfers and the only way out for them to feel better was to seek medical attention. This is brought out by the following articulations;

*When I was transferred from Kadoma to come and work here I don't know what happened to me. I began having chronic headache, at first I thought it was going to end but to my surprise, the headache remained stable. I went to see the doctor and I was informed that my blood pressure was high and that my headache could be due to stress. The doctor prescribed some pills called Prozac for me to use. I took them and after a few days the headache was no more. Since then, whenever I feel those symptoms, I just go to the pharmacy and purchase those pills (Participant 4).*

Participant 12 also added that she too relies on medications to deal with stress, she reported that;

*I don't want to lie to you, being here stresses me big time, I often suffer from abrupt health ills that I really cannot understand. Whenever i feel stressed I visit the doctor so that I get pills because if I don't I am afraid one day you might hear the sad news that I'm no more due to cardiac arrest*

To further add on the use of medications as a coping strategy, Participant 11 echoed that;

*Surely as old as I am where do you think the strength to exercise would come from, you will see it, and the more one ages the more the health problems. Transfers really affect us old people as we are living on multiple medications. We should be left in one area so that we take our medications peacefully*

This demonstrates that some employees develop health problems due to stress following transfers and they depend on medications to feel better. Although medications help employees feel better from stress; taking them can also expose them to severe unforeseen problems since they have their share of side effects too.

#### **4.4.1.5. Drinking alcohol**

Some of the participants reported that they resorted on alcohol to cope with stress. They shared that drinking made them feel much better and this can be seen in the following narrations;

*I was never a fan of alcohol but I'm now into alcohol because of stress, my refrigerator is always packed with beers and when I dismiss from work I relax myself with it. I don't mean that I'm a drunkard, hell no! Taking a few glasses of ciders make me feel cool, I don't feel stress when I drink. Whenever I drink, I just go fast asleep (Participant 8)*

In addition, Participant 10 articulated that

*Sometimes I drink although drinking is not really my thing. Even if you don't drink the situation forces you to start.*

This shows that some employees feel better from stress when they drink alcohol. Although alcohol helps them feel better, it has a major drawback of being effective for a short time.

#### **4.4.2. Problem focused coping strategies**

The study also showed that some employees use problem focused coping strategies to deal with stress. Participants reported that they often called their loved ones on phone and visited them as well. For others working hard and consulting their workmates on grey areas worked for them. This can be seen in the narratives below;

##### **4.4.2.1 Incessantly calling and visiting family, relatives and friends**

A handful of the participants reported that constantly calling and visiting their families, relatives and friends greatly reduced their stress and worry. The responses below show that;

*I may be here physically but my mind is always far away, I'm always thinking of my husband and children and since I rarely visit them I regularly call them. After calling I feel much better having assurance that all those I care about are well (Participant 1)*

Again, Participant 12 added to that by echoing the following;

*Every weekend I make it a point that I go to Harare to see my children as I cannot just stay this side leaving the maid alone to look after my kids. My husband is outside the country we only meet when he comes although we communicate over the phone*

Participant 6 also reported the following;

*I frequently go to Hwange to meet and hangout with my friends therefore I don't miss them that much*

The above narrations show that employees are powerless over their situations; the only way out for them is to frequently call and visit their loved ones so as to reduce the distress and homesickness although this is costly and travelling frequently is also risky considering the increased rates of accidents.

#### **4.4.2.2 Working hard and consulting coworkers**

To cope with the challenges of their work, most participants reported that they worked hard and consulted each other on grey areas. This is seen in the following utterances;

*At first I thought work was going to be very hard for me since I was moved from the department of Taxes to Customs but my workmates were so welcoming and supportive. I dedicated my time to my work, very eager to learn and get used to the Customs procedures and whenever I was facing challenges I would consult and be assisted. Now I'm used and I'm enjoying my work*  
(Participant 6)

Participant 9 also highlighted that working hard makes her cope with the challenges of her work, she said;

*I used to have difficulties with my work responsibilities but I have adjusted and grown to like my job. I just work hard and make sure that I do my work timeously and accurately. This way I avoid pressures that might stress me*

This shows that teamwork as well as employees' focus and commitment to their work can greatly reduce work stress.

#### **4.5. Recommendations given by ZIMRA female workers to improve the administration of transfers**

The participants reported that they were not satisfied with the way ZIMRA conducts and they felt that there were improvements needed. The recommendations they gave included the following distance to be considered, consultation to be done, introduction of transfer policy and review of disturbance allowance, these are discussed in detail below;

#### **4.5.1 Distance to be considered**

Most participants complained that the stations they were transferred to were too far from their families. They recommended that there should be a home station at least and the transfer periods for married women should be shortened so that the employee returns to home station closer to her home. The narratives below show that;

*Transfers have led to breaking up of marriages as most people end up in long distance relationships, it is therefore not surprising that the majority of ZIMRA female employees are single. ZIMRA should transfer employees to stations closer to home (Participant 3)*

Participant 8 strengthened the above point by echoing that

*Previously, when ZIMRA was still customs, you would know that even if you were transferred, after a certain period you would return to your home station but now it is different altogether as you are transferred from one station to the next on and on. I recommend that ZIMRA should return that system of home stations and if possible women with children should not be transferred at all*

Participant 1 added to the above by recommending that;

*ZIMRA can improve on transfers by shortening transfer periods for married women to a maximum of at most 2 years then the employee returns to her home Station*

On the same note, Participant 13 had the following to say;

*Transfers are just a mechanism to reduce corruption; I think people should be transferred within the same region so that distances won't be that much*

This shows that employees are distressed and frustrated by the distance created by transfers as it separates them from their relatives, friends and as well interrupt the smooth running of their personal activities.

#### **4.5.2 Introduction of a transfer policy**

The majority of participants reported that the absence of a transfer policy was affecting them as they felt that there was no transparency in the way transfers are conducted, a problem a transfer policy can eliminate. The following recommendations were given;

*ZIMRA should avail a transfer policy. If there is a transfer policy, transfers would not be as painful as they currently are as we would be aware whenever we are due for transfer. The transfer would also bring with it transparency in the administration of transfers as I have observed that currently there is no fairness in the way transfers are being conducted as there are some people who are not moving (Participant 7)*

Participant 8 cemented on the need for a transfer policy by saying the following;

*For as long as there is no transfer policy, there is need for improvement. There should be a transfer policy and it must be well communicated and be clear to all employees*

More so, Participant 3 had the following to say;

*The nonexistence of a documented transfer policy has led to victimization as well as unfair treatment of employees. For example, one employee can be transferred after every 3 years while others remain in the same station only to be transferred after 14 years*

This shows that there is no uniformity in the way transfers are conducted due to the lack of a documented transfer policy and employees feel that a transfer policy could rectify the problem.

#### **4.5.3 Consultation**

Participants complained that the major challenge accompanied with ZIMRA transfers was that the employer just superimposes his decision to transfer people and does not bother to hear the views of employees. The respondents recommended that ZIMRA should consult employees before transferring them. This is seen in the following responses;

*Even though we agreed by virtue of signing our contracts of employment that we could be transferred from one work station to another, we should still be consulted as this would make us feel important and valued by the organisation. I think we should be consulted and be given at least three locations from which to choose our preferred stations (Participant 4)*

In addition, Participant 7 shared that;

*It is very painful and difficult to accept to be just informed that you are relocating. ZIMRA should consult us before transferring us because we are people too and we are very logical too, we understand that ZIMRA has its operations in different parts of the country but that does not*

*mean we should just be pestered around as if we are goods with no feelings. Even if it is difficult for them to consult us, after the transfers, management should be considerate enough to allow employees who want to swap to do so without their disapproval*

From the aforementioned narratives it can be seen that employees feel undervalued and uncared for due to the fact that their employer does not bother to hear their views prior to transferring them.

#### **4.5.4 Reviewing of the disturbance allowance**

Another complain which was raised by most participants was that the disturbance allowance that ZIMRA offers to its staff to assist them in the process of relocation is not enough to cover all expenses that accompany transfers. The following are some of the recommendations that they gave,

*I am not satisfied with the money given as disturbance allowance, it is very little and unable to allow me to relocate and smoothly settle down at my new station. I recommend that ZIMRA should review its disturbance allowance. In fact, there should also be transport allowance for married people to allow them to visit their families more often (Participant 1)*

Participant 12 added that;

*The disturbance allowance that ZIMRA gives us following transfers is too little and should be reviewed. Following my transfer, I ended up using my own money as the disturbance allowance couldn't suffice all my relocation costs*

This shows that employees are not satisfied with the money they are given as disturbance allowance as it is not enough to cover all the costs that come along with transfers.

#### **4.5.5 Provision of bigger accommodation in border towns**

Another challenge raised by participants was the size of accommodation provided by the Authority in border towns. They reported that the rooms are so small and they recommended that bigger accommodation should be provided in border towns. This is seen in the following utterances;

*ZIMRA should provide us with bigger accommodation so that we can take our families along so as to reduce costs, or else there should be an allowance to cater for the new family created by the transfer because honestly it's painful not to live with your family and at the same time struggle to provide for them (Participant 1)*

Participant 7 also added and said that;

*Yes, we are provided with accommodation but it is just one small room per employee and as such, there is no way you can take someone to stay with you. I think ZIMRA should provide us with at least two rooms each*

This shows that employees are not satisfied with the size of accommodation given as they feel it is too small for them as they want to stay with their families in a bid to reduce stress.

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

The chapter focused on the presentation, interpretation and analysis of research findings concerning the stressors related to transfers and coping strategies employed by ZIMRA female workers to cope with stress. The chapter showed that there are so many work-life stressors related to transfers and on coping strategies, the chapter showed that ZIMRA employees mostly use emotion focused strategies as opposed to problem focused strategies to cope with stress. The chapter also highlighted the recommendations that participants gave to improve the administration of transfers the common recommendation was that reduction of the distance created by transfers between employees and their families should be limited.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction

Following the presentation, interpretation and analysis of the research findings, this chapter focused on discussing the findings by comparing them with previous studies used in the literature review to see if they link so as to determine the validity of the research. Discussions were done following every research question, that is, what work-life stressors do ZIMRA female employees experience following transfers, how do ZIMRA female employees cope with stress resulting from transfers, and what recommendations do ZIMRA female employees give to ZIMRA management concerning the administration of transfers. The chapter also includes the overall conclusions from the findings and the research as a whole and ended with the researcher giving recommendations to ZIMRA management aimed at improving the administration of its transfers and recommendations for further research were also given.

#### 5.2 Work-life stressors related to transfers

The study revealed that transfers led to family disintegration. This refers to the weakening of bonds between the transferred employees and their families due to the two staying in distant places thereby making it hard for them to maintain the strong and tight relations. These findings directly concur with the findings by Brett (1984) and Maxwell (2009) who found transfers are accompanied with changes in geographical locations which in turn result in separation of family members which in turn directly result in work-family disconnects, especially for working mothers. In addition, Marshall and Cooper (1976) argue that family bonds become shaky after job relocations and concluded that separation of family members following a job transfer can in short be referred to as a crisis point in marriages. More so, family disintegration following transfers is further strengthened by Anderson and Stark (1988) who posit that transfers that required employees to change geographical locations and travel to other towns, cities or countries are a major stressor as they disrupt work-family balance.

Moving on, the research findings demonstrated that transferred employees found it hard to concentrate on their work in their new stations as they were always homesick. A feeling of homesickness is like a disease on its own as the employees would be always distressed,

frustrated, worried and anxious of their homes. This finding relates to that of Van Rooyen Smith and Strumpler (2010) study on South African nurses who were transferred to work in Saudi Arabia where it was found that leaving home and loved ones was very traumatic for the participants and most of them showed signs of being homesick. The participants in Van Rooyen et al (2010) study complained of missing homemade food, home dress code, their native languages and religions which are a completely different from the Islamic culture in Saudi Arabia. Again the finding of homesickness due to transfers is also in line with the research findings by McCubbin, Dahl, and Hunter, (1976) on families of military employees who were often transferred to different places. The study found that there are so many challenges faced by mobile families which included homesickness, separation and loneliness.

Moreover, the present study found out that transfers incurred extra financial constraints which in turn strained the budgets of employees. This finding agrees with an assertion by Brett (1984) that job transfers represent a frequent, an expensive and potentially disruptive human resource issue. These costs emanate from employees' incessant calls and visits to their families, relatives and friends. Again, some employees reported that they rented two houses, one at home and another in their new work stations as such they paid double rents. This financially strain employees and result in distress, frustration and worry.

Another stressor associated with transfers highlighted by the study was lack of consultation prior to transfers. Employee exclusion when crucial decisions that affect them are made is bad and should not be done as it results in feelings of worthlessness and helplessness. This concurs with Rosch's assertion (as cited in Claussen (2011) that management should clearly communicate with employees as lack or poor communication between the two severely affects employees. In addition, the importance of consulting employees prior to transfer is seen in a case of Jane Kanonhuwa who worked for Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (Cottco) and was transferred from Harare to Gokwe which is about 400km away from her family without her consent. She then sought relief from the High Court and the High Court set aside Kanonhuwa's transfer and ruled that it was unfair and outrageous as she was not consulted. The High Court further stated that her views, wishes and personal circumstances were relevant and should have been taken into consideration before the decision to transfer her was made, (case number HH10/98, reported in Herald dated 14 June 2012 by Musakura).

On the contrary to transfers leading to the above mentioned work-life stressors, Mayer and Bones (2011)'s study on German managers who were transferred from Germany to South Africa found that those German managers reported more job satisfaction in South Africa than in their motherland and greatly liked the South African environment. Their study further demonstrated that the managers reported being happy with their families as well as with their social lives in general. In addition, Stassen (1993)'s study on feelings of transferred employees from a closing plant found that transferring workers to another facility reduced feelings of job insecurity and, at the same time, produced positive attitudes, loyalty and commitment towards the company. More so, Adekunle and Popoola (2009)'s study in Nigeria found that transfers exposed employees to broader job experience which led career growth and development. It was further found that transfers also acted as a motivating factor as they opened promotion doors and eliminated work boredom associated with routine work duties in one place.

### **5.3 Coping mechanisms employed by ZIMRA female workers to deal with stress**

The study revealed that employees relied more on emotion focused coping strategies such as seeking social support, prayer, exercising, medications and alcohol consumption than on problem focused coping strategies like constantly calling and visiting their families, relatives and friends and working hard and consulting their workmates. This relates to a study by Eisengart et al (2006) on the structure of coping in a sample of working mothers in Malaysia who experienced high but varying levels of stress. The study found that most of the mothers used emotion-focused coping techniques especially seeking social support and prayer to feel better. However, the study demonstrated that although seeking social support really did make the working mothers feel better as they could laugh with friends and were distracted from the stressing stimuli, it was ineffective as the stress persisted when they were alone.

Again, participants reported that they constantly sought medical attention to cope with stress as it made them feel ill. This concurs with Raak and Wahren (2005)'s study on the relationship between headache and coping among 257 female employees in a Swedish University hospital. The results were that employees who relied on emotion focused coping relatively suffered more from headaches compared to women who used problem focused coping methods and consequently relied on medications to cope with their chronic stress. In addition, Snow et al

(2005) articulate that participants who use emotion focused coping methods exhibit more psychological symptoms than those who use problem focused coping methods.

Furthermore, the participants reported that exercising was one of their best stress coping mechanisms. This is in line with the study by Keas (2014) on the trends and insights regarding stress at the workplace. The study used 762 participants in United States and it found that 83 percent of them used exercising to cope with stress. It was showed that exercising made employees feel better by relieving muscle tension; back pains, and headaches among others. In addition to that, it was posited that exercising produces endorphins in the brain, which are chemicals responsible for stress suppression.

Moreover, the participants in this study reported that they used alcohol to help them deal with stress. This again concurs with Keas (2014) study on the trends and insights regarding stress in the workplace. The study used 762 participants in United States and found that 66 percent of the participants reported alcohol to be their best means in coping with stress. However, the study showed that alcohol was only effective for a short period of time as stress always relapsed. Again, the use of alcohol despite its effectiveness in reducing the impact or level of stress was criticized for negatively interfering with employees' performance at work as such it is not recommended during working hours.

Lastly but not least, a handful of the participants reported that they used active or problem focused coping strategies such as constantly calling and visiting their families, relatives and friends. This finding is relates to that of Van Rooyen, Smith and Strumpler (2010)'s study on South African nurses who were transferred to work in Saudi Arabia where it was found that the nurses frequently called their families, relatives and friends who were in South Africa. Another problem focused strategy reported by the participants was consulting peers on grey areas. This made adaptation and conceptualization of new job procedures very easy thereby directly reducing stress experienced. This finding agrees with Killien and Brown (1987) and Morris (1991)'s findings on coping strategies used by working mothers in Malaysia. These studies found that most working mothers managed to cope with work pressures through consulting their co-workers on areas where they were having challenges.

#### **5.4. Recommendations given by ZIMRA female workers to improve the administration of transfers**

Various participants were not happy with the transfers as they viewed transfers to destroy the proximity between them and their families. Most of them recommended that the distance between the old and new station should be reduced so that employees would still be closer to their loved ones and able to visit them constantly. This concurs with findings of Van Rooyen, Smith, and Strumpler (2010) on South African nurses who were transferred from South Africa to work in Saudi Arabia. The study showed that the long distance between old station and new station following transfers greatly affected employees as they could not visit their families as often as they wanted. It was therefore recommended in the study that employee transfers should be done within the same country and the proximity of workplace and employees' families should be maintained to allow employees to balance their work and personal lives. Again, Kingsley (2013) argues that transferring employees to far away areas subjects them to totally unique experiences which make it hard for them to adapt as they experience culture shock, and recommended that whenever employee transfers are done, the distance should not be too much between the old and the new station.

In addition, a considerable number of the participants recommended that better and bigger accommodation should be provided by ZIMRA so that employees would be able to take along with them their families in a bid to reduce costs associated with them travelling long distances frequently to visit their families. This is in line with the recommendation that was given by Sibanda (2014) in her dissertation on qualitative analysis of ZIMRA employees' mental health experiences as a result of organizational transfers. The study found that transferred employees were experiencing challenges with accommodation and recommended that ZIMRA should provide better and bigger accommodation for employees working in both border and inland stations so as to reduce the frustration of staying in rented accommodation and being lodgers at an old age.

More so, participants recommended that the disturbance allowance should be increased as it is too little to allow a smooth employee transition. This is in agreement with Brett (1984)'s articulation that job transfer represents a frequent, an expensive and a potentially disruptive human resource issue as such employees should be compensated heavily for the transfer so as to

enable them to settle down smoothly and avoid situations whereby employees end up using their own resources to settle down as this would strain them and reduce their morale.

Another recommended that was given by the participants in the study was that employees should be consulted prior to transfers as they feel unvalued and uncared for if the decision to transfer them is superimposed on them by the employer. This concurs with the recommendation which was given by the High Court in the case of Jane Kanonhuwa who worked for the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (Cottco) and was transferred from Harare to Gokwe without her consent that it is really crucial that employees should be consulted before they are transferred and their views, preferences and suggestions should be considered, (case number HH10/98) reported by Musakaruka in the Herald dated 14 June (2012).

## **5.5. Conclusions**

Employee transfers are associated with so many work-life stressors. They lead to family disintegration, homesickness, disturbances in personal programs, increased financial constraints, isolation, challenges in adapting to the new stations and relearning the job procedures since they destroy the proximity of employees to their native communities thereby making it hard for them to balance work and life. Again, these stressors expose employees to chronic distress, worry, frustration, anxiety among other psychological effects as well as physiological problems such as chronic sicknesses including headaches, stomachaches and back pains among other ills.

There are so many coping strategies used by employees to deal with transfer related stress. These include seeking social support, praying, exercising, consumption of alcohol, taking medications, frequently calling and visiting families, relatives and friends. However, most female employees utilise emotion-focused coping strategies specifically seeking social support, praying and alcohol although these do not really solve the problem of stress as they are only effective for a short time. Employees' frequently calling and visiting of their families although appear to be more effective in helping employees feel better, they are so costly and frequently travelling long distances put employees under a great risk considering current accident statistics.

Again, there are a number of factors that act as moderators on the willingness of employees to accept job transfers; these include employee attachment to the area, their age, perceived attractiveness of the new station and the distance between the new station and the homes of

employees in question. The more attached an individual is to his station, the less the willingness to move. Again, elderly employees nearing their retirement years are less willing to move and also the greater the distance between the old station and the new station, the less the willingness of an employee to move. Employees can gladly accept transfers that do not disrupt the proximity between them and their families, relatives, friends and businesses among other attachments.

The study also showed that employees are generally not happy with the way transfers are done as most participants recommended that a lot of improvements were needed. The absence of a transfer policy means lack of transparency in the administration of transfers, lack of consultation destroys employees' organizational commitment, belongingness and motivation as they feel unvalued and uncared for and the gap created between employees and their families is so distressful and frustrating as it result in separation of family members thereby destroying family bonds.

## **5.6. Recommendations**

### **5.6.1 To the organisation**

Having noted the work-life stressors related to transfers and explored their psychosocial impact on employees, the researcher recommends the following to the organisation;

- The employer should consult employees and take into consideration their views and interests before finalising o the decision of transferring them. Employees feel uncared for and worthless if they are left out in decision making on critical issues that would in turn affect them.
- ZIMRA should come up with a transfer policy and communicate it to its employees so that they would get to know of the whole transfer process and feel less stressed when transferred. Again, the transfer policy would lead to fairness and uniformity in the way transfers are conducted.
- Consideration should be given by the employer on the rampant and fast growing pandemic of HIV/AIDS which may arise as a result of long distance following transfers separating spouses. Employees should be transferred to stations closer to their homes.

- Employees should be provided with transport allowance or coupons to those with their own vehicles to allow them to visit their families regularly as well as airtime allowances so that they could frequently communicate with their families, relatives and friends with little financial strains on their budgets.
- The employer should review upwards the disturbance allowance so that it would be enough for meeting all relocation costs and enable employees to smoothly settle down.
- The Authority should also take into consideration the ages of the employees to be transferred. Elder employees nearing their retirement years should be exempted from transfers so that they could prepare for their retirement in one area.
- The employer should provide pre and post-transfer counseling services to employees to prepare them psychologically and emotionally to accept the transfer and adapt better to their new stations.
- Participants in the study reported that the stress management courses as well as the Health and safety galas are attended by a few employees, therefore ZIMRA should provide more stress management courses and make sure all employees attend Health and Safety Galas so that they are taught of effective stress coping mechanisms.
- The employer should also respond to employee appeals against transfers in good faith. Some employees would be having genuine concerns which if all things being equal should result in the transfer being set aside, or alternatively ZIMRA should approve swop transfers between employees so that all employees would end up in their preferred stations and this would not only increase their loyalty to the organisation but their motivation and focus too.

### **5.6.2 For further research**

The current study focused on the stressors related to transfers and coping strategies employed by female workers at ZIMRA. The study only focused on ZIMRA female workers as such the findings can only generalise on ZIMRA female workers. Further research should be done on stressors related to transfers and coping strategies employed by male workers. This study also focused on ZIMRA transfers only, further research is necessary on other companies as the stressors can be different. Another study can solely devote itself on the effectiveness of the coping strategies used by employees to cope with transfer related stress.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### TARGET POPULATION: ZIMRA FEMALE WORKERS WHO WERE AT SOME POINT TRANSFERRED FROM ONE STATION TO ANOTHER.

My name is Recent Maseko and I am a student in the Department of Psychology at the Midlands State University studying for a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Psychology. I am carrying out a study on *‘Stressors related to transfers and coping strategies employed by female workers at ZIMRA’*. I am kindly asking you to assist me in carrying out my research by taking a few minutes of your time to respond to the following questions as frankly as you can. Your responses will be treated as highly confidential and they would be used **SOLELY** for educational purposes and full respondent anonymity is granted. **I deeply appreciate your cooperation and support.**

Date of interview .....

#### Section A: Demographic Data

1. Age.....
2. Gender .....
3. Marital Status.....
4. Number of children.....
5. Number of years in the organisation.....
6. Number of transfers.....
7. Employee category.....

#### Section B Work-life stressors related to transfers

1. Describe how you felt like when you were informed that you were to be transferred.
2. Were you happy with the station you were being transferred to? If not why weren't you and what did you do about it?
3. What challenges did you encounter following your transfer?
4. What do you feel is wrong with the transfers that you feel should be corrected

5. Describe how your work life was like before and after the transfer(s) in terms of your relationships with your workmates and your supervisor or managers.
6. Describe how your work and family life was before and after your transfer
7. Describe whether your transfer was beneficial to you or not in as far as your work and personal lives are concerned.

**Section C: Strategies used to cope with transfer related stress**

1. What strategies do you use to cope with transfer related stress?
2. How do these strategies work for you?

**Section D: Recommendations to improve the administration of transfers**

1. Are you satisfied with the way transfers are conducted or you think there are improvements needed?
2. What would you recommend to management which you feel would improve the administration of the transfers?

**NB:** This marks the end of my research; I would like to thank you so much for your cooperation and for devoting your precious time on my research. **I do not know if you have anything to add concerning the issue of transfers.**

**Thank you so much**

APPENDIX B- REQUEST FOR DISSERTATION INFORMATION FROM MSU

Midlands State  
University



Established 2000  
P BAG 9055  
GWERU

Telephone: (263) 54 260404 ext 261  
Fax: (263) 54 260233/260311

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Date: 1 November 2015

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WITH DISSERTATION INFORMATION  
FOR PECENT MASEKO  
BACHELOR OF PSYCHOLOGY HONOURS DEGREE

This letter serves to introduce to you the above named student who is studying for a Psychology Honours Degree and is in his/her 4<sup>th</sup> year. All Midlands State University students are required to do research in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of study. We therefore kindly request your organisation to assist the above-named student with any information that they require to do their dissertation.

Topic: *Stressors related to transfer and coping strategies employed by female workers at ZIMRA.*

For more information regarding the above, feel free to contact the Department.

Yours faithfully

*F. Ngwenya*  
F. Ngwenya  
Chairperson



APPENDIX C: APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM ZIMRA

ZIMBABWE REVENUE AUTHORITY  
COMMISSIONER GENERAL



WRITE TO:  
THE COMMISSIONER GENERAL  
ZIMBABWE REVENUE AUTHORITY  
PO BOX 4360  
HARARE

TELEPHONE:  
+263-4-790811/4  
+263-4-752731/2  
FAX:  
+263-4-792113  
TELEGRAPHS:  
HARARE

CALL AT:  
RECEPTION  
6<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR ZB CENTRE  
CNR KWAME NKRUMAH  
AVE/FIRST STREET  
HARARE

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE  
REF: NO.

18 December 2015

Recent Maseko  
2610 Chinotimba Township  
Victoria Falls

Dear Recent

**RE: APPLICATION FOR AUTHORITY AND ASSISTANCE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**Topic: "Stressors related to transfer and coping strategies employed by female workers at ZIMRA."**

The above matter refers

Please be advised that your application for authority to carry out the above research has been approved. However we may not have some of the information you will need for your research. At the end of your research, you are required to furnish this office with a copy of your final research findings upon completion.

We wish you success in your studies.

Yours faithfully

S. Dimingo  
**HEAD HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION**

I Recent Maseko-----acknowledge receipt of this letter and accept its contents.

Tel/Cell No: 0779824930 Signature RC-----Date 07/01/16

**APPENDIX D: AUDIT SHEET**

**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY  
SUPERVISOR- STUDENT AUDIT SHEET**

DATE	ACTIVITY	COMMENT	STUDENT'S SIGNATURE	SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE
14/10/15	Research topic	Approved		
16/10/15	Research proposal	Rework and resubmit		
18/10/15	Research proposal	Approved proceed to chapter 1-3		
17/11/15	Chapter 1-3	Rework and resubmit		
25/11/15	Chapter 1-3	Rework and resubmit		
27/11/15	Chapter 1-3	Approved proceed		
30/11/15	Interview guide	Approved proceed and collect data		
16/02/16	Chapter 4	Rework and resubmit		
25/02/16	Chapter 4	Rework and resubmit		
07/02/16	Chapter 4	Approved proceed to 5		
30/03/16	Chapter 5	Rework and resubmit		
08/04/16	Chapter 5	Approved bring your first draft		
20/04/16	First draft	Approved		
21/04/16	Final draft	submit		

**APPENDIX E: TURNITIN ORIGINALITY REPORT**

Turnitin Originality Report

Maseko dissertation by Recent Maseko

From Dissertation 2016 First Semester (Psychology 2016)

- Processed on 06-Apr-2016 7:50 PM SAST
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Student's signature.....

## APPENDIX E: DISSERTATION MARKING GUIDE

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Name of Student **RECENT MASEKO**      REG NO **R125558Q**

	ITEM	Possible Score	Actual Score	Comment
A	RESEARCH TOPIC AND ABSTRACT clear and concise	5		
B	PRELIMINARY PAGES: Title page, approval form, release form, dedication, acknowledgements, appendices, table of contents.	5		
C	AUDIT SHEET PROGRESSION Clearly shown on the audit sheet	5		
D	CHAPTER 1 :Background, statement of problem, significance of the study, research questions, objectives, hypothesis, assumptions, purpose of the study, delimitations, limitations, definition of terms	10		
E	CHAPTER 2: Addresses major issues and concepts of the study. Findings from previous work, relevancy of the literature to the study, identifies knowledge gap, subtopics	15		
F	CHAPTER 3:Appropriateness of design, target population, population sample, research tools, data collection, procedure, presentation and analysis	15		
G	CHAPTER 4:Findings presented in a logical manner, tabular data properly summarized and not repeated in the text	15		
H	CHAPTER 5 :Discussion (10) Must be a presentation of generalizations shown by results: how results and interpretations agree with existing and published literature, relates theory to practical, implications, conclusions (5) Ability to use findings to draw conclusions .Recommendations (5)	20		
I	Overall presentation of dissertation	5		
J	References	5		
	TOTAL	100		

MARKER.....SIGNATURE.....DATE.....

MODERATOR.....SIGNATURE.....DATE.....