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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS MANAGEMENT AND CURRICULUM STUDIES

PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY ECE LEARNERS IN SEKE DISTRICT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

BY

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APPROVAL FORM

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PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY ECE LEARNERS IN SEKE DISTRICT PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

BY

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In partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Education Degree in Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to establish the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools. The purpose of the study was also to make sure that some solutions to minimise the psychosocial problems faced are found. The research will assist the researcher, departmental staff and other teachers through seminars and workshops, where possible methods of assisting the affected ECE learners will be discussed. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design which enabled the researcher to use questionnaires and interviews to collect data. The design helped the researcher to elicit valuable knowledge about the psychosocial problems faced, their causes and possible methods of minimising them. The population for the study was made up of thirty-six primary schools. The three schools were picked into the sample through simple random sampling. The sample comprised three school heads, three TICs and twenty-five teachers. The findings of the study revealed that ECE learners are facing many psychosocial problems which are hindering their psychological and social growth. The psychosocial problems include poverty, malnutrition, migration, school dropouts, HIV/AIDS among others. The results of the study paint a gloomy picture of the effects of these problems on ECE learners. The research recommends that policies and legislation should be put in place to help minimise the effects of psychosocial problems on ECE learners. The schools are also recommended to partner with the corporate world in order for them to get donations to help the learners. It also recommends that the government through its BEAM program should increase the number of learners they assist. Lastly, the schools should operate as business entities and establish income generating projects that will raise money which may be used to assist learners, who are in abject poverty, learners who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, school dropouts among others.

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DEDICATION

This project is a special dedication to my loving husband, Paidashe Togo; my lovely children Tammia, Tianne, Tyrees and my late parents

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CHAPTER ONE
THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.0. Introduction

Psychosocial problems are those issues that affect the psychological and social domains of a human being. The researcher has noted with concern that a large proportion of ECE learners in Seke district schools have been experiencing psychosocial problems. The study seeks to look deeply into psychosocial problems faced by ECE children with a view of coming up with ideas for eradicating them. This chapter focuses on the background to the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms and summary.

1.1 Background to the study

Psychosocial problems are on the rise in schools. The psychosocial problems that may be faced by children in early childhood include poverty, malnutrition, diseases, rape cases, dropping out of school among others (Reiss,2013). This in turn will result in trauma, feeding problems, failure to thrive and emotional disorders. They affect the complete functioning of a child. Psychosocial problems are common in many countries across the world. They will affect the holistic development of the children. According to Fuller & Coll (2010) psychosocial problems are not only prevalent in African countries even in continents such as Europe, Asia and America, these problems exist.

In Europe, the most prevalent psychosocial problem is migration. Transnational migration is believed to be on the increase and is creating new family structures. According to Reiss (2013) growing numbers of families from low income countries across the world are joining the global movement of workers responding to labour shortages in wealthier countries of the region and beyond. Countries such as United Kingdom, Belgium, Holland and Germany are some of the countries were people from developing countries are migrating to. Evans and Cassels (2014) cite that increases in proportion of these migrants are mothers. These mothers work throughout the day and night and usually leave children on their own. Several children of the migrants are

growing up in the absence of their mothers, fathers or both, (Dekovic and Van Baar, 2017). The children will be exposed to psychosocial problems such as malnutrition and rape cases because there will be no adult to take care of them.

Moreover, in Europe according to Vikram (2005) children who face various challenges are at a greater risk of mental health problems. This is because some of the asylum seekers are fleeing from war or other disasters and these have already affected the children psychosocially. The -+migrants constitute a low prevalence group and for this reason they are further neglected and isolated. Amato (2005) points out that in European countries the children most affected by psychosocial problems are from minority groups which include the refugees or the asylum seekers. Children from these families are greatly exposed to psychosocial problems. The refugees who have fled from war zones are at an increased risk of psychosocial problems (Connel, 2010).According to Poulsen (2006) Institutional discrimination which includes the policies and legal frameworks may be harmful to certain groups.

Vikram (2005) pointed out that the majority of the refugees entering Europe in recent years, around 1,5 million applied for asylum in Germany between 2013 and 2016. Approximately one-third of them are minors. According to Wessels (2004) early childhood is a period when children are most vulnerable to environment and risk factors such as poverty and malnutrition. Many refugee children have already been traumatized in their country of origin, whether by war events, violence or abuse in their families (Dekovic and Van Baar, 2017). This implies that continued exposure of the children to these factors will greatly affect them socially and psychologically.

The Asian continent is of no exception when it comes to the prevalence of psychosocial problems among children. According to Joseph (2007) the United Nations Millennium Summit adopted eight millennium goals to be achieved by 2015. The first two goals were to eradicate poverty and hunger and to achieve universal primary health care. Amato (2005) has the view that there is a great relationship between poverty and psychosocial development. Despite this background children in Asia are still exposed to poverty, diseases and other problems that affect their psychological and social domains.

In addition Wessels (2004) has the view that when children live in poverty for a long time during early years they can have long lasting consequences. Families are the primary socialising agents

for their children. In addition to providing basic necessities such as food, shelter and clothes, families transmit cultural values and help children adapt to social demands and opportunities (Joseph, 2007). As Amato (2005) noted, children growing up in poverty experience double jeopardy. Not only are they exposed to risks in their homes and communities, including illness, family stress, lack of psychosocial needs and limited resources but they often experience more risks than children from high income families. Hagemann, Decillas, Elliene &Mehra (2006) cite that children in low income families are at an increased risk for both malnutrition and overweight often associated with food insecurity.

Similarly, in African countries children are directly exposed to psychosocial problems which include poverty and diseases which eventually lead to school dropouts Dekovic & Van Baar, (2017). Poulsen (2006) has the view that due to the impacts of diseases such as HIV in countries like Nigeria and Uganda, the ability of children to remain in schools is compromised. When parents are sick children's education suffers as children may drop out of school. According to Brown (2004) children may face financial challenges, unsupportive family environments and the urgent need to enter labour market. These issues could result in most children dropping out of school. In order to make ends meet. Cluver, Gardener and Operario (2009) noted that illness of parents or death because of diseases leaves the children helpless and vulnerable and prone to exploitation, abuse and dropping out of school.

Furthermore, due to wars and diseases orphaned children are at a much higher risk of being withdrawn from school and entering labour market, (Connel, 2010). Although this study is confining itself to psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners, some of the children in their early years are seen engaging in child labour. Child labour according to Abebe (2009) refers to work performed by a child that is exploitative, sometimes dangerous or unsuitable of that child's age. Most children in Africa, especially in war zones are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation when parents are no longer there to protect and fend for them.

In Southern Africa, according to Wessels (2004) poverty, diseases and malnutrition are the most prevalent psychosocial problems experienced by children. The issue of diseases has been the topic in much research in Southern Africa (Joseph, 2004). According to Poulsen (2006) Sub Saharan Africa has been heavily impacted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. According to Connel (2010) children are being exposed to a number of social ills as a result of diseases. This deprives

them of the opportunity to be confident, responsible and productive members of society. In addition, in a study conducted in Northern Botswana by Bray (2004) it was established that due to HIV/AIDS child headed families emerged and these have made children more vulnerable as they struggle with food insecurities, poor health care which negatively affect them psychosocially.

Similarly in Zimbabwe poverty and diseases have the greatest effect on the psychosocial development of the children. The Poverty Assessment Study Survey (PASS) conducted by the government of Zimbabwe in 2000 revealed that poverty has reversed progress towards the millennium development goals. It is estimated that about seven out of ten families in Zimbabwe live in abject poverty because of political unrest and socio economic instability. Hagemann et al (2006) posits that the children are exposed and become more vulnerable if they continually experience these problems.

In addition, Cluver and Gardner (2007) noted that the number of children living in poverty in Zimbabwe and the rest of the world is continuously increasing. Poverty has caused and will continue to cause the great suffering to countless children (Poulsen, 2006). Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) report that current estimates indicate that more than two million children in Zimbabwe are at a risk of not developing to their full potential because of poverty and diseases. According to Robertson (2011) the majority of the Zimbabwean poor (80%) live in rural areas. Communal farming areas contain 76% of the poor. Thus the severity of the level of poverty in Zimbabwe is critical hence children in their early years are greatly impacted and may lead to lifelong struggles especially when young people do not receive full education.

Moreover, poverty according to Hagermann et al (2010) is also associated with higher rates of school dropouts. There is high mobility among children from poverty stricken families. Joseph (2004) postulates that these families become of no fixed residence. Sometimes children are left to do as they wish whilst parents leave for neighbouring countries like South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia in search of greener pastures. This scenario according to Anakwenze and Zuberia (2015) seems to hinder the growth of children's intellectual capabilities, emotional, social, physical and moral improvement. Children may end up dropping out of school because of lack of supervision, hunger and lack of resources.

Children are the most vulnerable group in any society and can have their future affected by psychosocial problems that they are continuously experiencing. It is against this background that the researcher felt the need to look at the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners and the best ways that can be employed to minimise them.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Early Childhood Education children are struck with a range of psychosocial problems as a result of various influential factors. These problems are hindering them from performing to their fullest potential. Hence the need to look at the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the psychosocial problems that are faced by ECE learners in Seke district school?
- What methods can be used to minimise these problems?

1.4 Significance of the study

The research is going to benefit the researcher to develop essential research skills that she could use for further studies in her career.

The research is likely to benefit teachers in Seke district schools to put into consideration the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners. This may be done through workshops, cluster meetings as well as departmental meetings so that they treat each child as an individual and put into consideration their individual and background differences.

The research is also likely to benefit the schools administrators to understand various psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in schools and find possible ways to minimise them at school level.

1.5   Delimitations

Physical and conceptual boundaries were adhered to in the delimitation of the study. Physically the research confined itself to Seke District Primary Schools. Only psychosocial problems affecting ECE were examined leaving out those affecting the junior grades.

1.6   Limitations of the Study

The researcher encountered several constraints. Some of these constraints include inadequate financial resources to finance the project. The researcher had to seek financial assistance from her spouse and friends in order to successfully carry out the project. This led the researcher to select a small sample for the study. Some respondents were not cooperative and this threatened the validity of the results. The researcher had to assure the respondents that the information gathered will solely be used for academic purposes only. Owing to time constraints the researcher had to carry on spot interviews and to administer questionnaires and collect them on the same day, thereby not giving the respondents adequate time to respond to the questions. This was due to the fact that the researcher had to teach her class and at the same time carry out the research. The researcher had also other commitments at the school where she works.

1.7   Definition of terms

Psychosocial

Psychosocial refers to psychological and social factors that influence mental health. It also involves social influences such as peer pressure, parental support, cultural and religious background. Most of these lead to problems in functioning in social situations. Dekovic &Van Baar (2017) define psychosocial as a combination of psychology and the society where psychology involves a bias on the brain and society is concerned with environmental influences.

Psychosocial development

It refers to the progressive development of psychological and social behaviours in humans during the life span due to different social interactions in which people are involved (Theunissen, 2013)

1.8 Summary

The focus of this chapter was to give a background to the research problem. Areas looked at in this chapter are background to the study, statement of the problem,, research questions and the significance of the study. Delimitations, limitations and a summary of the chapter were given. In the next chapter literature related to the study is reviewed.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

While chapter one introduced the study and provided a description of the study, this chapter explored the literature on the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners.

2.1 Psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners

Psychosocial problems are faced by everyone including children. Children suffer the most due to the prevalence of these problems. Psychosocial problems such as poverty, diseases, malnutrition among others have taken root in Zimbabwe and the world over. These problems differ from one setting to another.

In Europe, most psychosocial problems faced are as a result of cultural diversity, (Amato, 2005). Cultural diversity according to Abebe (2009) refers to people who identify with particular groups based on their birth place, ethnicity, language, value, beliefs or world views. The issue of migration is at the core of the rise of psychosocial problems in Europe. Families migrate from one country, region, or place and settle in another for many reasons,. Brown (2004) cites that some families may migrate because of war, hunger, fear for being harmed or discriminated against among other reasons. Migration has resulted in cultural diversity. Resettling in a new country can be complicated. Vikram (2005) posits that in Ireland, families struggle to find housing employment, schools, social connections and services. This means that children of families in these circumstances become vulnerable.

With migration at historically high levels across many European countries, research suggests that ethnic diversity negatively impacts social cohesion (Hagermann et al, 2005). Most families who have resettled in various European countries lack knowledge about how things work in the new environment. They struggle to get education and health services. They may be discriminated against but find it difficult to report because they lack the knowledge on the procedure to be

taken. Wessels (2004) has the view that language becomes a barrier for migrants to get the services they need. This can make the challenge of resettlement more stressful. Language can be the greatest challenge to the newly arrived families (Joseph, 2007). Difficulties in communicating in English can cause challenges and undermine people confidence. Theunissen (2013) noted that in the Netherlands, the prevalence of psychosocial problems is higher among migrants' children from non industrialized countries than among indigenous children. Several studies also indicate that areas in which children live are associated with psychosocial problems, with problems occurring more often in deprived areas.

Multicultural societies are emerging within most European countries due to migration (Abebe, 2009). Groups within the societies may use different language, various life styles, use different child rearing practices, have different expectations at different developmental stages of children and assume different gender roles (Amato, 2005). According to Poulsen (2006) the emergence of multicultural societies in Europe resulted in discrimination against the minority groups and their individual members. For instance, a school principal may deny access to an immigrant child because of poor knowledge of the local language.

Furthermore cultural diversity may result in challenges in parenting across culture (Connel, 2010). Cultural differences in parenting practices can lead to misunderstandings and can be stressful for families. Dekovic and van Baar (2017) cite that common differences in parenting practices can relate to the ways affection is shown to children, attitudes to physical punishment and how much emphasis is placed on family responsibility compared with promoting children's independence. Theunissen (2013) also posits that some cultural practices can have strict codes of behavior according to age and gender. This can be different with other cultures.

When children from different backgrounds are exposed to various cultural values, parents and caregivers may find practices that once worked in the home culture may no longer be accepted in the new country (Brown, 2004). This can create confusion and may also become a source of conflict and tension especially as children grow into teenagers. For instance not long ago corporal punishment was not an offence in Zimbabwe and if a family settles in a European country and apply corporal punishment to the children, this will be a serious offence. In this case, children and their parents' relationship maybe jeopardized because of differences in parenting styles. What is termed disciple in one culture maybe abuse in another.

Another problem that may arise due to cultural diversity in European countries is cultural identity. Amato (2005) noted that cultural identity may cause tension with families as family members may try to maintain their on cultural values while adapting to the new range of cultural influences in the wider community. Parents might also be concerned about children losing their cultural identity through contact with children from different cultural backgrounds,(Wessels (2004). Children may learn other cultures through influences promoted in media or at school. This may built unnecessary pressure on children as they try to please their parents and at the same time trying to have a sense of belonging through adhering to the expectations of the new culture.

Poverty has taken root in most Asian countries. Brown (2004) posits that in recent years one in five Indian children live with poverty. Income poverty is rampant in these countries. Income poverty according to Wessels (2004) is the condition of not having enough income to meet the basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. Most people in India fail to provide well for their children due to low incomes. Because children are dependent on others they enter or avoid poverty by virtue of their family's economic status (Connel, 2010). Children in India are greatly affected by poverty. Hagemann et al (2006) cite that most children in Asian countries especially India and Malaysia engage in child labour in order to supplement food in the family.

In Asia the issue of poverty has affected many children (Hagermann et al 2006). Reiss (2013) posits that like some endless war poverty is destroying lives. Among the most affected group are the millions of children who are born into poverty or may be impoverished during their early years owing to various events outside their control. Joseph (2007) cites that the majority of the world's poorest people are in Asia. This may be so because it holds a majority of the world's population. This also means that in Asia the number of minors is great and they are exposed to hardships that come with poverty. Wessels (2004) points out that poverty in some Asian countries seems largely due to the pressure of excessive population growth on scarce resources. Amato (2005) points out that education, medicine, clean water and sanitation are inadequate too.

Most children in Asia have stunted growth. Hagermann et al (2006) posit that malnutrition comes as a result of poverty. The children lack nutritious food and breastfeeding practices are not all that good. Brown (2004) noted that there is high prevalence of malnutrition among Indian children particularly from poor backgrounds. Stunting according to Vikram (2005) affected over

thirty percent of poor children compared to twelve percent from better off families. At the same time obesity is imaging as a significant health problem among low income families. Because of poverty most families cannot afford to provide children with nutritious food thereby exposing children to malnutrition.

Similarly, in most African countries poverty, diseases, malnutrition and school dropouts are the most prevalent psychosocial problems that affect most countries. Somalia and Ethiopia are the most affected (Abebe, 2009). Child labour is rampant in most African countries resulting in children dropping out of school. Cluver and Gardner (2009) posit that child labour is an important global issue associated with poverty, inadequate educational opportunities, gender inequalities and a range of health risk. The international labour organisation (ILO) estimates that there are approximately two hundred and fifty million child labourers world wide with at least one hundred and twenty million of them working under circumstances that have denied them a childhood and in conditions that severely affect their health and life. Anakwenze and Zuberi (2013) point out that statistics indicate that approximately ninety-six percent of child workers are from Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is believed that only a few children are in child labour in most developed countries.

Many child labourers in Africa begin working at a very young age and are malnourished and work long hours in hazardous environments, (Reiss, 2013). They usually do not attend school or are unpaid and their income is essential for family survival only. It is not enough to pay fees or seek for medical services. Vikram (2005) posits that low school attendance and poor health are a serious negative result of child labour. They represent a missed opportunity to develop the productivity and future earnings of the next generation, (Fuller and Coll, 2010). In this way poverty is passed from generation to generation. In 1998 Graiter and Lerer published the first comprehensive report of effects of child labour on children's health. The report explained that there is an association of child labour, impaired growth and malnutrition.

Malnutrition is estimated to contribute to more than one third of all child deaths, (Abebe, 2009). Poverty remains the major cause to all this ill. The vicious cycle of poverty and diseases escalates the situation. Malnutrition according to the World Food Programme (WFP) is as a state in which the physical function of an individual is impaired to the point where he or she can no

longer maintain adequate body performance for instance growth and resisting and recovering from diseases.

Anakwanze and Zuberi (2013) have the view that overpopulation more commonly seen in developing countries can reduce food adequacy leading to inadequate food intake or intake of foods of poor nutrition. The effects of malnutrition can create and mantain poverty which can further hinder economic and social growth (Akhombi, Agho, Merom, Renzaho and Hall, 2017). This is explained with children starting life with stunted cognitive development and finding it difficult later in life to offer the best of their expected intellectual abilities. Theunissen (2013) cites that the impact of malnutrition usually falls mainly on children under five years of age. Malnutrition generally involves nutrition and obesity.

Out of the 800 million people suffering from hunger in the world over 204 million come from Sub Saharan Africa (Browning, 2006). Akhombi et al (2017) estimates that some 1, 4 billion people now live in absolute poverty. Nearly one of every four human beings alive today exist only on the margins of survival , too poor to obtain the food or adequate shelter or minimal health care (Maruta, 2011) This means that poverty is unmistakably the driving factor in the lack of resources to purchase food. Poverty together with other socio-economic problems create the bulk of food insecurity around the globe and mostly in Africa

Food discrepancies according to Dekovic and Van Baar (2017) happen to be a major driving factor in perpetuating lack of food in most of Sub-Saharan Africa. It was estimated that nearly 30% of infants in the developing world are suffering from one or more of the multiple forms of malnutrition and 49% of the 10 million deaths among children less than five years old each year in the developing world are associated with malnutrition (United Nations, 2012)

Furthermore, Dekovic and Van Baar (2017) posit that children under the age of five are the most affected by malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa. A vicious cycle has been described to actually exist between poverty, malnutrition and disease. De Haan (2010) noted that malnutrition leads to sub optimal intellectual development. This implies that the children, who are the future of a society, are greatly affected by malnutrition

According to Akombi et al (2017) Ethiopia has the poorest people in the world. He further explained that only 34% of children were enrolled in schools despite the fact that close to the

population are of school going age. Most of these children suffer from hunger, malnutrition and diseases. Mutambara (2015) posits that the Sub-Saharan Africa has a large number of orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV. This is the major reason for an increased risk of dropping out of school. Lask (2011) also points out that the increased mobility among orphans and vulnerable children due to parental loss and change of care giver usually contribute to increased school dropouts. Most schools may not accept new students and may require documents that these children may not have. This may result in an increased number of children who drop out of school

In Zimbabwe, most psychosocial problems faced by children include poverty and diseases which later result in high prevalence of school dropout and malnutrition (Mutambara, 2015). The World Bank Report (2012) defines poverty as the inability to attain a maximum standard of living, not having enough, a low life expectancy, a higher rate of infant mortality, low educational standards, poor drinking water, and inadequate health care, unfit housing conditions and lack of active participation in decision making process. This implies that poverty to a larger extent excludes many children from school. Poverty in simpler terms can be defined as being unable to afford basic human needs.

Poverty seems to be the major cause for failing to attend or dropping out of school. Connel (2010) posits that dropouts rate seem to be highest in poor communities or families. For instance in the USA, Abebe (2009) cite that poverty is high among African American and dropouts are also high. Theunissen (2013) postulates that poverty has an influence on the life chances of children. Certain families are unable to meet financial demands of school. As a result children from such families tend to drop out of school and seek employment as child labourers. In this case they may grow without literacy and numeracy skills they need to further their careers.

Furthermore poverty affects the children's psychosocial development across multiple contexts including the family, neighbourhood and school and has more negative effects on socio emotional functioning, cognitive functioning and academic achievement (Cluver and Gardner,2007). According to Abebe (2009) children living in poverty are much more prone to health and safety risks associated with malnutrition, diseases, infection and injury than those who are not poor. Connel (2010) points out that malnutrition remain one of the major obstacles to human well being and economic prosperity in developing countries.

2.2. Methods that can be used to minimising the psychosocial problems

The United Nations on the Rights of Children is an international treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social health and cultural rights of children. All the children regardless of gender, race ethnicity, colour and religion have rights which protect them. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the convention of which Zimbabwe is a signatory. Despite the Zimbabwean government efforts towards realisation of these basic rights some children continue to experience challenges. The existence of psychosocial problems such as poverty, abuse, diseases malnutrition has hindered the progress. It is therefore necessary to find some intervention strategies and suggestions to minimize the prevalence of these problems.

In Europe migration is a major challenge and has a great impact on the psychosocial well being of children (Cluver and Gardner, 2009). The flow of refugees and others seeking access to Europe has increased to alarming levels. Long back, most of these people were individual males. However, in recent years whole families are making the journey together in some cases with the elderly, disabled and often young children (Amato, 2005). Most of the people are from Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia and other countries who are forced to leave their home by conflicts and crises. According to the Dekovic and Vaan Baar (2017) 18% of the new arrivals in 2015 were children. The situation of migrants' children particularly those travelling alone has raised a lot of concern. According to Connel (2010) there are reports of unaccompanied children who disappear after their arrival in Europe raising fears that they have faced risks such as abuse, sexual violence or trafficking.

Legislation has been a major solution to curb problems associated with migration. The European Union (EU) member states according to Theunissen (2013) have made long term legal commitments under international human rights and refuge law to protect and promote human rights of all migrants irrespective of their status. In addition, the convention gives refugees right to work education, housing and the judicial system and protect them from punishment for entering a country illegally. These measures are taken by most European governments to protect every child indiscriminately. Dekovic and Van Baar (2017) posits that the governments are abiding by the United Nations on the Rights and Welfare of children (UNRWC) expectations and

have put in place laws that protect all children from risks such as labour or abuse. Parents who migrate leaving their children are expected to live their children with foster parents or leave them in safe places like institutions where care is provided.

The problem of poverty has affected many countries. Roughly 40% of the world's poor live South Asia where poverty is basically a major problem (De Haan , 2010). Therefore a significant gain in poverty reduction is crucial. According to Akhombi et al (2010) poverty hits children the hardest and come with problems such as malnutrition, school dropout and diseases. Tackling malnutrition is directly linked to the achievement of the millennium development goals. This is a crisis with devastating and far reaching effects which is robbing children of their full potential for growth and development. Hagemann et al (2006) posits that the European Union EU and the United Nations Children's fund (UNICEF) have joined forces to improve nutrition security. They are donating foods for the most affected areas worldwide.

In Bangladesh and Indonesia the government has ensured adequate nutrition during the critical period from pregnancy to two years (Brown, 2004). It is further explained that these countries bear a burden of under nutrition in recent years. They have managed to develop and maintain new infant and young children feeding programmes. Connel (2010) noted that most Asian countries have managed to bring governments and international organisations together to fight under nutrition. When dealing with malnutrition, Abebe (2009) posits that it is important to have prevention and intervention programmes that target health concerns such as immunization and pre natal care. Kwashiokor and marasmus are the two forms of diseases linked to malnutrition.

Furthermore, feeding programmes have emerged in most countries as a way of curbing malnutrition. Brown (2004) cites that in Nepal, feeding programmes for and distribution of rice to vulnerable populations is an ongoing process to reduce malnutrition. According to Joseph (2007) in Indonesia cash transfer programmes have been established to link poor families to improved community nutrition. Pemberton, Gordon, Nandy, and Townsend (2007) posit that in Japan, a local policy of local production for local consumption has been introduced. Japan's school feeding programme is believed to be the oldest and most successful feeding programme linking local farmers to child nutrition. Becker and Luthar (2002) point out that feeding programme had made great progress against child malnutrition. They have put into consideration that purchasing food from farmers and making sure children have a good meal can be a

foundation of food security. Cluver and Gardner (2007) posit that in South Africa they have linked orphans and vulnerable children programmes with existing community resource and clinical services This goes a long way in minimising malnutrition.

In Zimbabwe, free immunization programmes have been introduced in schools although at a lower rate introduced as a way of dealing with malnutrition and diseases. Akombi et al (2017) posit that children are likely to be affected by some malnutrition diseases such as kwashiorkor and marasmus. Children with such diseases may be seriously ill or die. UNICEF (2010) postulates that in order to make children realise their rights to education, some measures have been put in place by the government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare. Measures such as free immunization have helped in eradicating child illnesses. Mutambara (2015) noted that mothers are also given advice at health centers on how to feed their children to prevent malnutrition. In some areas, families get food aid from various organisations such as dried beans, mealie meal and cooking oil to feed their babies (Ganga and Chinyoka, 2010).The government recently have put in place feeding programmes for the infant department.

Poverty is a psychosocial problem that makes it harder for children to reach their full potential. This may result in child labour to supplement food and fees. Poverty according to Bronfenbrenner ecology system is in the exosystem level where the child is not actively involved but affected. When a parent is unemployed or loses a job it may have negative impact on the child. Fees may not be paid on time and children may drop out of school. (Robertson ,2011). In an effort to make sure that children are educated, the Indian government according to Amato (2005) has introduced free and compulsory education for up to the age of fourteen. Becker and Luthar (2002) posit that Indian government has also provided alternative forms of education for children who are unable to take full advantage at formal education for various reasons.

In South Asia, a variety of programmes have been introduced in an attempt to minimise poverty. According to Connel (2010) poverty reduction policies that focus on rural areas where 75 % of the poor work and live have been introduced .It is further emphasised that the rural poor need legally secure entitlement to assets and technology particularly to increase the output and yield of food staples. Becker and Luthar (2002) cites that they have also managed to minimise poverty by promoting inclusive growth by encouraging inclusion of deprived groups in development such as women and other groups disadvantaged by ethnicity and minority status. Pemberton et al

(2007) point out that basic infrastructure construction was introduced to reduce poverty directly by creating employment.

Direct foreign aid was one way of eradicating poverty which was used in Bangladesh. Hagemann et al (2006) cite that direct foreign aid involved any of a variety of payments from government or other institutions or individuals in more developed countries to the governments of less developed economies. Microfinance loans have also been extended to the poor. De Haan (2010) noted that since the poor in Bangladesh do not have access to capital, they cannot start business activities that can help them from emerging from poverty. Mutambara (2015) has the view that the solution to give the poor access to capital in the form of small loans that can be used for a variety of small businesses which in turn can raise the living standards of the poor.

Pemberton et al (2007) posits that in Ireland, the government implemented its National Anti Poverty strategy and strengthen its support to families living in economic hardships. In order to ensure that poverty is reduced and that children are protected against the negative impact of economic hardships on their development. Becker and Luthar (2002) postulate that in Netherlands a targeted allowance to assist the families which experience highest levels of poverty and implement full existing policies and strategies and increase budgetary allocations for child care, health care and housing for families with children who are particularly vulnerable. In Zimbabwe according to Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) an effort has been made to ensure that children from poor families are educated .The government has made it possible through Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) to assist the needy. There are some non-governmental organisations which help children for instance the Plan International.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UNCRC) states that every child has the right to an education that develops their personality, talent and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. It is against this background that most countries implemented various strategies to eradicate school dropouts. In Ghana according to Poulsen (2006) has witnessed a steady decline of children dropping out of primary school since it launched its major education reforms. Connel (2010) noted that the introduction of programmes such as the capitation grant scheme and the school feeding program appear to have helped reduce overall rates of dropout. The grant managed to remove the cost burden from parents of enrolling their children in schools

and attracted many children to enroll including those who dropped out because of fees (Abebe,2009).

Teachers can take an active role in curbing school drop outs. Dekovic and Van Baar (2017) noted that teachers took a more active approach to the problem of poor participation and drop out and this helped improve the situation .Reiss (2013) posits that in Southern Ghana, teachers contributed to the reduction of dropouts by providing learning materials and food on condition that children attend school regularly. In South Africa, they have used co curricular activities to reduce dropouts (Vikram, 2005). The students are motivated to go to school because of activities that are offered. Reduction of school dropouts dilemma therefore require commitment and investment in high quality early childhood education. According to Dekovic and Van baar (2017) attention to social, and emotional learning, continual monitoring of students attendance and academic progress, improving the school climate and engagement with parents and the community are all strategies used in South Africa to eradicate school dropouts.

Quality education is the most important remedy to help people come from out of poverty circle. Abebe (2009) posits that preference must be given to children aged six and below so that the habit to learn and develop study technique be instilled. What children learn before the age of six has long lasting impact in their hearts and minds. This will help to shape their personality and characters. Reiss (2013) postulates that in Tanzania, the Tanzanian Development Vision 2025 identified education as a tool to change low productivity. The promotion of education in science and technology in Tanzania has enhanced promoted growth and minimised poverty. Innovation of agricultural system for adaptation such as farmer production practices, market approaches, technological and policy innovations were also used to improve food production and eradicate poverty (Vikram , (2005)

Although the Zimbabwean government is making an effort to minimise psychosocial problems such as diseases and malnutrition, a lot still need to be done to minimise these problems. The government, community, parents and the school can take a leaf from the methods discussed which are used by other countries to do away with various psychosocial problems in their countries.

2.3. Summary

This chapter looked at related literature from different scholars. Various scholars gave diverse opinions as reflected in the chapter. This chapter was organized in subheadings which were; the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners and ways of minimising these problems. The focus of the next chapter would be outlining a research methodology to be used in finding out the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke district schools

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

As the research seeks to find psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners, in this chapter the researcher discusses the methodology that was used to carry out the research. These include the design, population, sample as well as research instruments that were used for data collection. Ethical considerations and validity and reliability of the instruments were discussed. Data collection procedure and analysis will be presented in this chapter.

3.1   Research design

In this study, the researcher used the descriptive survey design. The researcher adopted this design because it helped her to find the responses which were relevant to the study. Chiromo (2009) argues that descriptive survey is a method of research which describes what we see and that the word survey means to see over and beyond. The design helped the researcher to explore the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners. The descriptive survey allowed the researcher to use questionnaires and interview guides to collect data needed for the study. The descriptive survey design helped the researcher to elicit valuable data about psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners.

The descriptive survey design for this study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection which were best suited for gaining an in-depth understanding of the problems. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in a complementary manner.

3.2 Population, sample and sampling procedure

The population of this study consist of thirty-six school heads, thirty –six teachers in charge (TICs) and all the ECE teachers in the thirty-six schools in Seke district. According to Springer

(2010) a population is the entire group of individuals that a study is intended to investigate. Cohen et al (2011) define population as any group of interest to the research to which the researcher wishes to generalize the results of the research. Cresswell (2014) points out that population have to be a group with similar characteristics. The population used should be a group to which generalizations can be used without distorting the findings.In this study, the researcher limited the research to three schools with twenty-five ECE teachers, three teachers in charge and three heads being the participants in this study. Sidhu (2003) defines a sample as a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis.The respondents for the study were selected using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select the three participating schools from a population of forty-six schools. The three schools were chosen because of their proximity to the researcher. The researcher also used simple random sampling to select the teachers that participated in the study. This technique ensured that all the teachers had an equal and independent chance of being selected as members of the sample. The school heads and the TICs were selected using the purposive sampling technique.

3.3   Research instruments

In this study, data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Using both interviews and questionnaires was meant to counter the shortcomings of using one method. Questionnaires and interviews complemented each other. Some participants are uncomfortable with interviews and they cannot express themselves owing to lack of fluency when responding to questions orally.

3.3.1   Questionnaires

The researcher distributed the questionnaires personally to the twenty-five respondents. This research used a combination of both closed-ended and open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire presented information to the respondents in written form and required the respondents to tick or fill in the blank spaces provided. Closed-ended questions were used to minimise irrelevant answers and to obtain standardized answers. An advantage of closed-

ended questions is that they require less time to answer and are easy to answer. Open-ended questions enabled the researcher to obtain information that reflected the perceptions and attitudes of teachers on psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners. Open-ended questions also enabled the respondents to state their opinions freely. According to Gutuza and Mapolisa (2015) questionnaires provide a relatively quick and efficient way of obtaining large amount of information from a large sample of people. Data can be collected relatively quickly because the researchers need not to be present when the questionnaires are completed.

3.3.2   Face to face interviews

The researcher interviewed three heads of schools and three teachers in charge. Since the study was conducted using the descriptive survey design, structured interviews were used. Cohen and Manion (2007) define an interview as a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information. The structured interview involved asking a series of structured questions and then probing more deeply with open form questions to obtain additional information. This approach provided reasonable data across respondents, which is of greater depth. The reason for choosing structured questions lay in the fact that the researcher got first hand information and the respondents will give relevant information only. Also the researcher had the opportunity to clarify questions that the respondents were not familiar with.

The heads of schools and the teachers in charge were selected using purposive sampling. This technique allowed the researcher to select cases that were likely to be rich information with respect to the study. The researcher felt that these respondents could provide relevant information in relation to the problem under investigation.

The teachers acted as major respondents in this study because they spend most of the time with the learners. This gave a total of thirty-one respondents among which are three school heads, three teachers in charge and twenty five ECE teachers.

3.4. Validity and reliability

Validity refers to the degree to which a measuring device is truly measuring what we intended it to measure. Merriam (2009), defines research validity as the extent to which the final results can be regarded as accurately describing the real world. Independent participation by the respondents in the research process ensured that there was research validity. The researcher used simple random sampling to ensure research validity. Interviews were also done privately and the respondents were not directed by the responses of others. The use of different primary data collection techniques such as interviews and questionnaires ensured that there was research reliability in the study.

3.5. Ethical considerations

Ethics are codes or rules which govern the practices of a profession. It dictates how information and clients relationships should be managed. According to Chiromo (2009), ethical consideration refers to the extent to which the researcher took into account all research factors that must be considered when doing a research.

3.5.1. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the right to rely on the trust or discretion of another, the right of an individual to control access and disclosure of private information entrusted to another. Confidentiality derives from a relationship when an individual gives private information to another on the condition or with the understanding that the other will not disclose it or will disclose it to the extent that the individual directs. Merriam (2009), says that confidentiality refers to the keeping of data of a person and how you keep it secure. At the same time asking who will have access to it and who you may share it with. Ultimately it concerns itself with what you will do with it once the project is complete.

The researcher put in place a number of measures to ensure that there was confidentiality of information in this study. She assured the respondents that the information obtained from

them was going to be kept confidential and the respondents were assured that they were protected from all forms of harm , social, physical, psychological and emotional. The respondents' names were also kept private and not mentioned in the study. The names of teachers were also not mentioned in the whole research. The respondents were also told not to write their names on the questionnaires so that their information remain confidential as outlined by Chiromo (2009). During the interview the researcher also told the respondents to keep the answers to themselves so that information would not spread to others and influence their responses.

3.5.2. Anonymity

The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity. A participant or subject is therefore considered anonymous when the researcher or another person cannot identify the participant or subject from the information provided for example questionnaires might only contain a number instead of persons' names. The promise of anonymity will increase the truthfulness of responses as well as the percentage returns (Cresswell ,2014).

3.5.3. Informed consent

Two major pieces of legislation directing educational Research and the National Research act of (1974) and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of (1974) more commonly referred as the Buckley Amendment. The National Research Act requires that to ensure protection of participants proposed research activities involving human participants be reviewed and approved by an authorized group prior to the execution of the research.

Protection of the participants is broadly defined and require that they are not be harmed in any way "physical or mentally" and that they participate only if they freely agree to do so which is informed consent. If participants are not of age informed consent must be given by parents or legal guardians (Chiromo, 2009).

3.6. Data collection procedure

In this study, the researcher used an introductory letter from the Midlands State University (MSU) to seek permission from the Permanent Secretary to carry out research in the three mentioned schools. This letter of permission was used to get permission from the Provincial Education Director (PED) of Mashonaland East Province to carry out the study in Seke District. The letter of permission from the PED was used to get permission from the District Schools Inspector (DSI) of Seke district and the school heads of the selected schools.

3.7. Data analysis plan

Data that was collected in this study was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Cresswell (2014) described qualitative research technique as the one that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical findings or other means of quantification. A description of the data was employed to analyse information from questionnaires and interviews. Therefore data was analysed according to the questions in the research instruments. This helped the researcher to analyse the psycho social problems faced by ECE learners and ways of minimising them. Comparative analysis was done whereby data from different people was compared and contrasted. Chiromo (2009) defined quantitative research technique as the one that presents statistical results by numbers. That is the researcher used tables and graphs to analyse the responses from the respondents.

3.8 Summary

The chapter looked at the research methodology for this study. The research design was identified, discussed and justified. The target population was also identified and the sampling procedures and sample size were given. In addition, data gathering instruments were discussed and justified. The chapter also focused on data collection procedures and data analysis plan. The next chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The thrust of this chapter is to present, discuss, analyse and interpret data gathered from interviews and questionnaires for this study. The data will be presented in tables, graphs and verbatim. The data are discussed, analysed and interpreted in the light of the research questions and literature reviewed for this study. The data gathered from both questionnaires and interviews were categorized into themes and discussed under subheadings formulated from research questions. The chapter focuses on data that was gathered from interviews and questionnaires. It ends with a summary of the findings.

4.1. Demographic data
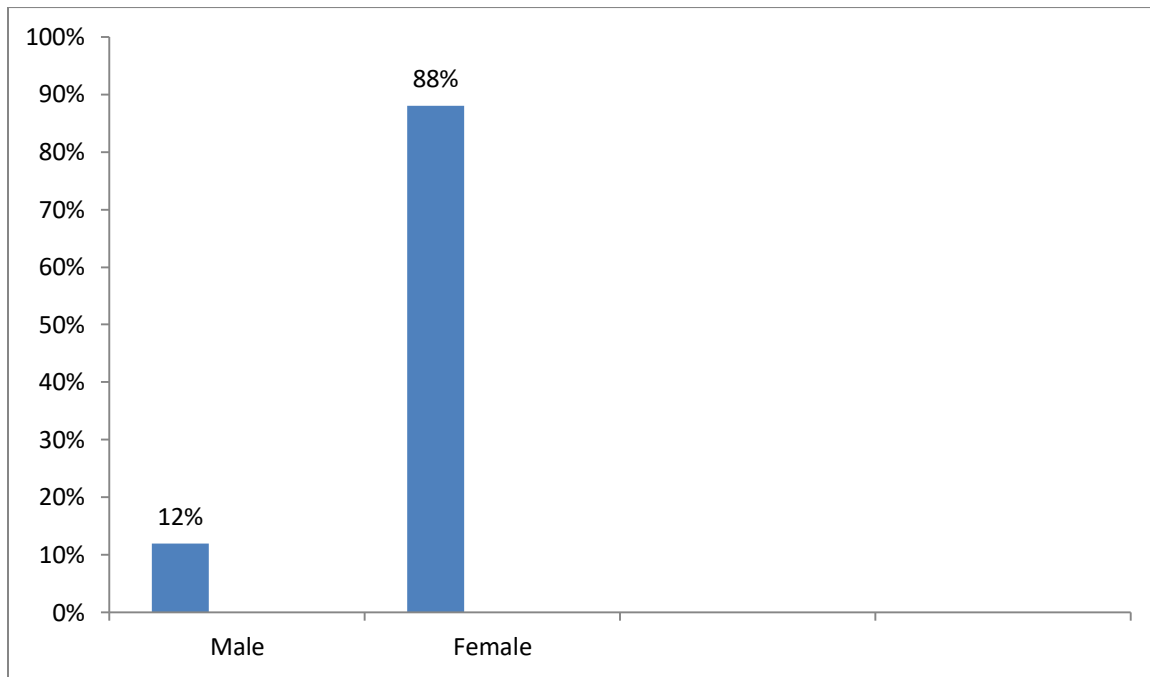
Figure 4.1   Gender of respondents

Figure 4.1 indicates that 12% of the respondents were males whilst 88% of the respondents were females. The figure also shows that the researcher managed to get information from both males and females. The availability of both males and females in ECE classes is supported by Rice and Goessling (2005) when they said that it is critical to have both male and female teachers working with young children because different traits are brought to the classroom.   However, the number of males did not match the number of females. This is because most ECE classes are manned by female teachers.

The following graph shows age of the respondents.
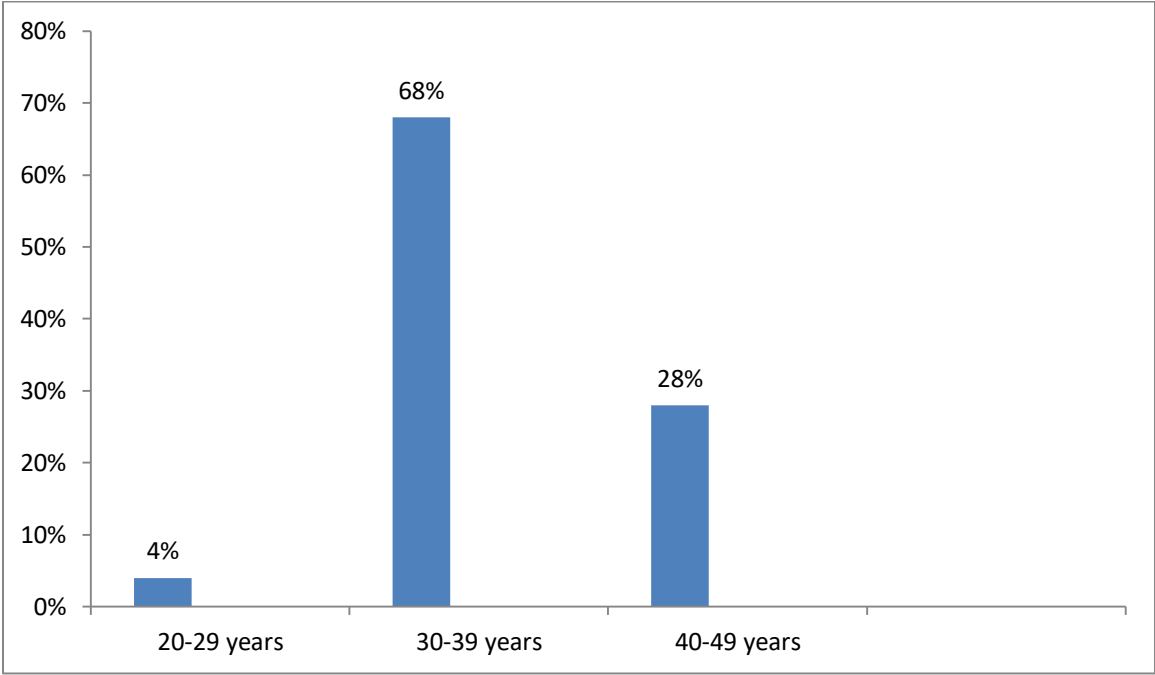
Figure 4.2. Age of respondents

Figure 4.2 show that 4% of the respondents were in the age range 20-29 years. Also 68% of the respondents were in the age range of 30-39years.Lastly, another 28% of the respondents were

between the age range of 40-49 years. This shows that most of the respondents were mature therefore able to identify psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners at their schools. Diamond and Powell (2011) agreed with this sentiment when they noted that children in ECE benefit more from mature teachers because of their experience not only in the profession but in life.

The following graph shows the professional qualifications of the respondents
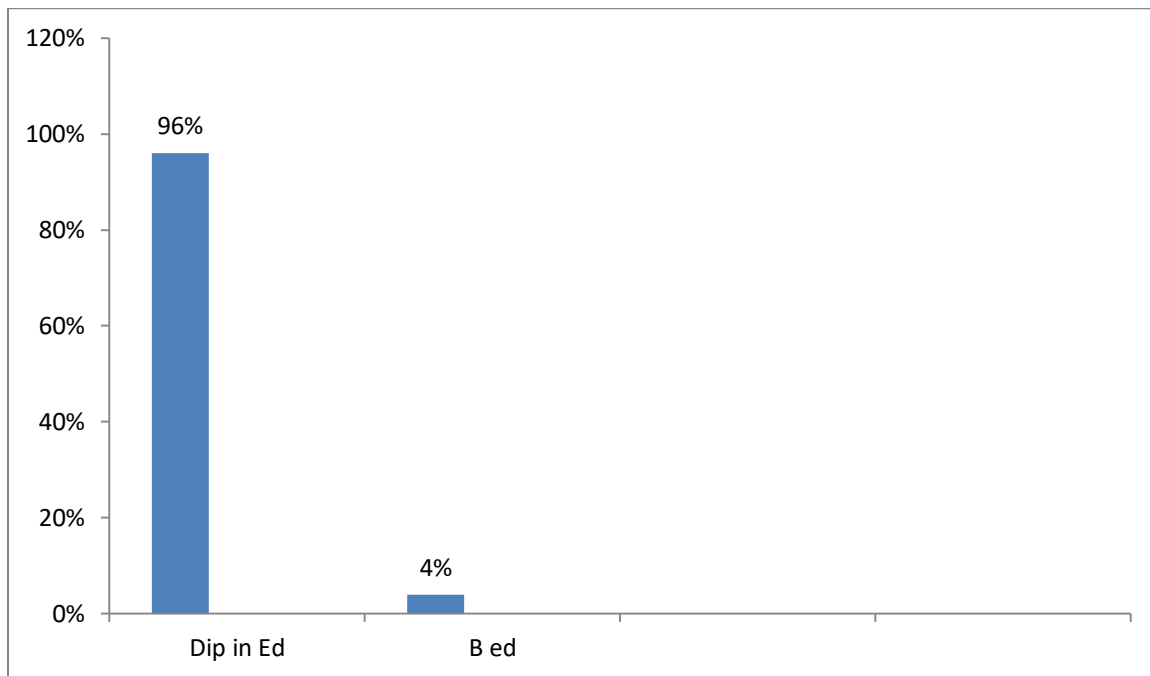
Figure 4.3. Professional qualifications of the respondents

The data in figure 4.3 show that 96% of the respondents have attained a diploma in education. Another 4 % of the respondents have acquired a first degree in education. According to Diamond and Powell (2011) educational requirements for ECE teachers can range from a diploma and professional Certificate to a bachelor's degree in ECE. This therefore follows that the ECE

department is being manned by qualified personnel who can identify psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners and suggest possible methods of minimising them.

The following graph is presenting data on grades taught by the respondents
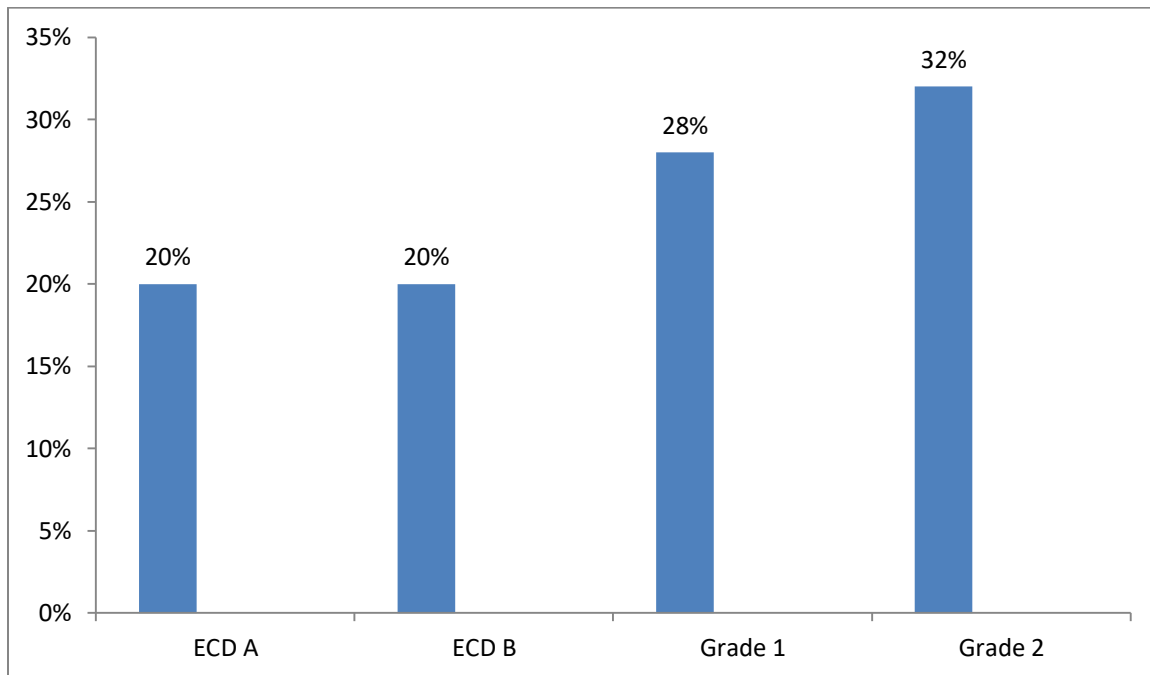
Figure 4.4. Grades taught by the respondents

The data on figure 4.4 indicate that all the classes that constitute early childhood education were represented in the study. 20% of the respondents teach ECD A, another 20% of the respondents teach ECD B, 28% of the respondents teach grade one and lastly 32% of the respondents teach grade two. Rice and Goessling (2005) describes ECE as a branch of Education theory that deals with the teaching of young children formally and informally up until the age of about eight. Basing on the grades taught, the respondents are ECE teachers.The ECE teachers are the ones who spend most of the time with the learners and are in a better position to identify psychosocial problems faced by these learners.

Data collected from questionnaires and interviews is presented.

4.2 Theme 1: Psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools.

Table 4.1.Teachers responses on whether they agree or disagree with a given list of psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners

n = 25

Response	Agree----------------------%		Disagree--------------------%	
	# of teachers	%	# of teachers	%
Poverty	21	84%	4	16%
Malnutrition	8	32%	17	68%
Rape cases	9	36%	16	64%
School dropouts	13	52%	12	48%
Child labour	8	32%	17	68%
Migration	17	68%	8	32%
Neglect	18	72%	**7**	28%
Domestic violence	18	72%	**7**	28%
HIV/AIDS	20	80%	5	20%

Table 4.1 indicates that poverty and HIV/AIDS are the most prevalent psychosocial problems among ECE learners. Teachers' responses on psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools show that poverty, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, child labour, migration, rape cases and neglect are some of the problems faced. Poverty was highlighted by 84% of the respondents as a psychosocial problem faced by ECE learners at their schools whilst 16% of the respondents disagreed. Another 32% of the respondents agreed that malnutrition is a psychosocial problem faced by ECE learners and 68% of the respondents disagreed. Whilst 36% of the respondents agreed that rape cases affect ECE learners in their schools, 64% of the respondents disagreed. On the issue of child labour 32% of the respondents agreed that ECE learners are affected whilst 68% disagreed. On migration 68% of the respondents agreed that migration is a psychosocial problem affecting ECE learners and 32% respondents disagreed. Neglect was agreed by 72% of the respondents as a problem affecting the ECE learners whilst 28% of the respondents disagreed. On the other hand 72% of the respondents agreed that domestic violence is a problem faced by ECE learners but 28% of the respondents disagreed. Lastly, 80% of the respondents agreed that HIV/AIDS is a problem among ECE learners and 20% of the respondents disagreed.

The following are other psychosocial problems which were cited by the teachers in an open ended follow up item.

- *Physical abuse*
- *Child illnesses*
- *Chronic diseases*

Participants in the study identified the above as other psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners which were not indicated in the previous question on the questionnaire. Most of the respondents indicated that the psychosocial problems highlighted in the previous question are the only ones affecting the ECE children. Other respondents mentioned physical abuse, child illnesses and chronic diseases as other psychosocial problems affecting the ECE learners.

The following responses were given by the teachers as the most prevalent psychosocial problem faced by ECE learners

- *Poverty*
- *Neglect*
- *Migration*
- *Domestic violence*
- HIV/AIDS

The responses above show that poverty, neglect, migration, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS were the psychosocial problems which were highlighted by the respondents as the most prevalent. Poverty was highlighted by the majority of the respondents followed by neglect, migration, HIV/AIDS, and lastly domestic violence. The responses indicate that these mentioned psychosocial problems are the most common one in the District.

The following data is from interviewing TICs and school heads and these are the responses given by the TICs on the same theme.

The TICs were asked on the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in their schools and the following are their responses

Poverty is the major problem affecting the learners. The learners also face problems that include neglect and HIV/AIDS

Poverty and neglect. Most ECE teachers report that the learners do not bring learning tools and this is a real challenge at the school.

HIV/AIDS, poverty and sexual abuse

The responses given show that ECE learners are facing various problems among them poverty, neglect, sexual abuse, and HIV/AIDS among other problems. The problems are very common in

most schools. The responses also show that learners are failing to bring the needed resources due to poverty

The following are the responses from TICs on what they think are the causes of these psychosocial problems

The economic challenges that are being faced by the country have a negative impact on the learners. Most of the young parents are not working and so cannot provide basic needs to their children.

Abuse is mainly caused by exposure of children to pictures and activities which   are not of their age. Sexual abuse is on the increase at this school and we are suspecting that these young learners are exposed to very bad things on televisions and cellphones.

Unemployment is causing many problems to children. Due to economic hardships children become vulnerable and exposed to all forms of abuse.

The responses given by these respondents show that economic hardships and exposure of the young learners to pictures and activities which are not of their age are the main cause of problems such as abuse and poverty.

When asked on the effects of the psychosocial problems on ECE learners , the TICs had this to say

Learners become withdrawn and become isolated

As a result of poverty children will have malnutrition because of lack of nutritious food.

Children may be traumatized in case of problems like abuse and HIV/AIDS

The responses given indicate that learners are greatly affected by various psychosocial problems they face. The effects range from trauma, isolation, withdrawal and malnutrition.

The following responses were given by the TICs on how the psychosocial problems affect the learning process

The academic performance is negatively affected because of illnesses and poverty.

learning materials may be inadequate and attendance may be erratic thus hindering the academic progress of the learners

Learners may fail to cope due to illnesses and poverty

The following are the responses given by the school heads on the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners at their schools

There are a number of them. They include poverty, neglect and HIV/AIDS.

Poverty and abuse (all forms of abuse) and migration are on the increase at this school. Some parents are transferring their children even during the middle of the term

Abuse –physical and sexual, poverty and HIV/AIDS some are infected and some are affected.

The responses given above indicate that poverty, migration, HIV/AIDS and abuse are the most prevalent psychosocial problems affecting the ECE learners.

The school heads were asked on what they thought were the causes of these psychosocial problems and the following were their responses:

Unemployment

Most parents in this area are unemployed and they resort to horticulture for survival which is not giving them enough income because they are doing it on a small scale due to lack of resources. This will result in these parents failing to provide for their children.

People *do not have money these days due to economic challenges in the country*.

Economic hardships in the country are forcing parents to look for greener pastures leaving children behind and exposed to all forms of abuse

The responses by the three school heads show that the economic hardships currently facing the nation is the major cause of the prevalence of most of the psychosocial problems.

When asked on the effects of psychosocial problems on learners, the school heads had this to say:

Absenteeism due to lack of school requirements or illness

When learners lack basic needs they usually have low self esteem and are withdrawn most of the time.

Poverty affects the learners socially. Most of them become isolated and take time to find friends

The responses above show that the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners affect them negatively and have a bearing on their future life. The learners may fail to relate with both their peers and the adults as expected of children of their age.

The school heads were asked how the psychosocial problems affect the learning process and they had this to say:

The learners will not perform to their full potential due to inadequate resources and absenteeism.

Learners who are affected by various psychosocial problems cannot participate in all learning programs due to lack of resources and poor attendance

The learning process is negatively affected due to lack of learning materials and abuse causes learners to be withdrawn others may become bully or play truancy.

The responses show that the ECE learners will not perform to the best of their ability and become more vulnerable due to lack of resources, abuse or illnesses.

4.3 Discussion

The responses given by the respondents show that the learning process is greatly affected because the learners will be affected both psychologically and socially. A hungry learner or an ill learner cannot perform like a learner who is fit and healthy.

The study was conducted to explore the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District. The responses given by the teachers, TICs and school heads indicated that ECE learners face psychosocial problems that include poverty, neglect, abuse, and HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and school dropouts. This view is supported by Vikram (2005) who pointed out that those young children from disadvantaged families face various problems which affect their psychological and social well being. The research findings indicate that poverty usually leads to other psychosocial problems that may be faced by ECE learners. This tally with what Abebe (2009) noted when he said that the unavailability of food and unpredictability of families from poor backgrounds is the most destructive force in children's cognitive development. He also further stressed that the lack of nutritious food triggers a number of health problems in children, many of which may be chronic.

The results from both interviews and questionnaires also show that poverty is the most prevalent psychosocial problem among the learners. The responses also reveal that due to unemployment and hard economic conditions prevailing in the country currently, most families are living in abject poverty thereby exposing children to various psychosocial problems. This is in line with findings made by Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) when they established that due to monetary constraints and the need for food and shelter and clothing young children are driven into the trap of immature labour and sexual abuse.

This study also established that the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners greatly affect the learning process. It was revealed through the responses given that most of the affected learners do not perform to their maximum potential. This view is also supported by Amato (2005) who noted that due to poverty parents engaged themselves in menial jobs like vending and other temporary jobs which took much of their time. As a result they could not supervise

their children's homework thus preventing academic progress. Poverty is therefore a hindrance to the optimal functioning of ECE learners

The findings of this study also show that learners can lack resources due to financial constraints. This also concur with the findings of another study carried by Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) when they noted that children who experience poverty live in environments that offer less resources for learning. These include factors such as lack of lighting, overcrowded homes or absence of books in the home. The parents may also fail to purchase toys, writing tools or games that promote learning. Becker and Luthar (2002) state that poor parents can sometimes provide little support at home and at school. Without books or other classroom resources, teachers cannot necessarily improve the quality of learning. This means that if the conditions at home and at school are not conducive for learning, learners' academic performance is affected.

The researcher also established that school attendance of children who face various psychosocial problems is erratic. School heads and TICs who were interviewed raised the issue of absenteeism due to challenges faced which include illness, lack of food, failure to get school fees, lack of parental support among other challenges. This view is also supported by the findings made by Mufanechiya (2012) that absenteeism by children from poor backgrounds because of various challenges may eventually lead to dropping out of school

Now theme 2 is discussed.

4.4 Theme 2. Methods of minimising psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools.

The following table is presenting data from teachers on methods that can be used to minimise psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools.

Table 4.2. Teachers responses on methods that can be used to minimise psychosocial problems   (n = 25)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Donations	25	100%
Feeding programme	25	100%
Legislation/policies	24	96%
Free immunization	25	100%
Nutrition garden	24	96%
Income generating projects	25	100%
Awareness campaigns	25	100%

Table 4.2 indicates that all the respondents recommended donations, feeding programmes, free immunization, income generating projects and awareness campaigns as noble methods of minimising the prevalence of various psychosocial problems. This is reflected by 100% of the

respondents recommending these methods. 96% of the respondents recommended the use of nutrition garden to minimise psychosocial problems and also 96% of the respondents recommended the use of legislation/policies.

The following are some of the suggestions proffered by the respondents through the questionnaire on other methods of minimising psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners which were not indicated in the table.

- *Educating parents*
- *Immunisation*
- *Awareness campaigns*
- *Follow up on dropouts*
- *Advocacy groups*

The responses given by the respondents indicate that educating parents, immunization of children, awareness campaigns, follow up on school dropouts and advocacy groups are some of the methods that can be used to minimise the prevalence of psychosocial problems on ECE learners.

The following are the responses given by the TICs on methods of minimising psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in their schools.

Nothing big is being done except that the school relies on BEAM to help a few learners.

Feeding schemes and guidance and counselling

BEAM helps the under privileged and the newly introduced feeding program

The responses given above show that the feeding schemes and BEAM are the main methods used in minimising psychosocial problems in schools. Guidance and Counselling was also mentioned as a method used in schools to reduce the prevalence of some of the psychosocial problems.

The following responses were given by the TICs on whether there are government policies to address the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners

The ministry has encouraged schools to start income generating projects like fishery and poultry Feeding program.

Feeding program and guidance and counselling.

The responses given above indicate that an initiative was made by the government to minimise the psychosocial problems through the introduction of feeding schemes, Guidance and Counselling as a learning area and income generating projects.

The TICs gave the following responses on other methods that can be used to minimise psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners

I think the ones that are implemented are exhaustive.

Awareness campaigns and income generating projects at school level.

Advocacy groups and the church should help the underprivileged children.

The respondents suggested awareness campaigns, creation of advocacy groups and establishment of income generating projects at school level.

The school heads were asked to explain how they deal with psychosocial problems at their schools and they replied

We usually rely on donations from well wishers and the government through BEAM assists some of the learners from poor backgrounds.

Awareness campaigns on abuse are regularly carried out at the school and BEAM is assisting a few learners from poor backgrounds

Immunisation programs are done to minimise some diseases, feeding programmes

The responses given were that awareness campaigns, BEAM, feeding programs and immunisation programs are some of the methods used in schools to minimise psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners.

These are the head's responses on the Ministry's policies that help to address the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners

Feeding programmes have been recently introduced. All ECE learners get food at the end of each school day. Although the government provides us with maize we face challenges of failing to get relish and cooking oil

Feeding programmes and BEAM had helped to a larger extent in minimising some problems faced by ECE learners.

BEAM and feeding programs

The responses indicate that there are few government policies in schools that have to do with minimising psychosocial problems. More should be done to assist the ECE learners in schools.

The following are responses given by the school heads on other ways of minimising the prevalence of psychosocial problems on ECE learners

Methods that are being used to minimise psychosocial problems on ECE learners are not enough. Parents should engage in some community projects to generate income.

The community should also help the less privileged. Schools should generate income through projects rather than relying on donations and aid from the government

The government should take upon itself to assist children who have HIV/AIDS

The school heads through their responses suggested that parents, government and the community at large has a part to play in minimising all psychosocial problems faced by the   learners. Suggested methods include income generating projects.

4.5 Discussion

Responses given by the teachers, school heads and TICs indicate that a positive step has been taken in terms of minimising psychosocial problems. Feeding programs BEAM and Guidance and Counselling are the main programs being done in schools to do away with psychosocial problems. Although much is being done by the government of Zimbabwe and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in both urban and rural schools to try to minimise problems affecting the learners, there is still much more that can be done. The respondents suggested that parents and communities should also take a leading role in minimising these problems at school level.

The responses given also show that alleviation measures that target various psychosocial problems need to be put in place. According to the United Nations Millennium Development Goal Report of 2012 preventive and intervention programs that deal with health concerns and other social and psychological issues that affect children need to be established. The responses given also show that follow ups on school dropouts need to be done. This is confirmed by Becker and Luthar (2002) when they pointed out that teachers have a pivotal role to play in curbing school dropouts. It was also noted through the responses given by the respondents that parents should be educated on immunization and other programs that benefit the child.

Furthermore, the respondents highlighted that awareness campaigns on child abuse should be carried out regularly to minimise the prevalent of various types of abuse on the young learners. The participants also cited through their responses that the community should also take a leading role in minimising various problems. The community should not wait for the government to deal with all the psychosocial problems faced. This is supported by Theunissen (2013) when he noted that communities should start income generating projects to assist learners in their schools. This implies that all stakeholders have a part to play in doing away with the problems affecting the ECE learners.

4.6 Summary

The main findings of this research were that the learners are encountering many psychosocial problems among them poverty, neglect, HIV/AIDS, school dropouts, physical abuse, rape cases and child illnesses with poverty being the most prevalent one. Some solutions pointed out by the respondents include donations, feeding programmes, and nutrition gardens, follow up on school dropouts and income generating projects. The following chapter, chapter five discusses the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on data presentation, analysis and discussion. The main focus of this chapter is to summarise the entire research. It also makes conclusions from the research findings. The recommendations were also made on what can be done to minimise psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners.

5.1 Summary

The main focus of the study was to analyse the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke district. Many ECE learners are facing challenges due to the problems they face everyday which affect their learning process. It therefore became the main focus of the study to look at the psychosocial problems faced by the ECE learners as well as the methods which can be implemented to minimise these problems. This study is vital for it will assist the researcher, departmental staff and other teachers at large through workshops, seminars and meetings where possible methods of minimising the effects of the psychosocial problems can be addressed.

The reviewed literature revealed that there are many psychosocial problems that affect ECE learners and there is need to address them early because they can affect the psychosocial development of the learners and their future can be jeopardised. In addition, the reviewed literature provided possible methods of minimising these problems. The research adopted the descriptive survey research design which enabled the researcher to use questionnaires and interviews in the collection of data. The descriptive survey design helped the researcher to elicit opinions, views and suggestions on methods of minimising psychosocial problems among ECE learners. It also helped the researcher to use both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection which are best suited for gaining an in-depth understanding of the topic under study.

Out of the thirty-six schools in the population, three schools were chosen using purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was used because it ensured that the

schools closer to the researcher are chosen. The ECE teachers were chosen using the simple random sampling because it ensured that every member has an equal chance of being chosen, the school heads and the TICs were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. The respondents therefore included three school heads, three teachers in charge and twenty-five ECE teachers. Teachers responded to a questionnaire while the researcher interviewed the school heads and the teachers in charge. The researcher first explained the purpose of the study to the respondents and assured them that the information they provided will be used solely for the purpose of the research. The researcher then requested the consent of the respondents to participate in the study. The researcher interviewed the school heads and TICs after they have made an interview appointment. The researcher self administered the teachers' questionnaires and later collected them. The researcher used questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Questionnaires helped the researcher to obtain standardised answers and to minimise irrelevant answers. Interviews helped the researcher to get first hand information and data that is of great depth. The researcher had the opportunity to clarify questions that the respondents were not familiar with.

The main findings of the study were that ECE learners are facing many psychosocial problems and the major one being poverty. HIV/AIDs, neglect and migration were also indicated by a fairly large number of respondents as affecting the ECE learners. Methods suggested to minimise psychosocial problems include donations, feeding programmes, income generating projects among others. Other respondents suggested follow ups on school dropouts and advocacy groups as other methods that can be employed.

5.2 Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are guided by the research questions.

Psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools.

The main conclusion of the study is that poverty is the major psychosocial problem faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools. The study also found out that children face other

Psychosocial problems which include neglect, migration, school dropouts, and HIV/AIDS among others.

The study also established that psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners have a negative impact on the learning process of these young learners. The study also established that most of the psychosocial problems faced can lead to learners dropping out of school. Thus the psychosocial problems are interrelated.

Based on the findings from the research, the researcher concluded that the prevailing economic hardships currently being faced in the country are also fuelling the prevalence of most psychosocial problems.

Methods that can be used to minimise psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke District Primary Schools

The research also established that that the psychosocial problems faced greatly impact the psychological and social well being of the child and has a major bearing on the future of the child. The researcher then concluded that the psychosocial problems need to be minimised early.

The research established that poverty is taking root in the lives of ECE learners and the researcher concluded that it is necessary for every school to initiate projects that assist learners at their own schools.

The researcher concluded that there is need for the school to make follow ups on school dropouts to minimise them.

On the issue of abuses the researcher concluded that advocacy groups and awareness campaigns can be used to minimise the prevalence of abuse on ECE learners.

The researcher also concluded that the government needs to assist parents to eradicate poverty in their homes so that ECE learners receive good basic family care

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings aforementioned, the researcher provides the following recommendations

- The government should put in place policies that will protect the ECE learners from the effects of these psychosocial problems in schools.

- School heads should partner with the corporate world and well wishers in the quest to find donations to help the affected learners.

- Schools should start income generating projects in order to help the learners at their own schools affected by various psychosocial problems thus schools should be run as business entities.

- The government should increase the number of learners assisted by BEAM since the number of vulnerable learners is increasing.

- Nutrition support programmes need to be introduced in schools. In addition, the introduction of nutrition gardens need to be developed so as to provide food to the children.

- Education must be made available to all children and every effort must be made to ensure that all children (within the school going age) remain in school.

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APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ECE TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

I am Tamboyenyoka Precious a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education student at Midlands State University (MSU). I am carrying out a research on the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners in Seke district primary schools.

INSTRUCTIONS

May you please complete this questionnaire by use of a tick or write in the spaces provided. The information you give will be confidential. Do not write your name, address or phone number on this questionnaire. Thank you

SECTION A: BIO DATA

In this section please tick the appropriate answer

1. Gender   Male ☐   Female ☐

2. Age?   20 years and below ☐   20-29years ☐   30-39years ☐

   40-49years ☐   50years and above ☐

3. Professional qualifications?   Diploma in Ed ☐   BEd ☐   Med ☐   Phd ☐

   Other specify--------------------------------------

4. Grade taught   ECD A ☐   ECD B ☐

   Grade 1 ☐   Grade 2 ☐

1. Indicate psychosocial problems that are faced by ECE learners at your school by putting a tick in the appropriate column

ITEM	AGREE	DISAGREE
Poverty		
malnutrition		
Rape cases		
School dropouts		
Child labour		
migration		
neglect		
Domestic violence		
HIV/AIDS		

2. Is there any other psychosocial problem faced by ECE learners at your school which is not indicated above? If yes specify_____.

3. What is the most prevalent psychosocial problem at your school?_____.

4. Indicate with a tick in the appropriate column methods that can be used to minimise psychosocial problems at your school

ITEM	RECOMMENDED	UNRECOMMENDED
donations		
Feeding programme		
Legislation/policies		
Free immunisation		
Nutrition garden		
Income generating projects		
Awareness campaigns		

5. Are there any other methods that can be used to minimise psychosocial problems that are not indicated above? If yes specify_____

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TICs AND SCHOOL HEADS

1. What are the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners at your school?

2. What do you think are the causes of these psychosocial problems?

3. What are the effects of the psychosocial problems on ECE learners?

4. How do the psychosocial problems affect the learning process?

5. How do you deal with psychosocial problems at your school?

6. Are there any Ministry policies that help you to address the psychosocial problems faced by ECE learners?

7. Do you think of any other ways of minimising the prevalence of psychosocial problems on ECE learners?