

## THE DEMISE OF THE SHONA FAMILY IN ZIMBABWE: A CONSEQUENCE FOR PROBLEMATIC CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

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### ABSTRACT

*The study sought to explore the impact of the traditional Shona family (mhuri) and the emerging new family structures in Zimbabwe on the educability of children growing in these emerging family structures. The study was conducted in Chitungwiza, a dormant town for Harare. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to come up with research participants. In collecting data in-depth interviews and content analysis were used. The study established that the problem of absent fatherhood and lone parenthood that come with contemporary family structures like the small house family in Zimbabwe, tend to pose problems for children's socialisation and educability. Children coming from households with minimum or no parental involvement have been observed to engage in quite a number of anti-school activities such as bullying, truancy and late coming to school. Since contemporary pedagogical theories and principles tend to emphasise the complementary roles of parents and teachers in the education of children, it therefore follows that lack of social capital and financial capital as a result of absent fatherhood and subsequent lone parenthood in contemporary families in Zimbabwe tend to compromise the educability of children growing in such contexts. The study recommends that the ideals of the traditional Shona family be continued to be revered and that there be awareness campaigns on the role of parents on the education of their children.*

**Keywords:** Mhuri, small house, pedagogical theories, absent fatherhood, lone parenthood

### INTRODUCTION

The family background tends to have tremendous bearing on the academic performance of learners. Sociologists, especially functionalists argue that the family and education as social institutions have a robust symbiotic relationship (Ritzer, 2012). However, this symbiotic relationship between the contemporary Shona family and education seems to be under threat by, cultural imperialism, acculturation and globalisation. It has been observed that the traditional structure, organisation and role of the Shona family seem to have transformed in its bid to embrace the so called modernity. Thus the demise of the Shona concept of family (*mhuri*) has culminated in the emergence of new family households (small house families, single parent families, child headed families etc.) which however seem to have created a 'cold' bond between children and their parents. It would also seem that these contemporary family structures have negated their primary responsibilities; supporting and socialising children into the accepted norms and values of society. This paper therefore argues that the demise of the Shona concept of *mhuri* has become detrimental to the well-being of learners at school. The paper starts by examining in detail literature on the nature and role of the